Durham E-Theses

Community and the production of everyday narratives : newspaper journalists and their readers in a Spanish city.

Machin, David

Abstract

This thesis reconsiders the media/audience relationship through an ethnography of newspaper journalists and their readers in Valencia in the South West of Spain. Using extensive ethnographic evidence the thesis suggests that we should not expect to find concrete or static responses to the media message, nor should we expect people to be influenced in these responses by their membership of concrete identifiable groups. The thesis argues that society might be visualised as an ongoing exchange of culturally shared stories about how the world works and what kind of people exist in that world. The relationship between the media and the audience should thus be visualised as voices involved in this exchange.

The thesis shows people involved in this exchange of narratives. It shows journalists producing texts by considering what kinds of narratives will work for readers . And it demonstrates that people will talk about the discourse produced by journalists using a repertoire of cultural narrative themes which shows them providing ongoing *ad hoc* accounts for the practical purposes of presenting a particular kind of 'face' in different contexts . The use of narrative themes allows speakers to evoke temporary categories of people, some of which they are part of, and others of which they are not. The thesis shows that the discussion of certain events compels people to demonstrate their alignment quite powerfully . In this case one temporary category of person becomes somewhat less transient as one sense of community crystallises.

Acknowledgements

Community and the Production of Everyday Narratives: Newspaper Journalists and their Readers in a Spanish City

By David Machin

Ph.D. Thesis 1994
Department of Anthropology
University of Durham

2 0 DEC 1994

Contents

Bibliography

List of Illustrations

Declaration

I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other University.

Statement of copyright

Introduction

Through an ethnography of journalistic practice and of talk about news, this thesis offers a perspective on media/audience relationships which attempts to deal with certain problems raised by current researchers in media studies. Radway (1988), Ang (1990), and Schrøder (1994), for example, have criticised audience research which has examined the way that people are influenced by the kinds of 'discourse communities' of which they are members. They suggest that we need to develop a methodology which is able to account for the way that people are influenced by many aspects of their lives which cut across each other in complex ways. They reject the idea that it is possible to account for media responses by attributing them to the influence of people's membership of concrete and identifiable groups. I argue that we need to think about the concept of community in a way that considers how people are able to evoke themselves as being part of many different and contradictory categories of people at different times. It is this that holds the key to understanding the ways that people talk about the media message. Let me say exactly how I came to this in order to make the nature of my argument clear.

I arrived at the anthropology department in Durham in 1991 to commence an M.A. by research interested in certain moral concepts, such as good and evil, that are used in newspapers, and the way that these work for audiences. Having been introduced to the idea of narrative thought by my supervisor Michael Carrithers, I started ethnographic work with journalists in the North East of England to examine the way they transformed news events into various cultural narratives. I found that they did this by considering what readers bring to texts,

in terms of the cultural narratives that would work for them. This had much the same character as the way that any individual in a face-to-face situation must consider what those they produce their discourse for bring to the conversation. This became the basis of my M.A. thesis as there was not sufficient time to investigate the way audiences used these texts.

At the time of submission, however, I received the news that I had funding from a university scholarship to upgrade to a Ph.D.. I decided that I wanted to continue with the same ideas but develop them with more ethnography, particularly of the way people used the texts that the journalists produced. Having funding to do so, I decided to take my research abroad to Spain. Spain was chosen as it fitted into my budget and because I had learned to speak Spanish as a hobby during my first year at Durham. I decided that there I would collect data so that I could produce a comparative ethnography on the way journalists from the two countries use cultural narratives to transform events into news and on the way audiences used these texts.

In October 1992 I left for Spain to spend a year in Valencia, which I chose because it was one of Spain's larger cities, and due to the fact that it had two local newspapers. I was particularly interested in the way that journalists working for such newspapers evoked a sense of local community through the narratives they used.

The journalists confirmed what I had observed in my ethnography in the U.K.: that they produced news narratives with a keen sense of what audiences brought to the texts with them. However, when I asked the journalists about their work I found that they were not consistent in the explanations that they gave. The same went for my respondents who talked about why they bought certain newspapers In each case I did not find consistent responses, but found that people had the ability to completely contradict themselves as they spoke. The reasons a person gave for their behaviour would often involve them giving explanations that seemed to refute each other.

2

The way people talked about the events revealed by news texts also had this changing nature. A person could at one moment give, what we would normally view as an opinion, on a news event, but then shortly afterwards have no difficulty in talking about that event in a way that was completely contradictory to the first. My problem was to explain these phenomena. I was able to think about the way people used different cultural narrative themes to talk about events, through the material on narrative thought that I had used in my M.A.. But I could not explain the way that people could continually contradict themselves. The literature on media and audiences, whilst providing me with many important tools, had tended to point to the need to find a way of accessing people's responses to the media. In my data I was finding nothing that could fit the description of a concrete or static response.

The key to this came to me after several months of fieldwork. Three girls from the village of Alcácer, several km from the city of Valencia, had disappeared, and then some months later been found dead in a make-shift grave. These were in fact quite ordinary events. In Valencia minors go missing or turn up murdered with relative frequency. Newspapers do not usually consider such events particularly newsworthy and at most give the details in a small insignificant text. But for some reason, that we will look at later, in this particular case, the whole of the city responded strongly with the anger growing over about a month into what was total hysteria. A powerful sense of the moral community of Valencia emerged as people stood up to be counted as being against the horror by writing to newspapers, marching in the streets, or by simply expressing their anger in everyday conversations. Everyone was concerned to show their position regarding the events. Everyone wanted to say how evil the murderers were. Everyone needed to show their position as being a genuine member of the concerned moral community.

However, I also found that many people were also able to talk about the events in quite different ways. Rather than talking about the evil of the murders

and the way that their behaviour had offended all senses of decency, they would talk about sociological causes — at least in the sense that the murderers were from an impoverished, marginalised background, in a society without state support for the long term unemployed, where such people easily become locked into a culture of crime. Yet at other times these people would return to the more moralistic stance. In each case I noticed that the speakers used narrative themes that were very much appropriate for the context. And by being seen to produce these themes they located themselves in a certain way as regards the events.

So in each case they presented a different kind of person depending upon the narrative theme that they chose. In each case they aligned themselves with and against categories of others. In the first case they aligned themselves with the morally decent community of Valencia, and in the second case against a community of those taken along by the hatred and that was thus unable to see the true issues. I realised that in my data gnerally I had been observing this kind of use of narrative themes and presentation of self through evoking an alignment with a temporary category of person. Yet in the case of the murders, one of these temporary candidates for community had moved people powerfully, due to the nature of the events and the way that they had become public.

My problem was then to explain the way that people use narrative themes for the needs of the moment which involves the alignment of the self with different temporary communities of people at different times. I found that the debate about community in the anthropological literature helped me to think about community as being something in the mind rather than as something objective, although the concept had still been tied to particular geographical location or group of people with particular traits. The discussion also revealed that people can evoke themselves as being part of many different kinds of community. Again, however, individual studies tended to focus on one sense of community.

It was here that I realised that my answer could be found in the work of Bruner (1986, 1990) Bruner and Weisser (1991) and Carrithers (1991, 1992, In Press). These scholars discuss the way that narrative thought and the human ability to comprehend stories allow us to collectively negotiate and plan collective life in a particular way. Using their ideas I could offer a perspective on community that would take into account the way that people used many and contradictory senses of community. And by offering a different perspective on community I could offer a useful way of thinking about the way that people 'respond' to the media message and what exactly it is that influences this.

So in the end writing my thesis as a comparison of British and Spanish journalistic practice seemed to lose its centrality in my concerns. I felt that, more importantly, I could offer an approach to the way people relate to the mass media message which might overcome the problem of concrete 'interpretive communities', and which would also contribute to anthropological understanding of the way humans use and maintain concepts of community. The comparative aspect does remain a flavour in the work but more for purposes of clarification and quality of analysis rather than as a central theme.

I will be using examples throughout the thesis from the events surrounding the murder of the three girls from the village of Alcácer, although I will devote a whole chapter to them at the end, since they summarise neatly what I learned about the Spanish Press. The events are both useful and important. Since the press lavished so much energy on them it is possible to see their workings in considerable detail, and due to the way the press coverage became somewhat sensationalistic they show clearly what was ordinary and what was extraordinary in the Valencia press. The events are also important as they show the power of stories to move people and show how a usually fragmented or temporary candidate for community could be brought together, more or less, under certain circumstances.

There is a point I would like to deal with here before I continue. When I have discussed my thesis with people they have often pointed out that it is impossible to consider media effects by considering newspapers alone. People are also influenced, they tell me by the T.V. and the radio. This is a reasonable point. The fact is of course, that people are influenced by all discourse. But I want to stress that my aim here is not to show some clear cut media effects, but to give a sense of the nature of the media/audience relationship and the way that people use its products. I use the example of newspapers for convenience, due to time constraints, and because they allow me to illustrate my point. As will become apparent through my discussion, even if the T.V. was included along with newspapers, we would still only be representing a small proportion of the voices with which each individual interacts.

Methodology

My research in the U.K. involved shadowing journalists working for local newspapers in the North East of England and tape recording interviews with them. I also developed some telephone relationships with some journalists working in London for national newspapers. I would often ring them and ask them about the texts they had written on the previous day. I made contact with journalists by sending letters to virtually anyone who had their name put to their work.

The data I produced during my field work in Valencia are a product both of my research as a white male anthropologist in his mid-twenties, and as an individual living, working in a factory, giving English classes, and socialising in the city. My initial concern when I arrived in Valencia, after finding somewhere to live, was to contact journalists. This proved difficult at first, as it was in my earlier research in the U.K.. I presume that many felt a sense of suspicion at the

interest of an academic who would no doubt only want to accuse them of lying or point out the lack of objectivity in their work. I started the search for respondents, as I had done in the U.K., by writing to any journalists whose texts were credited to them in the newspapers. I was particularly interested in those who wrote about local social or political events or occurrences (*sucesos*) although in the end I spoke with many who wrote on national affairs (*la política*), sport (*deporte*) and cultural events (*cultura y sociadad*).

Over time I realised that my difficulty in finding respondents was my own fault. I had been confronting the journalists with too much in my first attempts at contact. I had even hinted at some of my theoretical concerns, perhaps making the whole thing look like something they could do without. Later I learned to phrase things much more gently and to appear much more naive to give the impression that they would be in control of any interview they might give. Having done some interviews I also developed a mode of discourse which was more recognisable to them. I could tell them what I wanted but in terms that could seem more familiar to them. Similarly, of course, they themselves developed a way of talking for me, translating what they did into a genre of discourse that they felt would be more understandable.

My initial period in Valencia was frustrating as I received few responses to my letters. I changed my tactics and began to write stressing that I was simply interested in aspects of their particular work, saying that I would telephone them later that week. This had more success. I would then ask to meet them — they would usually suggest a meeting in a bar to begin with. Once I had established a few contacts more journalists became keen to speak to me. There had been talk among journalists in Valencia, I was told by an informant, that an English academic was in Valencia and was interested in the work of more quality journalists. I later learned that those who I had chosen felt that it was flattering. Luckily my initial contacts had been with those considered generally in Valencia to be quality journalists, so my work had been perceived to be a study of what

makes quality journalism. Thus after a time I ceased to bother with the letters and directly telephoned any journalist with whom I fancied speaking. At this stage those I rang always said that they had heard about me through a colleague and seemed pleased that I had asked them.

After several months when I would go out with journalists to cover an incident I would often know most of the other journalists present. I feel that it was this being known that allowed me to gain interviews with editors themselves, who were initially impossible to get hold of. I was also helped hugely in this by a the wife of a friend, who it turned out worked for a provincial press cabinet. She knew many of the editors and mentioned that I was interested in speaking with them. This along with my existing notoriety did the trick.

In the end I managed to speak with journalists at all the newspapers that had offices in Valencia. This includes both the local and national newspapers, although my main interest lay with the local newspapers which were the main sellers in the city, and which were most concerned with presenting an image of the city or region as a community.

My research with the journalists involved generally what my supervisor Michael Carrithers would refer to as 'hanging out'. I would spend time with them at their places of work and go with them to incidents. I would take notes when possible although often this would not be practical in which case I would make notes from memory when I returned to my flat. I wanted to develop a sense of how they obtained news and how they considered what was useful to use as news and why. I wanted to find out the way that this was done as regard to audiences.

I also did some recorded interviews with the journalists where I asked them about their work and journalism in general. I asked them to talk about texts they themselves and other journalists had written, and obtained some of the primary information that they used to produce news.

It is in my audience research that my position as a resident in Valencia becomes more important. Much of the talk about news that I use in this thesis was collected from conversations I heard as I went about my daily life. Due to my age and gender this would obviously include some settings and exclude others. Much of the talk which I use as my data was noted down after listening to a conversation in a bar or whilst riding on the underground. I would obviously have less access to more private settings such as people's homes although I did become 'adopted' by the family of a girlfriend.

I did do some formal tape-recorded interviews with many people to generate more specific data about why people read newspapers. These respondents were often people I had come to know to some degree, although some were not. This was important so that I could have some idea of other aspects of their lives in which to contextualise the interviews. I attempted to interview a range of people from different occupational and age groups as well as people who were newcomers to Valencia. Importantly I was concerned with getting a number of people who read different newspapers. The newspapers in Valencia, and Spain generally, all represent some political party generally quite overtly. I wanted to look at the reasons people gave for choosing particular newspapers and ascertain as to whether this was due to any sense of political allegiance.

All these interviews were tape-recorded, often in the homes of respondents, and also in bars. Much of my material was in fact collected from bars. In Spain they are very much the focus of social life, and although few people actually buy newspapers, they will read them in the bar that they frequent, which will have a copy of at least one of the dailies. It is here that they will often comment on or discuss anything which strikes them as interesting in the newspaper.

My position as a white English male university researcher is of course important to the nature of the data I collected. The talk I heard in certain cases, especially in the interviews, would be produced for me in the context of this.

9

Many of the respondents assumed that I was very much an intellectual and assumed that this would involve me having certain cultural baggage with me. For example, it was generally assumed that I would be against such things as consumer culture (*consumerismo*), of which I am a complete addict, current synthetic pop music (*musica de la maquina*), and 'ordinary' people (*gente corriente* or *gente del montón*) who do not seriously question the nature of such things. Respondents were keen to present themselves as seeing through such things and as being contemptuous of the masses who are so stupidly duped by them and who are willing to continue their lives in such an ignorant fashion.

I found it peculiar when I was assumed to have what we associate in the U.K. as middle-class values. Entering education through evening classes and being from a very working-class background, I had always found such values as being no more than part of a self obsessed culture that I had to learn how to emulate if I was to prolong my stay in its territory. So to be spoken to as such a person was at first even quite disorientating. And I was amazed how I was given such dialogue even when I explicitly stated that I had no concern for quality culture or the growing stupefication of society through the mass media. I even often expressed a liking for the irony of society becoming such a place yet still got the same feedback. Perhaps this was dismissed as being part of my intellectual eccentricity or simply was not really heard.

In this research, far from reflexivity being a problem, it is precisely what was of interest to me: how rather than having concrete responses to news people would talk about it in a way that was very much influenced by the setting and the work that the talk could do for them in that setting. By 'work' I mean to say what a piece of talk might accomplish for a person (*cf* Garfinkel 1967).

The effect was somewhat different in some of my data. The group of factory workers that I tape recorded each morning as we ate breakfast, were not aware that I was an anthropologist, or that I was any kind of researcher. They did know that I was English, which as we will see had a certain kind of effect on

the discourse produced for me. Also I should point out that they did not know that I was recording the conversations. I felt badly for doing this, especially since they became good friends of mine. However I wanted to be able to record naturally occurring conversations about news. And the use I make of the material assures complete anonymity. I had been working at the factory for several months before I started making the recordings by which time I had become familiar with each individual and with the dynamics of the group.

The workers were all what we might refer to in the U.K. as manual working-class. Three of them had no contract and thus no job security or holiday pay — subsequently they took no holidays. One of these was a nineteen year-old who lived in a small flat with his partner and their twelve month-old baby. One worker had returned with his wife and children to live with his parents due to financial hardship. Of the other three, one was single and lived in a flat, and the other two lived with their wives and children. Three of them had never left the Province of Valencia in their lives. One was from a village in a neighbouring province and the other had visited Sevilla for the 'Expo' in 1992.

A further aspect of my research involved a review of historical literature of the nature of the Spanish Press. I wanted to find out why the Spanish press was very different to that of most other European countries both in the form of its newspapers and in the way they are read. I also wanted to have some sense of whether there were historical reasons why certain sections of Spanish society, the equivalent of those who form the bulk of the readership in other countries, do not buy newspapers, but read those which are provided by the owners of bars and cafes. This proved to be difficult as no author had directly approached this problem. After much reading and discussion with various members of university faculties in Valencia, however, I was confident that I had a solution to this problem.

The Structure of the Thesis

In chapter one I consider the way that anthropological studies help in our understanding of the way people evoke senses of community. I will locate my arguments in this debate suggesting how the perspective I want to offer helps to understand aspects of the use of community that have proved problematic for researchers. I will make my theoretical position clear and show exactly how this helps to rephrase the nature of the problem. Here I provide some of the theoretical tools that I will use throughout the thesis.

In chapter two I want to show how looking at community in a slightly different way allows us to reconsider the way people interact with the media message and what it is in their lives that might influence this. This provides a response to current concern (Radway 1988, Ang 1990 and Schrøder 1994) that there is still no satisfactory account of the relationship between the media and audiences. I will locate my study into the academic debate and consider points that will be of help in my task. Media studies have covered a lot of ground and provide an invaluable wealth of ideas concerning the production and use of the media message.

In chapter three, having shown how I intend to present community and the media/audience relationship, I will move onto my ethnographic material. It is at this point that I want to start to create a sense of certain features of the Spanish setting where those theoretical arguments are to be located. In this chapter I will provide a background to the Spanish press which I studied. Many of its features, which distinguish it from other European press, and which influence the way it is now used, can only be understood though various historical factors. It is this chapter which helps us to understand why certain people do not buy newspapers but read those supplied in bars and cafes. This will allow us to contextualise the reasons that such people give for their behaviour. I will begin

12

the chapter by explaining these historical factors and then move on to talk about press consumption in Valencia.

In chapter four I will continue setting the scene by looking at some particularly Spanish themes that give a certain flavour to much of the talk that I later present. These themes, such as honour and shame, and distrust of officialdom, give us an insight into some of the social action which we encounter in later chapters.

In chapters five and six I show journalists producing articles for audiences. Chapter five shows how journalists receive events from sources that are able to provide convenient supplies of suitable and easily digestible material, and then transform them into something quite different. In some cases they run events 'cold' straight from news sources, but with others consider how they must place them within certain cultural themes. I will show how they bring in certain themes for a set of events so that future events will be seen by audiences as naturally news-worthy.

Chapter six looks at the writing of one text in detail. It shows the way that many different and contradictory pieces of information can be assembled into one text and shows the way that the way events can be presented depends on the nature of the ongoing discussion about those events.

In chapter seven I look at journalists talking about their work. I consider some of themes through which they talk about their work. They tend to have a favourite explanation for the nature of what they do, but will deviate from this, often contradicting themselves should the need so arise. They will then have no problem returning to the favourite theme when possible.

In chapter eight I look at people talking about news and about newspapers. I show them talking about these in different ways in using different themes that are frequently contradictory. As they produce this talk they continually evoke different categories of people, some of which they are a member and others of which they are not, although this, as with the themes used in the talk, is a

frequently changing and contradictory position. In this chapter we will get a sense of the repertoire of narrative themes that people use to talk about newspapers and news.

In chapter nine I present some of the conversations I recorded of people talking about news whilst having breakfast. Here we see people not producing 'responses' to news articles but talking about them in different ways at different times and in different settings. This talk does not seem to be driven by membership of any concrete community. Speakers have freedom to speak as members of many different, and contradictory groups.

In chapter nine I also want to show the way that people collectively produce an account of an event. Here it is the group which is temporarily evoked as being part of a certain category of people.

In chapter ten I will look at the events surrounding the disappearance and murder of the three girls from Alcácer. I will look at the way they were talked about and reacted towards both in the newspapers and by the people of Valencia. I will consider why, what were not unusual events, became so important to the people of Valencia.

In this chapter I want to put together the points raised in the previous chapters. I will look at the way that journalists use material that they receive from sources on the events and the kind of talk provoked by the texts they produce. I will show that the journalists must have a close sense of the ongoing discussion about the events if they are to produce successful texts. By this I mean texts that the journalists themselves consider will draw readers in. I want to consider the way that it was through the way the events were talked about that a particular temporary sense of community began to move people quite powerfully.

Section one: Reconsidering the concept of community and the media audience relationship

Chapter 1

From communities as concrete and static entities to community as a resource for interpersonal interaction

Introduction

In this chapter I want to locate this study in the field of anthropological studies of community and make my own perspective on the subject clear. I will begin by looking at what we can learn about community from the rich anthropological literature. I will show that collectively this literature shows that people can evoke many senses of community, although in individual works the focus as been on one particular sense of community. There has been a tendency to reify the concept and equate it with what has usually been a particular geographical location. More recent works have argued that community membership must be understood not as something that is objective, but rather as something that is in the mind. These studies take us somewhat closer to our solution. The problem still exists, however, of how to explain the way that people can, in talk, evoke themselves as being part of many different and contradictory communities.

Anthropologists researching community have always used talk as their resource — generally talk about one sense of community. It is the fact that community is something that people evoke in talk that is the very key to understanding why people evoke categories of people, some of which they are a

member and others of which they are not. I will argue, using the ideas of Bruner (1986, 1990), Bruner and Weisser (1991), Carrithers (1991, 1992) In Press, and Garfinkel (1967) that community is a concept that people use in talk to locate themselves in a certain way in relation to events which evokes them as a certain kind of individual. This location is done *ad hoc* and depending upon the kind of self, or 'face', to use Erving Goffman's term, the individual wants to evoke in any one setting. Remember that it is this process, I argue, that holds the key to understanding the way that people produce and use the media message.

Community in anthropology and sociology

Some who write about community write as sociologists and others as anthropologists. Here I will concentrate on the latter. Early anthropological studies and in fact many recent ones have been heavily influenced by 19th century sociologists who, using a range of terminology distinguished between community and society. For example Tönnies' distinction between gesellschaft and gemeinschaft. The basic theme was that the noble stable small-scale community was being destroyed and replaced by the large-scale impersonal diffuseness of mass society. Gusfield, commenting on many of these writers such as Durkheim, Weber, Comte and Spencer, points out that the general argument was that:

> the new world of economic logic, political interest groups, mass
> electorates and exchange-based market relationships could only mean
> the destruction of a stable environment and an authority essential to
> human well-being. They mourned the impending decline of the small
> and static local areas of neighbourhood, kinship and parish. They

saw chaos in the disappearance of a system of ordered and respectful relations between stable classes (1975:5)

This sense of the pristineness and quality of the local community against the atomising vagueness of the larger society has been a constant theme and limitation of much anthropological work (Ennew, 1980:1). The assumption has so often been that communities are, in one form or another, concrete entities which may only be impinged upon or destroyed from outside influences.

This was exactly the attitude in early anthropological studies of community such as by Arensberg and Kimball (1940). They wanted to give an account of the attributes of traditional Irish society. Here community was described by giving an account of the apparent attributes of traditional Irish society. They suggested that it was possible to identify a true Ireland of the small scale village community before it became spoiled by outside influence. Their approach was criticised by Gibbon (1973) and Brody (1973) who argued that they had a romanticised notion of a 'real' Ireland, and disputed whether such a place ever really existed anywhere. Gibbon points out that at the time of their study Ireland had been neither stable nor homogeneous for some time.

In the 50s researchers worked in villages but realised that they needed to look at and describe interference from outside. Rees (1950) and Williams (1956) considered the way that a sense of community was developed from individuals' involvement with tradition. They made an effort to distinguish these people from urban outsiders. Frankenberg (1957) looked at the way sports activities against other villages reinforced community belonging. He considered the roles of 'outsider' and 'stranger'. These people whilst participating to some extent in events would never really enter the realm of the community. These studies show that it is not possible to talk about a community in isolation but point to the way that people in villages are always defining themselves against outsiders.

One of the strengths of Frankenberg's ethnography is that he points out the way that what individuals describe as the Community depends on who they are talking to and why. A person who has lived in the village for 20 years might be included as part of the community in one context but excluded in another, where it might be pointed out that they were not born into the village so therefore their true allegiances lie elsewhere.

Emmett (1964) also emphasised the meaningful role of outsiders for those who want to express a sense of community membership. She looked at the way people in a village in North Wales defined themselves as being Welsh as the antithesis of Englishness particularly in terms of the use of the Welsh language. Community membership was not possible for those without specific kinship links or for those not native to the Welsh language. Emmet continued with Frankenberg's notion that who would be described as being part of the community could change depending on the context.

Some British researchers chose large towns or urban areas for study. Little (1948) got away from the community as being within a particular geographical boundary arguing that community is, "characterised by a common background of experience — the experience of its members in living together and sharing a common social life" (1948:1). He also gave a sense that different communities may cut across each other:

> People who work together at the same tasks meet to exchange ideas and in time these occupational attitudes create social cleavages. The family's integrative role is usurped more and more by sectional interests — unions, lodges, institutions, whose influence and distribution may be even nation-wide (1948:2)

In this case we are offered a sense of the way community may not be related to any concrete boundary, either geographical or based on kinship, but

that it is something people may get a sense of due to shared experiences. It also touches on the importance of considering the sense of community as an ethnic, religious, linguistic or other interest group.

Elias and Scotson (1965), argued, in contrast, that it was place or 'residential unit' that defines community, irrespective of shared experiences. They described a core of old residents in the suburb of Winston Parva that felt threatened by newcomers, despite the fact that many obviously had more similar life experiences to those incomers, rather than other long term residents.

Stacey (1960) in *A study of Banbury* also suggested that shared experiences lead to community. She argued that Banbury did not qualify as a community as the inhabitants were involved in complex ties with other towns and because a large proportion of them were newcomers. They thus had no real sense of shared experience to give them a sense of community. They also lacked any single geographical focus for that community.

Littlejohn (1963), suggests that it may not be the case that towns do not permit senses of community. In his study of Westrigg he also found that the majority of the population were newcomers yet he suggested that new senses of community had developed based on such things as social class. He argued that the earlier assumptions about the differences between the urban and the rural had been over-stressed. He rejected the notion that community was to be found in rural traditional life defending itself against the adverse influences of urbanites. He allowed room for change and the continual influence of newcomers.

Dramer (1974) examined a housing estate in Glasgow with a view to explaining why it had a terrible reputation as being particularly rough and squalid despite the fact that it didn't seem so different from other housing estates. He suggests that the answer lay in the fact that the people living on the estate had received certain privileges from the local council, which were felt to be more deserved by other more established areas. Also during the Depression in the

1930s, which was a period of boundary crisis, there was much scapegoating of the already disliked residents of the new estate, allowing people to re-assert the boundaries of their own community. Dramer observes that inhabitants of the new estate largely rejected the label often expressing this strongly through local newspapers.

Here Dramer usefully suggests that community is not so much something concrete but that it is open to negotiation and that it can be something which may mean different things to different people. Community may also not depend on geographical boundaries or on shared experiences but purely on the need to create self esteem. Dramer also presents a view of an urban setting alive with senses of community, but being free from the bonds of the rural/urban dichotomy he does not need to look for the pristine or traditional community.

Some of the studies in the 80s, Byron (1980) and Forsythe (1980), strongly emphasised the way that community membership was open to negotiation hinted at by Dramer. Studying rural areas, they moved away from the notion of the pristine community and described the way that incomers and older residents influenced each other. These studies suggested that community is far from something concrete or stable and suggested that newcomers had a role very different to being no more than that against which a true community defined itself. Here community members were ever changing and status was negotiable.

During the 80s the idea of community being something less concrete and of membership being something negotiated rather than given became more popular. Strathern (1981) in her study of Elmdon showed that 'village' could be considered as a metaphor which was understood differently by different people. What comprised the village, and who could be considered a member of it, was thus flexible and depended often on the considerations people had in mind at the time. In Strathern's view then we must see community, at least in the sense of a village, not as a concrete entity or people with shared experiences, but as a concept that people will use according to their own needs.

Cohen (1986, 1987) developed this notion, leaving behind his previous suggestions (Cohen, 1982), where he followed Barth (1969), that people become aware of their culture when they stand at its boundary. In his later work he describes community as a 'masking symbol' which is multi-referential. Community is a symbol in which individuals are able to invest their own meaning. He argues that, "people may hold the form of a symbol in common, while investing it with different meanings [...] exponents may be unaware of the strikingly different meanings which it has for each other" (1986:2)

In his ethnography on the Shetland Islands Cohen explains that the inhabitants of Whalsey used common terms for talking about community although they plainly understood them in very different ways. Community is thus a symbol

> to which its various adherents impute their own meanings. They can
> all use the word, all express their co-membership of the 'same'
> community, yet all assimilate it to the idiosyncrasies of their own
> experiences and personalities (1986:13)

Cohen also makes the useful observation that any talk of a homogeneous community may only be produced for outsiders. The same he suggests would go for any community. This is precisely the point I would like to make for community: that senses of it are produced in talk for individuals' practical purposes.

Other writers contributing to the editions edited by Cohen (1982, 1986) showed the flexibility and symbolic nature of community. Young (1986) showed the way that two different residents' groups used the same notion of community for political ends when fighting over whether the expansion of a local factory should be given the go ahead. Both the group for, and the group against, claimed to represent the interests of the traditional culture and heritage

of the area. Rapport (1986) describes the habitual and formularised discussion between two people, where despite having shared"experiencial particles" (p48), such as the farm where one of them lives, these particles are connected to the world in quite different ways, or are "housed in different symbolic contexts" (p48). Thus, "they achieve a social consensus which consists in part of ambiguity" (p49). Similarly Bouquet (1986) described the way that family could mean very different things for different people even though this would not prevent people from using the concept as if there were a consensual agreement over its meaning.

Kohn (1988), however, whilst accepting the importance of the points made in these studies, criticises them for making the study of community very much the study of a particular location. She argues that, "the use of the term 'community' remains problematic as long as its definition and description are solidly linked to a geographically or genealogically circumscribed locality" (1988:13). She cites the comments of Gusfield (1975) who puts the point well:

> 'Community' and 'society' do not describe any known, actually existing society nor any of historical existence. They are *analytical* and not *empirical* terms; concepts invented to help the analyst think about and talk about change and human associations. As such they are products of human imagination and not descriptions of a real world (1975:11)

Kohn, in her study of Coll in the Inner Hebrides, emphasises the way that community membership is something in the mind. She found that people who lived in Glasgow felt and were considered community members. Also newcomers and even tourists who returned often to the island became connected to the community in various ways. She thus preserves the sense of community being a masking symbol but avoids connecting it to a specific place or

specifically connected group of people. However, she does not take this to its logical conclusion and herself studies one sense of community membership.

What the debate about community in anthropology suggests is that we must consider community not as being related to any particular place but as a sense of membership that is in the minds of people. People may consider that they are part of any community irrespective of their geographical or other relationship to it. Studies also show that people may talk about their membership to different kinds of communities For example, Little and Elias and Scotson respectively looked at community in terms of shared experiences or of geographical location. Each tended to reify community in a different sense.

My problem is to account exactly for the way that people will evoke themselves as being members of different communities in different contexts. How is it that in one context a person will be concerned to evoke themselves as a member of say Spain, for example, and in a different context as being against that community and as a member of the community of Valencia. It is exactly this phenomenon that was discussed by Evans-Pritchard in The Nuer (1940). He showed the way that people may behave in a contradictory manner depending on the sense of community with which they aligned themselves at any particular time. The point is made in his description of the Nuer segmentary political system:

> One value attaches a man to his group and another to a segment of it,
> and the value which controls his action is a function of the social
> situation in which he finds himself (1940)

He himself did not develop the implications of this for the notion of culture, and his work on the Nuer was treated not as a discussion of community but of politics. What he shows though is the way that people continually align themselves in different ways as regards others which will influence the kind of

talk and behaviour that they produce. In conversation people evoke themselves as being aligned in particular ways as regards others and as regards events which allows them to evoke to others a certain kind of self.

Community and stories

I now want to look at some of the ideas of Bruner and Weisser (1991) about the use of autobiography for the navigation of self and of Bruner (1986, 1990) and Carrithers (1991, 1992, In Press) regarding the importance of the human ability to comprehend and tell stories for the comprehension of lives and the management of collective social life. Using these ideas, I want to suggest, we can get a clearer grasp of what is in fact going on when people continually evoke themselves as being part of different and contradictory communities. I will also look at some of the points made by Garfinkel (1967) which have had a strong influence on both Bruner and Carrithers and which have been introduced to anthropology largely by Watson (1991). It is the theoretical ideas that I now want to unpack that provide the analytical tools that I will be using throughout the thesis.

Community and the navigation of self

Bruner and Weisser (1991) discuss the way people use autobiography or self-accounting to navigate a sense for themselves and others of how and where they stand as individuals. This is, they argue, an ongoing process of continual re-tellings about the self, which will be done less explicitly through the way we talk about events, which will change depending on the needs of the moment. It

is what Eakin (1985) calls the 'Art of Self-Invention'. Bruner and Weisser argue that:

> The ultimate function of autobiography is self-location, the
> outcome of a navigational act that fixes position in a virtual rather
> than real sense. Through autobiography, we locate ourselves in the
> symbolic world of culture. Through it, we identify with a family, a
> community, and indirectly with the broader culture. It is the only way
> we have of relating to our conspecifics after we come out from under
> the shield of infantile mechanisms that allow us our prolonged human
> immaturity. But at the same time that our autobiographical acts locate
> us culturally, they also serve to individuate us [...]. If the 'inside'
> complexity of autobiography is given by the disjunction between self
> as narrator and self as subject, the 'outside' complexity is assured by
> this Janus-like requirement of declaring both cultural allegiance and
> independence in the act of autobiography (1991:133)

For them this navigation through self accounting is a fundamental way that we know ourselves and the relationship of that self to our cultural worlds. They argue that:

> Mind is formed to an astonishing degree by the act of inventing
> self, for in the prolonged and repetitive acts of self-invention, we
> define the world, the scope of our agency with respect of it, and the
> nature of the epistemology that governs how the self shall know the
> world and indeed, know itself reflexively (1991: 145-146)

What I want argue that these points can take us one step nearer to understanding the way speakers evoke senses of community. Evoking oneself as

being part of a particular community is part of this very process of navigation and location of self. As a person evokes themselves as a part of a community they evoke a sense to others of a particular kind of person. Those who are members of certain communities will be attributed with certain characteristics and be perceived to live out certain kinds of experiences. In short certain kinds of cultural actors are involved in certain kinds of plots. Talk about the collectivity of Spain or of Valencia involves using certain culturally shared themes or stories which contain certain generic characters in certain plots. The individual who evokes themselves as being part of one of these communities imagines that those listening will imagine the kind of character and plot that they have in mind and how these will work for those listeners. To make this clearer I will offer more details about Bruner's general notions about human sociality.

Bruner's (1986, 1990) view is that culture itself is an ongoing process of the exchange of stories where individuals use cultural themes in a struggle to assert selves and what they desire for those selves. And it is through stories or the 'narrative mode of understanding' that people largely understand their lives. I will explain exactly what he means by this along with the ideas of Carrithers (1991, 1992, In Press), which together offer a theory of human sociality which will allow us to take a few more steps in our understanding of the talk these speakers are producing about news and the way they use community.

Narrativity

Following Bruner (1986, 1990) and Carrithers (1991,1992, In Press) I presume that humans grasp the flow of social events, the sense of themselves and others through what Bruner terms 'the narrative mode of understanding'. This refers to our ability to create, understand and share stories. This sharing of stories, Carrithers argues,

is a particularly powerful form of interactive planning for in
fashioning an account of what has been happening, we lay down the
background against which future mutual action may sensibly unfold. (In
Press:1)

The narrative mode of understanding or narrative thought is the way
human beings conceive of themselves and others as characters in past and future
action in the overall plot of their lives. We creatively remember past stories and
selves and project them into futures by running simulations (Harris, 1991).

The narrative mode involves what Bruner describes as two landscapes, or
what Carrithers refers to as 'terms of art' which are 'character' and 'plot'.
Character involves what those in the action know, feel and their attitudes and
intentions. Plot involves the character in an unfolding flow of action. Carrithers
argues that:

Plots embody what a character or characters did to, or about, or with
some other character or characters, for what reasons, how peoples'
attitudes, beliefs and intentions thereby changed, and what followed on
from that (In Press:3)

Character must be thought of as a very broad concept as it has to cover the
range from generic characters, such as fathers and how they behave, to the
particular, how a specific father will behave with all his personal traits.

The narrative mode of thinking is to be contrasted with the 'paradigmatic'
mode (associated with scientific modes of thinking) which is to do with
systematic logical thinking where truth is of importance. The narrative mode is
concerned more with a 'good story' and does not need to be testable in the same
way. Carrithers (1992, In Press) demonstrates the difference between the two

using two accounts given to him by Indian Jains (Mr P. and Mr S.) regarding what Jainism is basically about. The first account, by Mr P. ('for philosopher'), characteristic of paradigmatic thought, was formal and involved explicit reasoning. This account demonstrated the Jains' process of reasoning offering a number of propositions about the world. This involved 'X leads to Y' type reasoning, for example: causing pain to other beings defiles our soul which leads to a cycle of painful rebirth.

Mr P's discourse is contrasted to narrative thought as in his account there is no flow of action, no characters and no plots. It was general and made up of clear propositions. Mr S (for 'story')'s discourse, in contrast, was a short story about a bull who stood on the hand of a man. The man did nothing to move the bull from its position. Eventually the bull's owner returned and struck it to make it move. Rather than being relieved the man said to not beat the bull as it did not understand.

Here we have two accounts of part of what it means to be a Jain. But Mr S's story does it without being explicit and by dealing in specifics rather than generalities. Both wanted to tell of Jainism's commitment not to cause suffering. Mr P did this by going through a list of laws explaining that avoidance of A leads to B. Mr S's story however offered a moving story of how a person suffering extensive pain still refused to cause the suffering of another creature. It gives a sense of the attitudes and states of mind of its characters. The use of story of narrative to explain Jainism leads Carrithers to suggest that:

> narrative thought is, for some purposes, superior to paradigmatic thought. For paradigmatic thought, I suggest, cannot so easily be applied to one's own actual life; it is less persuasive, less vivid, and less informative. In practice, story is easier to use, conveys more and does so more effectively. Narratives have a capacity to move people and, in so doing, to make things happen (Carrithers, In Press:7)

The paradigmatic mode leaves us cold so to speak. We are not drawn in. We are naturally drawn towards stories and the relationship between character and plot. Theorists such as Dennet (1984,1987) have argued that the paradigmatic mode is in fact incompatible with the practical concerns or everyday life. We are simply not designed, in his view, to go around being rational and logical all the time. Such a thing would have been an evolutionary disadvantage. Let us look at how it came to be that narrative became such an important way of organising knowledge. Why do we understand ourselves through stories?

Why Narrative?

Lets consider an environment where considering character in a flow of action may have become advantageous and also mention more evidence for the human predisposition for narrative.

Whiten and Perners' (1990) discussion of the development of the ability to imagine 'other' and the development of higher order intentionality suggests the way a temporal space or flow of action with a past, present and future, may have opened up from the essentially here and now world of the early social primates. They argue that any social primate:

> who has a sophisticated knowledge of the individual
>
> characteristics and propensities of others in the group and the network
>
> of social relationships existing between them; a flexible capacity to
>
> perform co-operative alliances with some, so outmanoeuvring others
>
> in competition for resources and a considerable repertoire of tactics

30

for social manipulation ranging from deception to reciprocal helping (will have a selective advantage over others) (1990:3. my brackets)

So individuals of a species who are best able to predict others' intentions will be most able to manipulate social and natural situations. This will give them a selective advantage. Groups where individuals manipulate each other for the good of the group as well as for their own benefit would have a further advantage. Lewin (1988) argues that it is such a sensitivity to others that in higher primates becomes the criterion for natural selection. It is this imagining of others into a flow of action which ultimately allows us to make more complex social forms.

Humphrey (1982) argues that consciousness itself developed as part of this evolutionary selective process. As our forbears left the forest and their hand-to-mouth existence to seek out their new life on the African savannah:

They sought it with stone tools, they sought it with fire; they pursued it with forks and hope. But above all, they sought it through the company of others of their kind. For it was membership of a co-operative social group which made the life of hunting and gathering on the plains a viable alternative to what had gone on before. Life from now on was to be founded on collaboration (1982:476)

Humphrey argued that the ability to create a picture of the inner reasons for our own behaviour and the ability to project those onto the behaviour of others would provide a powerful predictive model of their behaviour more so than purely by observing their overt behaviour. Humphrey suggests that "this kind of imaginative projection gives [...] an explanatory scheme of remarkable generality and power" (1982:477).

31

So consciousness as the ability to reflect on one's own behaviour and to get inside the heads of others itself became a selective advantage. But what about stories? How is it that we came to do this through stories?

It is this consciousness and awareness of other that allows us to open up the temporal gap to imagine a past and future. Harris (1991) argues that when imagining what someone else is imagining or imagining if that person knows what we are thinking, we do it, "by running a simulation" (1991:299). That is we imagine ourselves into a flow of action. We consider whether that person knows what our intentions may be and we imagine how we may be able to persuade them that we are acting through intentions different than those that we in fact have. This imagining takes the form of a simulation of a possible plot with a possible outcome. Thus a temporal space opens up.

Carrithers argues that in contrast to this, early social primates inhabited a world

> where the evidence on which their calculations are based is ephemeral, ambiguous and likely to change, not least as a consequence of their own actions(1991:309)

He comments that:

> This is not [...] a world without time but one where temporal horizons are very close and which does not, at least so far as the social primates are concerned, suffer the burden of a laboriously planned future or a long remembered past (1991:307)

So it was the selective advantage given by other and self-awareness that lead to social primates imagining characters in ongoing action — the narrative mode of thinking.

Researchers have suggested that human infants are born with a propensity for awareness of other and thus for narrative understanding. Trevarthen and Logotheti argue that at birth the infant has

> a dual self and other organisation in its mind ready for contact
> with the expressed feelings of a real partner (Trevarthen and
> Logotheti, 1989:66-7)

The new-born will mimic and connect emotions with events. In subsequent development, these tendencies give rise to responses that are guided by the style of caregivers. Bruner has pointed out that in contrast to Piagetan thinking where infants remain egocentred for about their first seven years, they in fact rapidly show consciousness of other minds and intentions. He describes the way that infants look for things that carers point at. The infant, if unable to identify the point of reference will look back to the referrer for cues. This can usually be done by about 1 year of age. Bruner also points to the ease with which infants pick up linguistic expressions such as diectic shifters, for example, a child knows that the pronouns such as 'I' and 'you' refer to different people at different times.

Bruner argues that infants are thus predisposed to experience self and other as they relate internally and externally to the flow of events. They are predisposed to narrative thinking. Bruner points out that as children we come to

> produce and comprehend stories, are comforted and alarmed by
> them, long before they are capable of handling the most fundamental
> Piagetan logical propositions that can be put in linguistic form
> (1990:80)

As children we quickly realise the importance of being able to tell stories about our actions. We realise that our actions are not only judged in their own right but by how we are able to tell about them.

As children we soon recognise that our actions can be made acceptable by telling them into an acceptable canonical form . This takes us to another point in the nature of narrativity: canonical forms. Bruner argues that:

> Narrating becomes not only an expository act but a rhetorical one. To narrate in a way that puts your case convincingly requires not only language but a mastery of the canonical forms, for one must make one's actions seem an extension of the canonical, transformed by mitigating circumstances (1990:87)

Bruner argues that children quickly come to know canonical forms. An experiment carried out by J. Lucariello shows how children were always ready to attempt to interpret non-canonical events into canonical forms. Lucariello read children stories about a birthday party. Some of the stories were canonical. In other stories the birthday girl threw water over the candles instead of blowing them out. Children tried to explain the non-canonical stories by saying that the girl was unhappy as she had no dress to wear or that she had quarrelled with her mother. They saw it as pointless and even stupid to add any explanation to the canonical stories. The point is that children quickly get a grasp on just what are the canonical forms. Bruner argues that:

> Four-year-olds may not know much about the culture, but they know what's canonical and are eager to provide a tale to account for what is not (1990:82-83)

So children soon realise the value of being able to put their own behaviour into a canonical form. They realise that this often allows our behaviour to seem acceptable to others. They soon start to compete to give particular narrative interpretations about actions and events.

The Cultural System of Interpretation

Let me now say what it is that constitutes these canonical forms — the cultural system of interpretation for which narrative is the organising principle. Bruner (1990) argues that

> the very shape of our lives — the rough and perpetually
> changing draft of our biography that we carry in our minds — is
> understandable to ourselves and to others only by virtue of [...]
> cultural systems of interpretation (1990:33)

This cultural system of interpretation informs us about what we are ourselves, of just how reality hangs together. It is the socially available knowledge through which we creatively construct our narratives. Bruner argues that:

> All cultures have as one of their most powerful constitutive
> instruments a folk psychology, a set of more or less connected, more
> or less normative descriptions about how human beings 'tick', what
> our own and other minds are like and what one can expect situated
> action to be like, and what are the possible modes of life, how one
> commits oneself to them and so on. [It is] a system by which people

organise their experience in , knowledge about, and transactions with the social world (Bruner, 1990:35)

It is the flexibility or 'more or less' of this knowledge which is of crucial importance. What Bruner wants to stress is that we have an available cultural system of interpretation with which we are able to improvise in settings. Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' offers a useful definition of this system and the way it is available for that improvisation. Habitus is

the installed generative principle of regulated improvisations. [This] produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation [and importantly] as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus (1977:78)

So humans' shared practical knowledge is formed of 'regulated improvisations' which tend to reproduce what already is, which will involve supporting institutional and normative knowledge, but is of a nature that it can be used creatively according to the task at hand although this creativity itself will be largely defined by the habitus.

The kind of system of knowledge I have in mind is distinct from that posited by the cognitive school in psychology (e.g., Schank and Abelson 1977, Mandler 1984). This view created an image of humans as cultural robots. They were concerned to provide a description of the cognitive models or schemata through which we organise and understand the world and our experiences. All human thinking and action was described as being organised by its own cultural model. Mandler's ambition was to describe exactly how different schemata or

models which motivated various bits of our behaviour were hierarchically and structurally interrelated. The view I am offering here and which was of fundamental concern to Bourdieu, suggests that the idea of models must be balanced against that of setting. That is the actual action which is going on in any setting must be seen to have a great influence in its own right. The important point here is that humans act primarily towards others rather than to the system of knowledge to which they share, although this system of knowledge will provide available regulated improvisations for these interactions.

This system of interpretation or habitus, Bourdieu argues, will not simply be seen by its users and creators as a system of interpretation but rather as objective knowledge:

> One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a common-sense world endowed with the objectivity secured by the consensus on the meaning (sens) of practices and the world, in other words the harmonisation of agents' experiences and the continuous reinforcement that each of them receives from the expression, individual or collective [...] imposed or programmed [...] of similar or identical experiences (1977:80)

Let us consider this in the context of our social primates who had a selective advantage by collectively working together to manage their environment. This shared knowledge about how the world objectively is, this 'harmonisation' of our experiences, would have given a basis for that working and understanding together. Lets put it another way. We have, say, an early human society. Individuals are able, through a sophisticated awareness of other, and an ability to deal with higher order intentions, to manipulate each other in order to collectively manage their environment giving them a selective advantage. If these humans had some kind of system of shared meanings about

37

the world about what minds are like, about what one can expect of situated action and just what are the possible modes of life they would have a further advantage. New members emerging into that society would enter into these meanings allowing the society some stability in its form of sociality whilst still permitting adjustment to the objective demands of the situation.

Using the vocabulary of the theoretical arguments we have considered, we can say that the speaker who produces a narrative which evokes themselves as being a member of a particular community, is, with a sophisticated awareness of other, using certain canonical forms which she knows are mutually shared by the others, to manipulate those others in the business of interpersonal interaction. By successfully being able to provide a narrative which will be accepted by others, this person can negotiate their standing in relation to those others. As they do this narrating they continually align themselves in relation to events and to categories of people. They evoke themselves into, or in relation to, the flow of events. The way the talk works for them, in terms of the of the way they are able to evoke different senses of self, is what Bruner and Weisser describe as 'the navigation of self'.

I should point out here that I do not want to portray this process to have a highly manipulative or Machiavellian flavour where the self-conscious actor controls the presentation of self. The image I want to portray is not one of deliberate and strategic calculation but rather one of people producing instantaneous reactions, where as Bruner and Weisser suggests, people continually improvise their auto-biographies.

But how is it that a speaker can use contradictory narratives to talk about the same event in different contexts or even in successive slices of talk? How is it that at one moment they can produce one narrative which evokes them as being a member of one community and them at the next moment produce a different quite contradictory narrative which evokes them as a member of a community with interests that contradict those of the first community they

evoked? Well from our discussion so far we can say that both narrations allow them to evoke senses of self. Bruner and Weisser emphasised the way that individuals produce ever changing locations of self depending upon the their needs in each context. But why is it that the contradiction is not important?

It is here that Garfinkel's (1967) descriptions of '*indexicality*' and '*ad hocing*' are particularly useful. Indexicality refers to the way that the meaning of all utterances can be understood only in the context that they are made. Knowledge is used creatively in contexts. And a speaker will use knowledge *ad hoc* to deal with the context as needs arise. Here we get a sense of how avoiding contradictions is not so important as is the practical necessity of providing accounts. Watson (1991), a writer bringing Garfinkel's ideas to consider methodological problems in anthropology, argues that:

> People routinely produce what for practical purposes count as definitive accounts and sustainable generalisations. Being less concerned with first principles than with the practical matters at hand, people produce accounts that, although inevitably flawed, are good enough to be getting on with (1991:77)

There is a further point that helps us to understand why contradictions are not so important. This also gives us sense of how narratives work in the business of interpersonal interaction. Garfinkel, in his analyses of conversations, emphasised the way that it is not always the actual topic of the talk that is so important for the interlocutors. The topic may often be better described as a vehicle for other intentions. Heritage describes Garfinkel's approach to conversation:

Characteristically, utterances were not treated 'literally' or at 'face value' but were understood by reference to unspoken assumptions and presuppositions that each party attributed to the other (1984:94)

So listeners will hear discourse not just in terms of its face value but, using Garfinkel's vocabulary, in terms of the work the speaker intends to do with that discourse. A response to that discourse may thus not be concerned with dealing with that face value but with the assumptions which its production suggests to them.

We can now say that our speaker is producing narratives about an event to evoke themselves as a certain kind of actor as they compete and co-operate with others in the business of social interaction. As they do this they will use cultural narrative themes *ad hoc* for practical purposes. Listeners will not always be so concerned with the literal meaning of what that speaker says but rather with the work intended by it, although as Carrithers(1992) points out, this is frequently not such a smooth process. Social interaction, as we know, is not free of misunderstandings. And as the articles in the Cohen (1986) volume demonstrate, to use Rapport's words, people tend to "achieve a social consenus which consists in part of ambiguity" (1986:49).

Let me now articulate what I have argued in the context of our problem of considering the way people use and senses of community. I suggested that the problem was to explain the way that people evoke many different temporary categories of people in talk. Sometimes they are themselves members of these categories and at other times they are not. They may evoke themselves as a member of one community, and in a subsequent piece of talk evoke themselves as being aligned against that community. What we can now say is that people are involved in an ongoing exchange of stories about how the world works and what the people in it are like, and that it is through the way that we use these stories that we can navigate a sense of self. When an individual offers someone

a narrative account of an event in order to do a particular kind of work on that person in the business of interpersonal interaction the individual will imagine that the person will be aware of the kind of person who might offer such a narrative interpretation. Also as the individual produces the narrative they will align themselves in relation to those events either implicitly or explicitly. Community is thus a resource for the navigation of self and is used either implicitly or explicitly in settings to evoke a self that is of a certain nature. It is not important for practical purposes if the individual contradicts themselves at different times. Those to whom the community is addressed may attend primarily, not to the face value of the utterance, but to the work the speaker intends to do with it.

In this thesis I want to show people using narratives to evoke certain selves in particular settings and show the part that the media plays in this. I now want to use the points I have developed to consider research into the media/audience relationship, where I suggest a different way at looking at the way that people use the media message and what it is in their lives that influences this.

Chapter 2

Relationship between media and audience

Introduction

Researching the nature of the media message and its effects on audiences has proved to be a difficult and complex task to say the least. Many invaluable developments have been made although recent researchers (Radway 1986, Ang 1990, Schrøder 1994, Chaney In Press) have argued that there has still been no satisfactory account given of how exactly people deal with the media message. In this chapter I want to consider some of the important contributions that have been made and show exactly the nature of the problems to which these scholars point. I will suggest how the perspective I want to offer may offer a useful way of thinking about these problems.

In the previous chapter I suggested that it is useful to think about community and the themes that people use in talk not as something concrete and static but as resources for the navigation of self in the business of interpersonal interaction. Here I want to argue that the same points may help us to think about some of the problems confronted in media research.

Atomised society and the vulnerable audience

Early work on the mass media argued that with the demise of traditional society people would be without a sense of community and would thus have no sense of reference or location. They would thus be open to any kind of suggestion.

In the pre-war period the general idea seemed to be that the mass media exercised a powerful influence over audiences. After the perceived effectiveness of propaganda in the 1st World War and events in Germany in the period leading up to the 2nd World War, the view, as elaborated by the Frankfurt School, was that due to the loosening of traditional community structures and ties people had become atomised and thus susceptible to the messages of the growing mass media which would thus provide the only point of reference. In this view, referred to as the *hypodermic* model, as Curran *et al* (1982) point out, "The media propelled 'word bullets' that penetrated deep into its inert and passive victims". (1982:12)

D.Barrat (1986) discusses various manifestations of this assumption in government policy of the 1950s where American children's' comics were banned in the UK due to the belief that they would corrupt morally. Various interest groups campaigned for them to be taken from shelves before Superman led children to believe that only strong men could solve problems and that all foreigners were baddies. No credit was given to the readers to see the stories as fantasy.

Although academic research has since moved away from the hypodermic model it is, as Barrat points out, far from dead:

> Although it has been decisively criticised by many media
> researchers, it still lives on as a common sense theory [...] and underpins

43

the activity of moral campaigners who seek to censor the output of the mass media for the 'benefit' of their audiences.(1986:20)

Recent talk about 'video nasties' has had this flavour to it. Each time there is a particular case of violence in society the usual questions are rolled out.

Active audience in communities and a pleasing media

American researchers at the end of the 40s were not satisfied with the view of a direct and unmediated impact by the media. They argued that the nature of the complexity of effects needed to be researched. Merton (1946) talked about the way the emphasis had so far been on the media message itself. The effects, he argued, thus had to be inferred by those concerned with their malevolent influence. He still emphasised the message as being an important focus for investigation but stressed the necessity to investigate the way in which it was received. Morley (1980) suggests that this "opened the road to an almost exclusive pre-occupation with receivers and reception situations" (1980:4)

Merely a glance at the titles of the volumes that came out in this trend gives a clear idea of where their sentiments lay, for example, Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1944) *The Peoples Choice* and Katz and Lazarsfeld (1956) *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in The Flow of Mass Communication.* This trend of research is generally referred to as the *uses and gratifications* approach. These works strongly rejected the conventional view of the all powerful media. They argued that people are more generally influenced by people around them and that they use the media in accordance with pre-existing dispositions, opinions, values. The Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1944) study looked at the way voting behaviour was influenced by the media. They concluded that only a few changed their views because of the media. Messages

were described as generally reinforcing those which people already had. The Katz and Lazarsfeld (1956) study looked at the influence of the media on women concerning various issues — political and consumer. Again they concluded that personal influence was the most important. Trenaman and McQuail (1961) made the same conclusions when looking at the influence of a British general election campaign.

All these studies were based on showing audience members media material and then looking for changes in opinions or 'effects'. Whatever the methodological problems with this many were only to pleased with the conclusions. Many media professionals today still cite such models when criticised about the content of their work. Barrat (1986) suggests that the response to such studies was that "The American ideal of democracy seemed safe" (1986:31)

The view was that society was not in fact comprised of isolated and atomised individuals but of communities, sub-groups of people living within a rich network of personal ties. These influences would act as a shield to direct media influence. Also, as Curran et al (1982) point out, cognitive dissonance theory at the time also helped suggest that people would look for things compatible with their beliefs and avoid or ignore contradictory influences.

There were also functionalist studies around the same period which followed the same 'uses' emphasis, for example, Riley and Riley (1959) and Wright (1960). They were concerned with the functions of the media for society and its members. The media functioned to disseminate views in pluralist democracy and had to provide its function of being a form of entertainment in accordance with what people want if it was to survive. If people had no uses for the media — if it didn't appeal to their tastes — then it could have no effects.

Throughout the 60s research continued to look for direct effects through laboratory based studies. Bandura (1961), Berkowitz (1962) studied responses to violent and non-violent films by examining blood pressure and social

behaviour after exposure. They concluded, although with some caution, that violent films did indeed have an effect on audiences. As Barrat (1986) suggests, these studies had a quality of 'scientific respectability' (p24) but they were, like the 'uses' and functionalist studies, criticised for simplifying and narrowly defining the nature of 'effects'.

In these studies the media lost its all powerful influence as researchers emphasised that people would have their own uses for them and that if the message was not what the audience wanted they would not be interested in it. These are important points. Many newspapers and television programmes disappear due to lack of commercial success. Also in this discussion people are no longer without a sense of community but are located in smaller networks of personal ties.

Telling the audience what is important to think about and how to think about it.

Criticisms of the uses and gratifications approach came from Marxists and neo-Marxists throughout the 70s. The 'uses' studies had assumed that effects were of a direct nature; that they could be studied as a stimulus-response phenomenon — for example, that if someone appeared not to have changed their voting behaviour after watching political broadcasts it is safe to say that media messages do not control what people think in any way as they use them selectively and in the context of their own opinions. Such assumptions ruled out long term effects.

Many studies in the 70s questioned this view of media effects by showing the way that the media provides a certain ideological view of the world. This view dominates public information about the general nature of how the social world hangs together and just what the consensus view is — those views which

constituted the dominant culture. Most Marxists in Britain looked at the de-legitimization of outsiders and legitimization of state force: Cohen (1973) Murdock (1973), Hall (1974) and Chibnall (1977) examined the way the media looked for evil-doers whose traits would be exaggerated and contrasted with those of 'respectable citizens' or 'bobbies'.

The Glasgow University Media Group (1976) looked at 'agenda setting' and the way the media controls what we see and what we don't see. It thus controls what we should worry about and how. For example, they showed the way that strikes were always treated as a threat to national interest or as disrupting daily life. The media, they argued, never raised the underlying problems which made the situation what it was. Likewise, Golding and Middleton (1982) studied agenda setting in the panic created about 'scroungers'. They examined the way that those who 'cheat' welfare benefits are portrayed a one of the major enemies of the national good and of the ordinary person.

The emphasis in these studies went back on the nature of the message itself. This message was seen as creating or favouring a certain ideological environment. Effects could thus be something extremely obvious but difficult to pin down through the stimulus-response type methodology of the 'uses' and laboratory studies

The Marxists also went on to study the way the institutional structures of news producing bodies and their relationship to the socio-political environment (Bell, 1991. Curran, 1980. Gurevitch and Blumler, 1977) influence the nature of what is news. They also looked at professional ideologies and work practices (Fishman, 1988, Gans, 1980. Tuchman, 1978). These studies showed that what becomes news for audiences is a long way from the idea of what news should be as offered by liberal enlightenment views. Here news was the result of journalists working for politically motivated employers in a context where due to time and financial constraints they will rely on agencies, who will themselves be part of multinational organisations, and institutional sources who will always be

looking to present a good public face. Again the emphasis is more on long term kinds of effects which are more difficult to pin down. In these studies, the media offers a dominant ideology view of the world. This is not offered as a political stance only as simply how reality is. I will be looking in more detail at some of these studies later on.

Some of the Marxists moved away from the traditional emphasis of looking at the way external social and economic factors determined ideology, drawing on structuralists and semioticians such as Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Barthes, the symbolic interactionism of Goffman and some contemporary psychoanalytic theory. Reflecting Althussarian ideas these studies (Williamson 1978, Myers 1988) looked at the material existence of ideology and the way it influences people by being part of the everyday and the ordinary rather than something imposed from above. They looked at media-signifying messages in advertising, for example, the way products are associated with personality traits — a perfume with independence, a pair of jeans with masculinity. In this way people are encouraged to find themselves, happiness and fulfilment, through consumption. The dominant ideology is thus maintained by being attached to the everyday, through that with which people come to think of themselves.

The Marxists thus aimed to show the limitations of the no-effects 'uses' model. They argued that we cannot simply take it for granted that there are no media effects simply because audience members will choose what they want to expose themselves to and will be protected by the values of family and other ties. Effects may be more subtle and may be unmeasurable by cause and effect experimentation.

Curran *et al* (1982) however, argue that the two views were not necessarily inconsistent. The uses approach was designed to challenge the hypodermic model and thus tended to focus on the way that media messages were not simply absorbed by audiences. Similarly Marxists were talking about the dispositions of audiences. For example, Marcuse (1972) argued that the media

48

does not do all the indoctrination and that people interacted with the mass media as preconditioned receptacles.

What the two approaches also have in common is a lack of real empirical research into what audiences were doing with the media message. The uses approach relied on a simple cause-effect model. The Marxists, while emphasising the difficulty of actually finding effects and making an invaluable contribution to the understanding of the processes that yield the news product, tended to supply the likely audience responses themselves. The 70s studies of media representations of evil-doers and agenda setting failed to consider audiences actually doing things with the message. Williamson and Myers like their contemporaries writing for the film theory journal *Screen*, used semiotics to give them the right to assert that 'this is the effect that this signifier will have therefore this is how all this works for audiences'. The only concession to audience they gave was in saying that the receiver needed to be a part of that particular cultural group in order to share the intended reading.

So the Marxists suggest that responses might be more difficult to find to the subtle nature of media persuasion. But by tending to focus on the source of the message they cannot help us to understand what people will in fact do with that message.

Ethnography of audiences

Other researchers saw the need to attempt to study audiences. In the 1950s two books were published which are now viewed as extremely influential on later audience work in cultural studies. They attempted to confront the problem of the way audiences interacted with texts: *Uses of Literacy* by R. Hoggart (1957) and *Culture and Society* by R. Williams (1958). These two works emphasised the varied responses which a text may elicit. As Chaney suggests:

> They began with the determining conviction that the intellectual culture of Britain masked a diversity of tradition and perspective in culture as lived experience (In Press:16)

They showed how people used aspects of culture. Popular culture was to be seen as just one of these uses. They helped to point to the problem that audiences could not be demonstrated to be actually responding as the text based studies had argued. These studies had assumed

> that meanings somehow exist as inherent properties of textual signification and are thus available there for identification and plotting, provided that a sufficiently powerful or sensitive 'reading' can be brought to bear on them (Richardson and Corner, 1992:159)

Marxists at the end of the 70s working in the new movement of Cultural Studies realised the need to address this problem and examine the points of reference through which audiences view media messages. This lead to a further swing in the pendulum back to reception studies where the autonomy of the audience again became the focus of interest. For example, Morley (1980) looked at the readings people gave of the TV programme 'Nationwide'.

These studies concluded that audiences would read the media message depending upon their relationship to the ideological world or codes which it represented. Those with codes closer to that of the programme would produce readings more consistent with the codes it offered. Those with codes further away from those of the programme would produce 'negotiated or oppositional readings' (Morley, 1980:134). This trend of studies gave a more realistic description of the ways that media may be used than the 'uses' approach — that if messages were too far away from the world view of an audience they would be ignored completely. The work got away from the view of audience as a nation of individuals. The problem with this work, of which Morley himself is the greatest critic, was that there seemed little room for audience pleasures

or for the extent to which a variety of media genres are relevant to the concerns of viewers and comprehensible in the light of the readers' cultural capital. There also remained the problem of the context in which the reading takes place (Moores,1992:146)

So it was impossible to conclude exactly what audiences were really doing with media texts purely by showing them something and asking them what they thought of it afterwards. Would the same sense of a programme be gained if it was viewed in the domestic context? The following ethnography based studies were to offer a serious attempt at understanding people using media messages in contexts: Hobson (1980) *Housewives and the Mass Media*, Hobson (1984) *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera*, Modleski (1984) *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* and Morley (1986) *Family Television: Culture, Power and Domestic Leisure*, looked at the way TV and radio programmes were used and selected for diverse reasons. The housewives in Hobson's sample used TV as site of conversation or company in the home. In the evenings switching on the set may be a way of avoiding conversation or to

bring about a shared experience. Also Hobson demonstrated that radio programmes rather than just being used as light entertainment are important to structure an otherwise unstructured day.

Radway's classic, *Reading The Romance* (1984), as part of the 'new paradigm' work in cultural studies, challenged conceptions that romance fiction is just drivel which offers stereotyped views of masculine and feminine roles for passive consumption by soppy housewives. Through ethnographic research Radway showed how romance readers used books to give themselves time to themselves in lives which were based upon the care for others. Also, far from reinforcing stereotypes the books offered images of heroes and heroines that would not be in contradiction with feminism. Readers would not buy literature if they thought that it contained characters with conventional gender roles where the women were subordinate. Radway discusses how publishers are aware of this and thus supply books which avoid these kinds of representations.

Willis (1990) investigated the way young people select what they want from popular culture. He argues that people are now unable to do the 'necessary symbolic work' that they used to do through work, which is important for the way humans define themselves, so they increasingly do it through leisure. The media offer meanings to the audience which they will use creatively:

> They actively collaborate with the screen to create and recreate a
> web of meanings that are relevant to them and anchored in their own lives
> (Willis, 1990:32)

Willis also discusses the way that the meanings that are created by audiences have to be continually picked up by the media in order 'to stay with it'. He mentions the way that many fashions and other symbolic forms offered to young people in fact originated with the young people themselves. His ethnography allows him to avoid the sweeping statements made by other

Marxists who tended to provide the readings of the texts themselves. He describes the way that young people may like an advert for its music or think it funny or just consider that it is artistically good without even considering the product itself.

Willis also considers the way that soap operas don't simply offer mindless pap but are used to be laughed at argued with or discussed. He uses evidence from the research of Peter Collet who put video cameras in peoples' TV sets. Viewers looked round the room, derided the clothes of commentators, shouted at the set and talked during programmes. They did not simply passively consume everything put before them.

So these studies present a sense of a media sensitive to and producing material for audiences and that suggest that different audiences will receive and interact with this differently and that the kind of response given may depend on the context where the media are used.

The problem with 'audience"

With what appeared to be a further swing in the pendulum researchers have more recently begun to ask whether indeed all these ethnographic studies are getting us anywhere. Emphasis on the active audience seemed to have shifted research away from the way they might be influenced by the media message and dominant culture. Morley (1992) argues:

> that in recent years the question of media power as a political issue has tended to slip off the research agenda of this burgeoning field of 'demand-side' research (1992:18)

Morley stresses the concern of Corner (1991) that:

much recent work in this field is marred by a facile insistence on the polysemy of media products and by an undocumented prescription that forms of interpretative resistance are more widespread than subordination or the reproduction of dominant meanings (1992:20)

Morley criticises Fiske (1984) who emphasises the way that meaning is made of texts interdiscursively, rejecting

Fiske's celebration of a 'semiotic democracy' in which people drawn from a vast shifting range of subcultures and groups construct their own meanings within an autonomous cultural economy (1992:26).

Ang (1990) points to Meaghan Morris's (1988) concern that:

the perspective of the ethnography of audiences has led to a boom in isolated studies of the ways in which this or that audience group actively produces specific meanings and pleasures out of this or that text, genre or medium (1990:243).

Ang (1990)suggests that we need to study

reception as an integral part of popular cultural practices that articulate both 'subjective' and 'objective', both 'micro' and macro' processes (1990:224)

So for Ang the ethnographic studies simply overdid the emphasis on the ability of audiences to construct their own meanings, cultures and identities from

the images given to them by the culture industries. Research needs to look at the way that relations to power are implicit within consumption processes.

Radway (1988) reflecting partly on her own ethnographic work argues that we need to get away from concepts such as 'audience' and 'reception' completely. To understand the process better we have to emphasise,

> in our everywhere-mediated society, the point of view of the active, producing cultural worker who fashions narratives, stories, objects, and practices from myriad bits and pieces of prior cultural production (1988:362)

She sees many of the problems in media research as arising due to the difficulty we seem to have in dissolving the boundary between textual object and audience. She says that we need to look at

> how multiple, publicly constituted discourses call to social subjects who, in turn, through complicated processes of identification, actively locate themselves within at least several of those discourses (1988:364)

So the important thing for Radway is to examine the relationships between different discourses and the ways in which 'nomadic subjects' move around within these. She argues that ethnography needs to

> capture the fluid, destabilized, ever-shifting nature of subjectivity produced through the articulation of discourses and their fragments (1988:368)

It seems that we are still waiting for work to be produced which fulfils these requirements. However we do seem to have a clearer sense of the direction

in which research should go. Researchers must take care not to produce ethnographieswhich celebrate the way categories of people produce their own meanings from the media when these people are influenced not by that one isolated category, but by many which interrelate in complex ways.

Some recent work has promisingly attempted to do just what Radway advocates. In the latest publication by the Glasgow Media Group (1993) *Getting the Message: News, Truth and Power,* Philo in an article 'Getting the Message' and Kitzanger in her article 'Understanding AIDS: Researching audience perceptions of AIDS', attempted to go beyond the idea of a single audience whilst examining the way that texts might provide sites where accounts of the world are produced. They investigated the way groups from different job categories were able to reproduce the ways of talking about certain topics — the miners strike of the 80s and the nature of AIDS — used in news reporting. They were an attempt to "identify the cutting edge of media power as it operates in a given cultural context" (Kitzanger,1993:271-272).

These studies involved getting respondents to produce their own news texts on the basis of photos taken from actual articles on the miners strike or AIDS. Philo and Kitzanger suggest that unless audience members have direct personal experience to the contrary they tended to produce texts which emulated the language and concepts used in news reporting. Kitzanger also illustrates how discussions of AIDS were done through themes given by the press, for example, the theme that people often give other people AIDS for revenge or that AIDS may be spread by saliva reflecting the 'strong message/strong solution' type of texts which often characterise AIDS coverage.

Kitzanger makes the important point that people become familiar with these ways of talking through discussion with friends. This is a very important point and is something the journalists in my ethnography told me that they often considered when looking for news events. Kitzanger, in contrast to other studies, shows that the ways people respond to the media message is something

that people develop through general discussion. However she does not take this point further. In the previous chapter I argued that people continually develop sense of how the world works and what people in it are like through an ongoing exchange of stories. This, I want to argue, is the key to understanding the media/audience relationship.

Research which has attempted to get at the way that people are part of different discourse communities — Radway's 'nomadic' subjects — has been sparse. It seems to be the case that generally no one is strictly clear on how this might be done. Frazer (1992) in *Teenage girls reading Jackie*, and Dahlgren (1992) in *Viewers' plural sense-making of TV news*, have suggested looking at the way people talk about things differently in different contexts. Dahlgren, using Goffman (1974), distinguishes between 'official' and 'public' discourse. He noticed the way that people used a different style of speech and different content when talking about the news with him in a formal interview and when they talked about news in public places.

The observation that news can be talked about differently in different contexts is an important one although Dahlgren misses the point somewhat by being satisfied with his two modes of discourse. As we will see Dahlgren was just hitting the tip of the iceberg.

Much of the material being produced on the media still looks largely at the text, speculating about likely responses (of others). Some of this provides useful thinking points but still leave us with that 'how do you know?' sensation. For example. Connel (1992) talks about the way that the popular press give readers a sense of power by showing the Great falling. This could be the case, but then one could easily say such material in its colourfulness and sensational nature, just serves to allow readers to escape from their immediacy for a short time — to a place where problems take on a different shape than their own ever could (see Bird,1992). Also those very readers who enjoy this escapism may be reflective enough to comment on those very texts and say the story was unlikely, that it

was highly exaggerated or completely fabricated. The point is that though the kind of speculation in which Connel is involved might be interesting — at least for the speculators — it still isn't really taking us anywhere.

Let us formulate exactly what the problem for media studies is and suggest how the perspective I want to offer may help us to think about it. The problem lies in accounting for the way that people are not influenced by individual, separate communities, but by many aspects of their lives that cut across each other in complex ways. This suggests, as researchers have pointed out, that we need to move away from observing audiences in specific settings. I want to argue also, that this means moving away from the idea that it may be possible to identify concrete influences in people's lives. The perspective I offered in the previous chapter suggested that people are perpetually engaged in an ongoing exchange of stories about how the world works. They are continually using cultural narrative themes to do work on others in the business of interpersonal interaction and the navigation of self. These themes are used *ad hoc* to improvise in contexts. To look for specific concrete influences will thus be to only reify certain categories of people evoked by an individual in a specific setting. In this sense one should not expect to find any concrete and stable response but expect people to improvise, using a repertoire of cultural narratives, in contexts depending upon the work that person wants to do in that context.

In this thesis I want to present individuals including those who produce the media message involved in an ongoing exchange of such narrative themes. However, we must bear in mind many of the points covered in this chapter. Researchers have argued that the media may have a powerful voice in the discussion as it sets the agenda for what may be talked about and gives the official view of what is not legitimate in society. I will consider the nature of this voice in later chapters.

Section two: Ethnographic context

Chapter 3

Spanish newspapers and their consumption

Introduction

Before I go on to examine the individuals involved in the exchange of narratives I have described I want to create a sense of certain features of the Spanish setting where those voices are to be located. I will start in this chapter by describing the nature of the Spanish Press (*La Prensa Española*) and the press in Valencia (*La Premsa Valenciana*) and go on talk about the context of reading.

La Prensa Española

The Spanish Press is in some ways very different from the press of most other European countries. This is both in the form of newspapers (*los periodicos*) and in the reading habits of its readership. The newspapers are often very dry (*seco*) and serious (*frio*). There is no sensationalist press (*La Prensa Amarrilla*) as we would recognise it. I will look at the reasons for this and look at why it is that the way that people come to read these newspapers has a certain public character to it. It is these historical reasons for people's behaviour that will help to provide an insight into the reasons that people give for the fact that

they either buy or do not buy newspapers. As we will see these reasons are very different than those suggested by the historical evidence.

I will start by giving a brief history of the Spanish Press which is crucial if we are to understand its present nature. I will start from the 19th century where events started to shape what is now the Spanish Press.

The press in Spain in the 19th century was used for private or political interests and was made up basically of pamphlets. Many of the papers would last for no more than a few issues, although some of the more successful ones achieved circulations of up to ten thousand copies. Shulte (1968) cites the historian Goméz as saying that

> all those who wanted to say something, even though they had nothing to say, inevitably founded a newspaper (Goméz, 1964:20, cited Shulte 1968:138)

Shulte argues that the French occupation in the early 19th century greatly changed the Spanish concept of the use of the press. Napoleon, imposing a constitution based on the French model in 1810, proclaimed freedom of printing in Spain resulting in the Spanish Press like that of the French becoming used for the first time as a vehicle of propaganda.

But as Timoteo points out, referring to the mid-19th century:

> The newspapers to which we are referring were basically at the same time , club, cafe [...] centres of conspiracy when necessary, sustainers of bohemia and essential stepping stones for ambitious young people (1989:16).

So the papers were used to promote ideological interests or solely for those who could afford to do so and were used generally for individuals to promote

their own names. The fame acquired could lead to better things. Shulte argues that, "two paths led to the top levels of government in the 19th century - a military career or a journalistic one" (1968:204).

These papers existed in times of constant revolution and changes of government or regime. Each had its own idea of what the role of the press should be. Shulte suggests that:

> swings followed every change of government, liberal administrations permitting the press to operate freely, authoritarian regimes imposing controls (1968:203)

For the majority of the 19th century the press lay in amateur hands. There were some changes to this situation later in the century. With the development of the telegraph system, along with the establishment of the news agency 'Fabra' in 1873 more up to date news became possible. The importance of editors and more professional techniques grew. With the relative stability brought about with the governments of Cánovas and Sagasta during the Restoration at the end of the century the idea of professionalism and economic independence from political groups emerged. A handful of newspapers, *La Vanguardia*, *ABC* and *El Debate* were run as commercial instruments. The relative internal peace took some attention away from politics to international events and it was there for the paper to provide for this. The papers moved away from being openly political instruments in favour of a greater pluralism to attract advertising:

> At the end of the 19th century information and newspapers became businesses...(They) became a type of publicity vehicle for anyone who wanted and was able to pay for their message. (Timoteo, 1989:18)

Timoteo points out that these papers were still far from what readers were being given in other countries:

In the same years in which the North Americans started to discover new forms of sensationalism, or the English were baptising the *new journalism* or The French speaking of a 'golden age' for the press, the press here at the end of the century was another thing (1989:17).

The constant changes in press law from the various regimes had seriously hampered the development of the press. No sooner did a newspaper get going then it would be closed down as the political atmosphere fluxed. Also the Spanish Press lacked the mass readership which was enjoyed elsewhere. This has remained a constant feature of the Spanish Press ever since. The reasons for this are pretty clear. Gómez (1989), commenting on the turn of the century, argues that we have to consider

the high level of illiteracy (70%)...the low level of urbanisation (20%)...the geographically localised industrial development (Cataluña, The Basque Country, Asturias)... the non-dynamic socio-political structure... the low political participation of the masses (1989:29) [My translation]

Iglesias (1989) adds to these that due to the low wages of many workers at the time there were "serious economic difficulties in buying newspapers" (1989:41). Monthly subscription to a newspaper in Madrid was one peseta which was far beyond the capacity of the majority of people. So, although at the turn of the century, as Timoteo argues, newspapers had "many qualities of newspapers of the masses" (1989:83), they were not for the masses in a country

where the majority of the population was isolated, rural living and simply could not read[1].

The press today in Spain continues without large circulations. But why did people not start to buy newspapers once illiteracy fell and distribution became possible through improved transport networks and an increased urban population? There are several reasons for this. One is that people came to see them as something to be read in bars, and the other which has been offered, is that a public unable to read developed the habit of spending their money on going to the cinema — a habit which is still very strong in Spain today — and in being satisfied with the radio's capacity to bring news into the home. Marín, commenting on the 1930's argues that:

> In the South of Europe — particularly in the Iberian Peninsular - the development of an informative journalism of the masses occurred with the emergence of the new audio-visual media of cinema and radio. This concurrence resulted in written journalism losing its battle before it had started (1989:105).

, He argues that this is the reason that Spain still has a press which is "comparatively cult and politicised" (1989:105) in contrast with the domination of the sensationalist press in other countries. The masses had thus developed the habit of spending their money elsewhere before they could be captured by newspapers. Today in Spain those groups that comprise the readership of say *The Sun* in Britain or *Bild Zeitung* in Germany simply do not consider newspaper purchase to be a part of their daily routine.

Marín points to a further problem faced by the press in the first decades of the 20th century in reaching a mass audience. He suggests that the Spanish population was extremely heterogeneous with strong divisions between rural and

---

[1] in 1920, 60% of the rural population was illiterate.

urban populations, various political and ideological groups and a linguistic-cultural plurality. It was difficult for papers to present a view which could claim to represent all of these.

So far then I have suggested that the Spanish press at the beginning of the 20th century was somewhat more basic than that of other countries after a 19th century press comprised basically of pamphlets. This was due to the constant changes in political power which tended to inhibit any steady development or consolidation. Standards were improving due to technological changes and political stability at the end of the 19th century. However this press still lacked the mass readership common in other European countries due to high levels of illiteracy, a highly heterogeneous population and distribution difficulties. There are other reasons why the press failed to increase its readership and why there are still no sensationalist newspapers in the Spain of the 1990's. To understand these we need to follow Spain's press history into the 20th century.

For the first decades of the 20th century chaos still ruled the press, with constant threats of closure, confiscations and suspensions as different regimes or governments brought in different levels of control. The relative stability at the end of the 19th century was followed by a period of total instability. One 18 month period saw six changes of cabinet. In 1923 when General Miguel Primo de Rivera forcefully took power it was the forty-third coup since 1814.

The two decades following 1923 were to be of great significance for the future of the press. Primo de Rivera imposed his own strict controls. When he left the beginning of the 2nd Republic offered a period of growth for the press which had experienced considerable modernisation during The 1st World War, emulating the models provided by the rest of the European Press.

Censorship soon returned, however, as the political situation worsened. It is not possible here to write in any detail about the two regimes of the period of the 20's and 30's due to the complexity of events. What they did have in common

though is that neither of them came to grips with a largely irresponsible press, nor realised the importance of connecting with the masses. Timoteo argues that:

> the failure of the regimes of the 20's and 30's in Spain is
>
> fundamentally related to the incapacity of successive governments to
>
> organise an information system capable of achieving a general consensus
>
> and of organising the masses, 'the new sovereignty' (1989:84).[My
>
> translation]

Those responsible were of an old ideology which failed to see the significance of mass communications. They lived in a past age where all learning came in the classroom. The Republic, for example, concerned itself with orientating teachers to convey their propaganda in the education system (Timoteo, 1989)

There is a further factor at this time which helped alienate readers and threaten the credibility of the newspapers. The Spanish press agency,'Fabra' set up in 1865,was sold to the French agency 'Havas' in 1870. Fabra had a monopoly over providing news from outside to Spain's newspapers,and to the outside world from Spain. After it became part of Havas the running of the agency of this became determined by the wishes of the French government. Paz argues that

> The image of the outside world for the Spanish reader was formed
>
> almost exclusively with information from the French agency
>
> (1989:73).[My translation]

Newspapers were not satisfied with the news provided by Fabra but found it difficult to obtain it from elsewhere. Fabra maintained its control until the

invasion of the North American Agencies in the 1930's. By this time much of the credibility of the newspapers had been lost (Paz, 1989).

At the end of 1935 the Republic was in general chaos and had seen the rise and fall of twenty-five governments (Shulte,1968:239). With the vast range of political interest groups and parties,no-one was capable of forming a stable government. In 1936 an exchange of revenge murders by the socialists and the fascist movement,the Falange,triggered a military revolt which had been prepared for some time. The revolt and the subsequent regime, lead by General Franco, and successfully uniting a divergent range of right-wing and religious groups, was to determine the nature of the press in Spain until the formation of the constitution in 1978.

During the three year civil war that was fought between Franco's nationalists and the Republicans saw the press used carefully as a strategic instrument. In 1938, with victory in sight, the Nationalists with Franco as the head of the military government met in Burgo to talk about how Spain was to be. One result of this conference was the Press Law of April 22nd which was to regulate the nature of the press for the next 28 years. This law gave the right to the military to control diffusion, content and staffing of all newspapers. Also an order in August 1938 gave power to the Ministry of the Interior to confiscate all print material found in territory taken from the Republicans.

After the war this put about 40 newspapers in the hands of the state or to be accurate, of the Falange, to whom they passed in 1940. The press law was, at least initially, to completely repress newspapers. Shulte cites the law which stated:

> The existence of a fourth estate cannot be tolerated. It is inadmissible that the press can exist outside the state. The evils that spring from 'freedom of the democratic kind' must be avoided (1968:8).

Its intentions are clear. The ministry was able to fine, suspend, close, confiscate, or sack in cases where newspapers included writing which

> directly or indirectly, may tend to reduce the prestige of the Nation or Regime, to obstruct the work of the government of the new State, or sow pernicious ideas among the intellectually weak (Shulte,1968:14, citing the press law)

Timoteo argues that unlike the previous regimes the Franco regime was perfectly aware of the possibilities which lay in mass communications. The Ministry set up the apparatus to check and censor all publications before issue. All journalists had to be state registered and those with previous 'offences ' against the State were not given licences. The Ministry had total right to elect editors and directors of all state and private newspapers. Pizarroso argues that the 1938 Press Law basically made the press "an institution at the service of the propaganda of the new state" (1989:238) [My translation] where journalists had a role more or less like civil servants.

Whether the newspaper was of the state or remained in private hands the control was absolute. Sinova argues:

> there is no sense in trying to discern between the private and the state press as [...] they needed permission by the state to be edited and were invigilated by the state every day [...] all of the existing press was of the state in a political sense (1989:262) [My translation]

The effect of this on the press was to make it incredibly dull. There could be no critical questioning of any state policy or social ills. Many things such as strikes simply could not be mentioned. Shulte (1968:25) notes that journalists were arrested for reporting things like defects in public housing projects, animal

diseases and crop deficits. Editors were often sent things they were to publish without question or given guidelines on how they should deal with certain events. All international news came via the state press agency EFE. Thus papers were often left very little to write about. The pages of newspapers after the war were full of inaugurations, onion growing, sport and religion. The pre-copy editing which went on until 1962 also slowed the news production process down dramatically making up to the minute news impossible.

Things did change somewhat after the 2nd World War. Pizarroso argues that the Francoist state needed to polish up its image for the victorious democracies (1989:239). The need for trade and economic support lead to the need to shed the image of totalitarianism. The Law of July 1945 'Fuero de Los Españoles' in an attempt to give the impression of being more liberal, claimed to give freedom of expression to the Spanish. In practice it meant no change as the sub-clause was that this was the case as long as this expression did not challenge the principles of the state. Franco also revamped the Falange to get rid of the fascist image and included economists and trade experts in his cabinet. Shulte argues that:

> by the mid-1950s (Franco) began to show signs of flexibility as Spain
> moved away from isolation and toward close co-operation with the
> United States and other nations of the Western bloc (1968:11)

Later Franco even replaced his medal inundated military uniform for a double-breasted suit.

So after the 50s the environment in Spain started to change. As Pizarroso argues:

After the first stage of totalitarian pretensions and prolific propaganda it went into a certain apathy. The one party regime became a bureaucratic apparatus (1989:232) [My translation]

The same censorship continued throughout the 50s although towards and during the 60s sanctions against offenders became less harsh and the control over what could be covered seemed to slacken. For example, the miners strike in 1962 was completely invisible whilst some coverage was permitted of student demonstrations in 1965. Manuel Fraga Iribarne who was appointed Minister of information and Tourism in 1962 made many of these changes possible. In just two years from his appointment he allowed 654 new magazines to open. Also papers were allowed to cover politics, although uncritically. Editors could discuss reforms so long as they did not attack the regime. Censorship was removed in the Provinces although dissension was punished with arrests or closures.

On April 9th 1966 Franco signed a new press law which Fraga said was to find some middle ground between complete press freedom and absolute state control. Zalbidea argues that:

after this date started the great march toward freedom of speech that culminated in 1978 with the establishment of the constitution (1989:253) [My translation]

The law abolished pre-publication censorship and allowed newspapers to appoint their own editors and directors. In the two years following 129 new titles appeared on the newspaper stands. The distinction between the state and private press became apparent.

Control was loosened after the law but there were no clear guidelines as to what the limits were. Before the censors had said exactly what could be written,

now it became extremely vague. There were constant arrests and suspensions. Sinova suggests that the law

castigated anything that went over the limits and one couldn't know exactly what the limits were (1989:267) [My translation]

He argues that:

These large doses of subjectivism made journalism dangerous and obliged them the frustrating and unjust exercise of self censorship (1989:268) [My translation]

The papers at this time were still different from their European counterparts which found circulations through sensationalism and personalised news. The Spanish press still offered a diet of sport, religion and 'culture'.

Throughout the Franco period there were also many small clandestine anti-Franco papers, largely circulating large factories or the universities. But, as Pizarroso argues: "The influence of these publications was minimal in Spanish society" (1989:284) [My translation]

In the late 60s circulations fell even in the urban centres . Zalbidea argue that:

There is no justification for this decadence given that it coincided with a period of economic and cultural development (1989:254) {My translation]

She blames the decline on bad management — the misuse of money for 'paper', the absence of market research, excessive numbers of workers. Also the state press had largely had a protected life and been free from genuine

competition. With the new freedom and growing private press the state press lost many of its readers. Perhaps most importantly circulations fell as no-one was particularly interested in reading the ideas that the papers expounded.

By 1975 the state press chain had accumulated a huge debt. In 1977 twelve papers were closed. On July 30th Suaréz, as chief of Government after Franco's death in 1975 allowed publication of *El País* and *Diario 16* . El País was to become the most successful newspaper ever in Spain. With its commitment to 'informing and the truth', as the editor at the time of my fieldwork told me, it attracted most of the university graduates giving it a circulation of around 300 000 in the 90s. *El País* is still the paper that most journalists would ideally want to work for. Zalbidea argues that the opening of these two newspapers started

> A new golden age of journalism, comparable with that of the years of the Second Republic (1989:257)

Due to declining circulations the state press was finally auctioned off in 1983. Of the twenty two remaining papers only seven had a positive balance.

Over the last ten years there have been other changes in the Spanish Press. Iglesias (1989) suggests that there has been a revitalisation of the regional press. Regionalism and regional identity are generating increasing interest in Spain. The national papers are also unable economically to provide detailed coverage of events in all the provinces. There has also been an appearance of a 'free press' takes the form of news pamphlets containing publicity. But as Iglesias points out that:

> Between all these changes and transformations there is something however that seems to be a constant: the stagnated diffusion levels and the low indices of purchase and readership of newspapers (1989:436) [My translation]

So due to high illiteracy levels those who form the bulk of newspaper buyers in other European countries tended to not develop the habit of spending their money on newspapers. Even today it is simply not considered as likely practice by these people. Later the heterogeneity of the population and transport problems meant that it was difficult for newspapers to reach or appeal to a large audience. And due to frequent government censorship ending with forty years of the Franco dictatorship newspapers were neither interesting nor had much credibility with readers. In Spain today these people do often read newspapers, no less than people in other countries, but these are read in bars and generally used to discuss issues with others.

It is unlikely that the situation will change simply because the habit of buying does not exist. The German Axel Springer company seeing what they viewed was a gap in the market in Spain tried to introduce a more sensationalist tabloid newspaper called *El Claro* in the early 1990's which despite much publicity failed to make any real impact and disappeared after only several weeks. Other newspapers are reluctant to change their format, according to various editors with whom I spoke, partly due to pompousness and partly due to the fear of alienating established purchasers.

A further change in the Spanish Press in the last ten years has been a slight concentration of ownership. The top seven companies with a handful of newspapers each account for 63% of the national diffusion (Iglesias,1989:417). But, as Iglesias argues, "it is still not possible to really say that in our country there are large newspaper groups" (1989:443).

Most multinational activity has focused on magazines. The Axel Springer company owns seventeen. It seems that the low newspaper circulations are unattractive to multinationals.

La Premsa Valenciana and its consumption

The most important newspapers in Valencia are *Las Provincias* and *Levante*. Both are regional newspapers covering the city of Valencia and its surrounding villages and towns. Valencia is the 3rd largest city in Spain with a population of just under one million. *Las Provincias* has the highest circulation of all the newspapers sold in Valencia with 106 thousand copies followed by *Levante* with 60 thousand. *Las Provincias* is a newspaper basically owned and run by supporters of the conservative opposition party the P.P. who have recently begun to seriously challenge the socialist P.S.O.E. who have had the luxury of being the only serious party for about 10 years. *Levante* is linked to the P.S.O.E.. Purchase of the two papers depends on the readers ideology — whether they support the government or not — and often purely on the grounds of tradition if one of the papers has been bought in the family for several generations (*Levante was in fact the more conservative of the two during the* Franco years as it was a state newspaper).

In Valencia the local council or *Ayuntament* is run by the P.P. whereas the provincial government or *Generalitat* is P.S.O.E.. Thus the two newspapers represent their respective bodies favourably, criticising the other. For *Las Provincias* everything is the fault of the provincial council. For *Levante* it is the local council which is the source of all evil. Both newspapers usually offer a large amount of this kind of material, around six pages on average, which is usually comprised of various comments made by politicians of the respective sides. This material is notoriously unread by readers. Market research has continually told the editors of this and it is something that I found virtually without fail in my interviews and interactions with people in Valencia

The politics pages are found to be very complex and difficult to access by readers. Many people told me that they wouldn't even attempt to make sense of them: "Shit politics, politics, so much of it makes you dizzy (*¡Joder! la política,*

la política, la cantidad te marea). Many people told me that they would only look at these pages if something on the front pages attracted them or if there were important events happening such as a general election. This is considered a problem by all journalists and editors with whom I spoke. One journalist told me that when she wrote these texts she didn't even consider how they might appear to the reader, as, she said: "no one will ever read this stuff anyway". Rather, she said the important thing was to consider how the text would appear to the person who was its source and other members of the party who her paper represented.

The newspapers also have several pages — or many more depending on the quality of the story — of *sucesos*. These are the kinds of texts that we would find more familiar end expect to see in the British tabloid press and local newspapers. These cover accidents, fires, murders, rapes and the like. I say they would be more familiar to the British tabloid reader although in fact the incidents reported never receive quite the same amount of 'play' or development. This is in terms of both the form and the content. Large type is not used and there are seldom photographs. In newspapers such as *The Sun*, for example, the majority of the page would be taken up by a large photograph and a headline. A *suceso* will generally be quite tame in its form with a small headline and then the details of the incident. In a newspaper such as *The Sun* we generally expect every point to have some kind of sensationalist quality.

The Spanish newspapers unlike our tabloids do not deal in material regarding the exploits of the famous or celebrities. This is considered to be the territory of the magazine. Editors are aware that it is exactly this kind of material which readers like but are reluctant to include it in case they should lower the status of their newspaper, although one editor told me sarcastically that: "the politicians don't want attention distracted from them". He told me that there may be some truth in this along with a certain pompousness on behalf of directors leading them to a desire to keep their newspapers of a relative

75

intellectual appearance. However a different editor did point out that having seen the failure of Axel Springer's tabloid *El Claro* they were aware that the odds were that people would not respond favourably to a dramatic change in formula.

When I asked readers if they thought that newspaper should include more material on personalities the response was without fail, "no". I was told, for example that: "a newspaper that did that would no longer be a newspaper". These same people, however would tell me that it was the more sensationalist material that they would in fact read in the newspapers.

More recently newspapers have, in fact, been putting more effort into *sucesos* sections as editors have come to realise that it is this material which people always want to read and which is capable of vastly increasing a days circulation should an alluring story be included. This has been done quite tentatively and editors say that it has not improved circulations. *Levante*, the newspaper that has tended to experiment with this has been heavily criticised by other newspapers and by many readers although it was the newspaper to which many turned during the coverage of the murders of the three girls from Alcácer. .

Both *Levante* and *Las Provincias* run large sports sections which cover mainly football and bullfighting. Again these sections have recently got larger as editors have realised their importance.

The papers both start with several opinion pages, also generally ignored, where editors, directors, and writers sympathetic to the paper's party or considered by the editor to have sufficient status to appear on the page, comment on anything they feel worthy of commenting on regarding current or general social issues. They both also include several economics pages and 'culture' pages which cover local entertainments, the work of a local artist and social events.

The other papers bought in Valencia are the nationals, *El País,* a socialist paper, *ABC,* a right-wing monarchist paper, *El Mundo,* an independent, and

Diario 16, which at the moment seems to be in crisis and without any direction. All of these papers with the exception of *El Mundo* produce a Valencia section. This is important for sales as they are all generally very Madrid orientated. They have more or less the same format as *Las Provincias* and *Levante* except they tend to have less *sucesos* due to the problem of the high cost of having production teams in each province.

Valencia has recently seen the introduction of *El Gratúito,* a free paper of two pages only, financed completely from publicity. The paper in its first year of running has had spectacular success. Most people I spoke with said that they read it due to its brevity and intelligibility. The newspaper claims that it is read by 112 000 people.

The idea behind *El Gratuito* was that it would briefly cover all the main news with highly reduced texts (made up mainly from news agency material). Many readers told me that they actually find the politics, for once, understandable. Much of the publicity to promote the paper has been based on the argument that it is a waste of money to buy a newspaper which is never read. Also it was thought that the 'free' aspect of the paper would appeal to the Spanish attraction to anything that is free — anyone living in Spain for the first time will be bemused by the way that seemingly every product is marketed by the 'buy one get one free' approach or 'buy this product and we give you the gift of...'— although the assistant editor told me that they were initially concerned that people would not take news in a free paper that was given out on the streets seriously.

Context of reading

Newspapers in Valencia, and in Spain in general, are bought from news kiosks, which are situated here and there in the streets, and which also sell magazines and confectionery. Many of these are family businesses and they tend to develop relationships with many of their customers. Kiosk owners will tell you how they recall when some of their current customers were only babies. Many of the newspapers bought at these kiosks are taken home where they seem to go largely unread. Many people told me that they used them generally only for browsing or for the television page.

A large proportion of the newspapers bought end up in the bars (*los bares*) which are found in every street. These *bares* are the site of what must be the most popular Spanish pastime which involves drinking coffee or beer whilst chatting to the other clientele or to friends. They are the focus of public life and it is here that I heard and tape-recorded much talk about news.

The *bares* are not like a bar in the U.K.. They are usually more like what we would think of as a cafe. They generally have a long counter upon which are glass cases which contain the various dishes which are for sale in the form of *tapas,* small snack portions of meat, cheese or sea food. *Bares* also serve sandwiches (*bocadillos*) and drinks. Many people drink beer at most hours of the day, especially during the summer months although coffee is just as popular. On top of the bar you will also always find rows of small cups and saucers which the waiters (*camereros*) clatter around noisily which wait for those who call in for a rapid coffee as they are passing.

Inside a *bar* there are usually stools along the counter where those who are familiar with the staff tend to sit and chat with them. There are also usually, depending on the *bar*'s size, several rows of tables, each one surrounded by chairs. However if the *bar* does not have air conditioning and during the summer evenings these tables will go fairly unused. Each *bar* will have a *patio,*

an area outside on the pavement where it is licensed to have a certain quantity of tables. During a summer evening the *patio* of a successful *bar* will be crammed with people.

Most *bares* will have regulars who visit every day. People will generally use the bars for coffee before work, then again for breakfast at around eleven (*almuerzo*). At dinner-time (a *comer*) at about two or three in the afternoon and then possibly to drink beers in the evening or to eat out (*una cena*). How a bar is used will depend on its location. *Bares* in residential areas will usually attract people from the immediate area. In one small street of say one hundred metres there may be several bars so people in the street will have a favourite where perhaps they know the *bar* owner (*el dueño*) or *camerero* or the other clientele.

A *bar* in the city centre or on a busier street will tend to attract a range of people, such as shoppers or tourists, although these *bares* will also have regulars and it is usual to see the *camereros* chatting to someone in a familiar way. The Spanish *bar* is as open to women as men. At meal times there is likely to be equal numbers of both, although in the afternoons there will tend to be predominance of men passing the hours chatting over a beer or a coffee.

All age groups can be found in most *bares*. During the day groups of workers will sit together during their breaks irrespective of age, although in the evenings it is common to see younger people, teenagers, sat together around a few tables in one part of the *bar*. On Sundays I found that it was common to see families eating and chatting together in the *bares*.

Bares are usually, especially at meal times and early in the mornings, very noisy places. There are usually many heated discussions going on in various parts of the bar, coffee cups are clattering around and coffee machines sizzle out steam.

Bar owners usually buy one or more of the local newspapers for use by clientele. Most will thumb through them whilst drinking their coffee and comment on articles that took their attention to friends in the *bar*. Frequently I

would see groups of workers taking breakfast with one member thumbing through the paper raising any issue that caught their eye. This would generally be one of the *sucesos* which might be particularly gruesome or amusing or a sports article. It is this use of newspapers that accounts for its readership in Valencia and for newspapers' importance in social life in general.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that due to high illiteracy, distribution problems, and poverty in Spain during the first quarter of the twentieth century, those who form the mass of newspaper buyers in other European countries never developed the habit of purchasing newspapers. With this trend established no change was encouraged by the quality of a press controlled by a dictatorship for forty years. However newspapers are still widely read, generally in the setting of *bares* which are the focus of public life. As we will see in chapter eight, however, people offer very different reasons for this behaviour.

I now want to go on to look at some aspects of Spanish culture that give a particular kind of flavour to the nature of my data. The themes that follow are important to our understanding of much of the conversation that I present in later chapters and of the kinds of action that was produced in the face of certain events .

Chapter 4

Some Spanish themes

Introduction

In this chapter I will look at some more features of the setting where my theoretical arguments are to be located. Here I want to look at some themes which give a certain flavour to the kinds of talk and interaction I present in this thesis. I will discuss concepts that have been basic themes in anthropological literature on the Mediterranean, honour and shame and distrust of authority, and one important related concept, particular to the Spanish context, that of *morbo*. It is these themes which help to define many of the temporary categories of people that people in my ethnography use in the navigation of self.

Honour and Shame

Honour and Shame are concepts which have received much attention by anthropologists writing on the Mediterranean. These writers suggest that the concepts are fundamental to understanding these cultures. In the book *Honour and Shame* Peristiany argues that:

The Mediterranean peoples discussed in these papers are constantly called upon to use the concepts of honour and shame in order to assess their own conduct and that of their fellows (1965:10)

Pitt-Rivers (1965) makes the same argument. The concepts

loom large both in theoretical discussions regarding the propriety of conduct and also in the daily idiom of social intercourse: indeed the honourable status of the members of a community is a matter of continual comment (1965:39)

Honour and shame are not concepts that are frequently heard in the U.K.. Yet they were themes that gave a certain flavour to much of the social interaction that I witnessed during my fieldwork. The concepts are often heard quite explicitly in the ways described by Pitt-Rivers. For example, "people in villages may be poor but they have honour (*honor*)" and referring to the murders of the three girls of Alcácer: "our community has been shamed (*avergonzada*) that we can not protect our young girls" and "do we no longer have the honour (*honradez*) in our society to stand up against such terrorists?". These examples are classic of the way honour and shame have been discussed in anthropology. Many researchers (for example, Du Boulay 1974, Schneider 1971, Campbell 1964) have dealt with the way that male honour is closely related to protecting the females in his family. In this example, it is a particularly sacred aspect of the female in Mediterranean culture, her virginity, (Pitt-Rivers 1954:115) that has been abused.

In these examples I have hinted at the way that Spanish people may have a continual regard for the relative status in terms of honour of themselves and others. However, in these examples we get only a sense of the way the concepts are used explicitly. The honour of a person, as many of these writers point out,

is continually being addressed in a more implicit way. I soon came to realise the nature of this after only a short time in Valencia, after initially being quite confused at what seemed at an avoiding of the point in many discussions.

After 6 months in Valencia I booked a flight to Germany to visit a friend and take a week's holiday from the heat. The airport was several km outside the city, and as I couldn't afford the taxi fare, the only option was to risk the bus. I decided to get an earlier bus than seemed necessary by the timetabling just to be sure. I had already had bad experiences with bus drivers whilst travelling on long journeys to villages in the interior of Spain, one of whom decided not to leave a certain village until two hours later than scheduled, as he wanted to wait until a friend's dog had given birth.

The bus I caught would give me an hour to wait for my flight and was the first bus of the day. It arrived 15 minutes late and the driver was in no hurry to leave. Eventually we got going, to the relief of the increasingly nervous passengers. Then, as we neared the area of the airport, it seemed that we had taken a detour off the normal route. The driver wanted to drop a friend off in his village. People started to complain. Some shouted from the back of the bus waving their hands about. The driver replied by asking whether he should leave his friend by the road saying that this route was no slower. He said that even if they were the kind of person that would do such a thing to a friend, he certainly was not.

Eventually he dropped the friend off by a *bar*. The driver went in to the *bar* and came out drinking a small glass of coffee (*un cortado*). I began to sweat nervously. Shouts to make him hurry made no difference. He replied: "hey, its okay for you lot going on holiday, some of us have to work. Don't you care about working folk?". Some of the passengers got involved in an animated argument with him about who worked harder and who was behaving shamefully saying that they had worked hard to pay for their flight tickets. The commotion died down as we, at speeds I am sure were previously unknown to the bus,

approached the airport only ten minutes later that scheduled. I leapt frantically from the bus the moment the door was opened before anything else went wrong. Some passengers, however, remained to argue further.

In this example, the bus driver rather than dealing directly with the questions being put to him regarding whether he was aware that we might miss our flights, talked about what category of people had the right to challenge him and his honour. He did not deal with the issue of whether or not he should have taken the detour but talked about what kind of person would not do a favour for a friend. He then took great delight in arriving at the airport on time, somehow proving that they were wrong to challenge him and his favour to a friend. During the early stages of my fieldwork I was often bemused by the way that, in such disputes, the actual point of the dispute was often not confronted. People would not point out what seemed the obvious. In this example, the passengers were not surprised that a company could allow such employees to continue, nor did they or the driver actually compare the value of dropping a friend off with twenty people missing their flights. Both parties were content to have, what seemed to me to be a completely tangential discussion about who had more right to be doing the criticising..

When I had become familiar with this kind of dispute I started to enjoy listening to them. I was always impressed by the way that the actual issue seemed to be missed. One such case was when a lorry driver got his lorry stuck in the street outside the crumbling house where I was living in the ancient historic centre of the city. Many of the houses in the area sometimes simply fell down killing people. When I had moved in I had wondered why the landlord had seemed so keen for me to take the keys and accept the tenancy.

The lorry driver had assumed that he could get his lorry around the corner without contributing to collapsing process. I and a flat mate went to the window, alarmed by loud grating and creaking sounds. Residents in the block were shouting out of windows that he was an imbecile and that he would bring

84

the whole building down. He became more determined to make the corner, asking them if they knew so much about driving why did they not make a living out of it instead of sitting around criticising others. 'Did they have nothing better to do with their time?', he asked 'Were they the kind of people that liked to interfere in the business of others (*que morbo teneis*)?'

The police arrived and a debate followed about whether the police should be more concerned with other crime in the area. The driver pointed to a group of alcoholics sprawled out around a small fountain in the square. Several of them also started shouting, asking what right he had to attack them. He started to shout at them and then back at the people in the windows asking why they didn't use some of their energy to get rid of such rubbish "basura".

By this time there were about twenty people in the street, all shouting and waving their arms around. Some even took chairs out and a local opportunist *camarero* from a *bar* in the street rushed around serving coffee and beers. In the end the driver was not to be dissuaded and, after about 20 minutes of discussion, a beer, several cigarettes, and manoeuvres of the lorry, he made it round the corner leaving our building intact. He waved as he drove off with a look on his face as if to say 'what was all that fuss about anyway?' Again the lorry driver turned the conversation away from was seemed at stake to discuss who had the right to challenge him and his honour and what their motives were. As in the previous example, who was right in the discussion was not so much a matter of the practical details at hand but the location, in terms of honour, of those involved in that discussion, and the right that location gave them to be making any challenge. Those dishonourable enough to be not constructively occupying their time or those who are shameful enough to interfere in the private affairs of others have no right to criticise others. The conversation for all parties thus quickly leaves the issue which motivated the dispute and turns to an attempt to locate others as shameful individuals.

Such conversations happened even in places such as the supermarket. I recall once standing with my shopping basket in a queue for a till when a woman, in her sixties I would guess, walked up and put her shopping down in front of me. She then walked off presumably to fetch something else. A minute passed and she returned standing firmly in front of me. Now this sort of thing had happened to me often but I had avoided getting involved in the kinds of arguments that usually followed such actions. This time my resolve broke. I asked her what she was doing, saying that she had pushed in. She replied that her shopping was there and that was her place. I said that I saw her put it there. She then said that I was wrong but that if I was so small minded she would willingly let me in front. I said that it didn't matter. She shook her head as if shocked. Then looking round her, half at other people, she started saying "what cheek some people have these days (*que caras tan duras tiene la gente hoy en día*)". I stood there embarrassed while several other women looked at me disapprovingly. The woman said "I tell you young people have no shame (*te digo los jovenes no tienen vergüenza)*" I had seen such disagreements over queuing before and couldn't believe I had entered into one.

In all of these examples we can see the way that everyday problems can quickly become a matter of personal honour. The actual actions that the person had undertaken were not debated. The right of the complainant to complain was the first response in each case. As Campbell suggests "honour is opposed to the canon of honesty" (1964:257). It is simply more important to maintain face than to face up to the fact that a building may be demolished or that many people may miss a flight. In each of these cases the protagonists at no point acknowledged in any way that of which they were initially accused. In each case the strategy was to question the motives for the challenge and the rights of the challengers to do so. The task was to locate others as category of people that have no shame. If this could be achieved then those others had no right to be making the criticism in the first place and the criticism need not be dealt with. Honour and

shame are particularly important concepts for the temporary categorisation of people for many of the speakers who appear in this ethnography.

The examples I have given also illustrate the public nature of the need to present an honourable sense of self. Much of the literature on Mediterranean culture considers the importance of this. Du Boulay (1974), for example argues that:

> honour is closely related to reputation and where reputation lies unequivocally in the hands of the community, honour must be seen as residing largely in public opinion (1974:108)

and that:

> the community rather than the individual is the custodian of social values which is granted him by public opinion and which may not be possessed in defiance of it... Thus it comes about that there is a very significant sense in which it is considered more important to be seen to be honourable than it is actually to be so, and the villager passes much of his time in trying to extract from public opinion by whatever means he can (including lying and deceit) such a reputation (1974:81)

In her view Mediterranean people, or at least Greek villagers, are constantly concerned with their public image which they conceive of in terms of honour. Their actual actions or thoughts are not important so long as a certain public face can be maintained. Pitt-Rivers offers the same argument:

> Students of the minutiae of personal relations have observed that they are much concerned with the ways in which people extort from

others the validation of the image which they cherish of themselves (1965:21-22)

Like Du Boulay, he argues that it is not so much private practices that are important:

> Honour [...] is only irrevocably committed by attitudes expressed in the presence of witnesses, the representatives of public opinion (1965:27)

The public presentation of self and honour and shame features strongly in many aspects of Mediterranean culture. Silverman (1975) and Belmonte (1979), for example, discuss the importance of clothing and promenading the streets in the evenings. This was despite the underlying poverty. Lison-Tolosana (1966) comments that "it is important for the less prosperous strata to show a more-than-ordinary effort" (1966:101). Campbell (1968) describes how Greek herders, despite lack of funds, increasingly run up debts by buying consumer products, such as cheap pottery to replace that traditionally used, to avoid the shame of being seen to be unable to do so.

During my stay in Valencia I was surprised at the effort people put into their appearance even to go to work or for casual everyday attire. There is one particular instance during an English class I was giving to 4 female students where I realised the kinds of judgements that would be made on those not making enough effort.

The women showed amazement, as I had anticipated, when I handed out photocopies of an article on 'train spotters' in the U.K.. But to my surprise they did not express this at the idea of a train spotter, which was new to them. They were amazed by the attire of the people in the photograph that accompanied the article. The photograph showed a platform full of people waiting for a train, with the train spotters at one end. Most of the people were, by their standards,

shoddily dressed, (*¡Hostia, que cutre la ropa!*). They were astounded by one commuter still wearing his bicycle clips saying that: "Shit (*¡Joder!*) no Spanish man would leave the house looking like that".

Here we have a sense of the importance of the public presentation of self, which is interconnected with shows of honour and status. It is this continual concern with maintaining an honourable public face, despite actual practice, which helps us to understand much of the talk about news I will later consider and many of the kinds of responses that were shown by the people of Valencia to the murders of the three girls of Alcácer. People needed to make their view of the incidents public. This takes us onto a further point in our discussion of honour and shame.

The way I have so far discussed honour and shame has been in terms of the way that people are continually competing with others for a relative sense of honour. This can, however be done in very much a collective sense. Pitt-Rivers (1965) refers to the way that a whole group may feel a sense of shared honour or shame:

> Social groups posses a collective honour in which their members participate; the dishonourable conduct of one reflects upon the honour of all, while a member shares in the honour of his group (1965:35)

This certainly seems to have been the case in my data where villages and the whole of the city of Valencia were seen to have been shamed in respect to the murders three girls from the village of Alcácer several km from Valencia. The population of the village of Catarroja which was the home of the suspects, became themselves taunted as murderers (*assasinos*). They were shamed due to the fact that they lived in the same village as the murderers. They then had to publicly demonstrate their distance from the events by marching through the streets of the village and by threatening to throw the families of the suspects out

onto the streets and out of the village. It was not only the villagers of Catarroja that took to the streets but almost the whole of Valencia in a public display of their position regarding the events.

So honour and shame are useful concepts for understanding aspects of my ethnographic data. They are concepts which are not usual in a U.K. setting but which in this case are important for the navigation of self in various contexts, as people work to categorise others as being of the category of person that has no shame and thus should not be taken seriously.

In previous chapters I made various theoretical points necessary for understanding aspects of human behaviour. Here I have suggested that this behaviour will have a certain flavour to it due to aspects of Spanish culture.

There is a problem with the concepts of honour and shame, however. Anthropologists have been criticised for using them to account for virtually all behaviour in the Mediterranean whilst they would not be likely to use them if they were describing a non-Mediterranean culture. Davis argues that:

> There is of course no society, anywhere, without prestige. But observers of the Mediterranean often seem prepared to say that the rank which comes from the performance of roles judged by neighbours, friends, acquaintances, rivals, enemies, is a significant allocator of resources. Where this is so and where, furthermore, the roles which are judged include explicitly sexual ones, the word honour is conveniently used (1977:90)

Davis's point accepted, the concepts proved useful in accounting for much of the kinds of behaviour that have looked at. This is illustrated no more than by the concept I now want to examine: that of *morbo*.

Morbo

I now want to discuss a concept that cropped up very often in discourse about news. It is very much part of the way people can be accused of being dishonourable, thus making a claim to one's own honour whilst all along being aware on some level that one's own private behaviour is not dissimilar to that which is being criticised. Nevertheless, the concept is frequently used to categorise others and thus allows people to present a certain, more honourable sense of self in a setting. The concept I want to discuss is *morbo*.

The way I want to talk about *morbo* reminds me of a discussion given by Du Boulay (1974) regarding the way individuals have an awareness of the kinds of performances they should present to others and the reality of their own behaviour. She discusses the way that there are ideal standards for behaviour which are used only to judge others whilst the self is given credit with being only human and thus prone to certain failings. She argues that people use

> the ideal standard when they evaluate their neighbour's actions. Not unnaturally, when they are evaluating their own actions, it is the relative standard of practical social life which is invoked. Eaves-dropping, lying, gossiping about neighbours, inventing scurrilous explanations of events —all common occurrences in village life and all accepted among friends as being a perfectly legitimate way to keep up in the endless business of defending personal secrets while finding out those of others — are sharply condemned by those who happen to be suffering from these things at the time. "Is this the way people behave?", they ask indignantly. But when rarely admitting their own faults they say "That is how we are made" (1974:174)

Morbo is a concept which was used frequently in Valencia in talk about news and about what other people liked in it. The term is translatable into English to a sort of prurient morbid curiosity. Magazines which focus on the private lives of the rich and famous are described as being directed to people with a lot of *morbo*. In this sense *morbo* is a negative characteristic. It is presented as a rather undesirable trait, associated with pettiness or small-mindedness. The term may be used similarly for anyone who expresses the desire to know all the gruesome details of a murder, for example. The sensationalist reporting of the murders of Alcácer in the newspapers were criticised for being for people with a lot of *morbo*, or people who are *morboso*.

The term can also be used to refer to the material itself. The news article may be described as having its *morbo* (*tiene su morbo*). In this sense it has a certain attraction in that it appeals to one's *morbo*.

Morbo is a concept that is generally used to describe others, not oneself. Those others are stupid, irresponsible and perhaps rather selfish. In this way it presents the speaker as part of the community of perhaps rather more decent respectable people — people who have more honour. Occasionally people who were sharply critical of other's *morbo* themselves admitted with embarrassment that they did in fact like to read news that had *morbo*. In such cases this would be offered to me as something that they used only in certain contexts, say if they were on holiday and needed light reading or, to titillate themselves. They definitely did not themselves have a lot of *morbo*.

People would generally strongly object to any suggestion that they were *morboso* saying that material with *morbo* was appalling (*me da tanta rabia ¡joder!*) or sickening (*me pone enfermo*). However, such comments generally went against actual behaviour. The majority of people were obsessed by the details of murders in the press and with gossip generally. The important point here is that people were aware of the importance of presenting a public face of

disliking *morbo*, and that *morbo* is an important way of temporarily categorising others.

In my experience everyone had a lot of *morbo* and everyone expressed dislike for it. This fits in with Du Boulay's account of the way that it is the public face which is important to Mediterranean actors. This also reflects her description of the way Greek villagers tend to criticise others' shortcomings, for example, a tendency to gossip, whilst describing the same behaviour in themselves as being due to simply being human.

Morbo is a concept then that is part of some ideal standard for behaviour where people should have no concern to pry into the details of other people's lives. This *morbo* is seen as a sense of lack of honour. *Morbo* is a practical way to present self in a context and to categorise others.

Dislike of authority and officialdom

A further theme that is a striking feature of the conversations and news texts that I discuss in this thesis is the frequency of the use of narratives which describe the government, those in authority, or in any official position, as being corrupt and self-interested. Again this is a further way of temporarily categorising people which is specific to this ethnographic context. It is something that one hears less frequently in British discourse. In the U.K. people may complain of 'red tape', or one political party may be criticised, but there is seldom criticism of this general nature.

There are two aspects to the use of this representation of such categories of people, which are basically two faces of the same coin, so to speak. Firstly, in Spain it is not difficult to dislike the state and its bureaucracy, as interactions with it can be a nightmare, and the press regularly tells of corruption or fraud involving members of the government or local council. So on the one hand

people have direct experiences of the state machinery which gives them a bad impression of it. Although it must be stressed that whilst it is possible to have bad experiences of officialdom in Spain, this is likely to be less frequently the case in the larger cities. And many of the attitudes that people on occasions express about officialdom do not prevent them going about their business as if they expect it to function in an efficient and objective manner. Much bureaucratic work is in fact done in this efficient manner. I have to add that some of the experiences of bureaucracy I had in Spain, whilst not being particularly enjoyable, could be easily compared to experiences that I had in the U.K. claiming state benefits during years of unemployment.

This is where our second point, or our other side of the coin comes in. The dislike of authority and officialdom is very much a collective representation, and may be a legacy of Spain's recent history as an essentially peasant society (Pitt-Rivers 1954, Kenny 1968). People can often be heard saying that officialdom of any kind is very much against the interests of the ordinary person and that it is run by individuals whose objective will not be the performance of their allocated tasks. Any experience with officialdom is likely to be understood through this representation, although as we shall see when I look at conversations where the role of officialdom is at issue, it may be talked about very differently, for example, as the representative of decent ordinary people. The point is that the negative representation of authority and officialdom is very much a cultural theme which is used in certain contexts to evoke certain temporary categories of people.

I will explore this in terms of two interrelated points for convenience. The first is distrust of authority: the second is nepotism. I want to illustrate this collective representation of officialdom and show the way that it is often verified by personal experiences.

Distrust of authority

Anthropological works on the Mediterranean generally include a section on patronage. One of my first lessons of Spanish culture on arriving in Valencia shook me into the reality of many of these studies. I soon learned the value of having friends in useful places.

When I arrived in Valencia one of the first things I needed to do was to open a bank account so that my scholarship could be transferred from the English bank where it was being deposited every three months. I had imagined that it would be a simple matter.

I tried several banks but all of them told me that I needed a Spanish national insurance number if I was to open an account. To get one of these I found out that I needed to apply for a temporary residency in Spain. I complained that this could not be so in the context of the recent changes in the E.C.. Some the staff of the banks agreed but said that I should return with my number.

Obtaining a resident's permit was far from simple. I had to go to the police immigration department where I spent several days waiting in different queues only to be told each time by an offensive civil servant that I needed go to and get yet another form from yet a further government office which would always be situated in a different part of the city.

Time was running out for me. I had started to borrow money from the one or two friends that I had made in the first month. I was only just able to pay my rent from the wages from the factory job that I had taken which were extremely low during the first month, while I was 'learning'. It was one of these friends that told me that I should go to see her mother who knew someone who worked at a bank who might be able to give me some advice.

The following day I went with the friend's mother to a branch of a provincial bank where the son of a good friend was working. Within fifteen minutes I was out of the bank skipping with my account booklet in my hand.

The process hadn't seemed so difficult. The friend's son said that it was just that clerks had either been ignorant of procedures or had not wanted the trouble of having to go out of their way to investigate the possibilities. Thus knowing someone in the trade transformed my problem.

This is not the case with all such transactions but I noticed that people I knew generally preferred to have a relative or patron in any position such as this giving them greater confidence in having their requirements fulfilled. Campbell (1964) captures the feeling of this in his discussion of marketing and patronage in Greece. Speaking of goat herders, he points out that:

> Generally he does not think that he can approach a senior civil servant in a straightforward manner with any hope of success since he believes there is no ethic of public service and that the official has a primary obligation to his own family [...] To protect himself, therefore, the villager searches for a patron among the elite of the professional class (1964:143)

People feel then that those in official positions lack any ethic which drives them to perform their job in a professional manner. Such officials are, rather, out to protect their own interests. This is particularly the case as regards perceptions of the civil service. I was often told angrily that state employees are given contracts for life and try to just pass the days doing as little as possible many of whom have little idea of the job they are supposed to be doing. Hooper (1986) describes how in 1980, the socialist government investigated the civil service finding many people claiming wages for more than one job, huge amounts of unnecessary 'expenses' and 'bonuses' being claimed, and workers not working the hours for which they were paid. The government, he points out, have continually made promises to deal with this problem but little seems to ever

get done. The civil service still seems to have much of the power it developed during the Franco years.

The aim then, for people is often, as Campbell (1964) suggests, "to establish some kind of link which will transform an otherwise impersonal confrontation into a personal relation" (1964:218). People look to make such relationships wherever necessary. What happens, as Kenny (1968) points out, is that: "Patronage channels seem to weave their own special web throughout official power and authority structures" (1968:158).

Kenny discusses the way that in an Andalucian town locals try to make patrons of the policeman, priest, municipal secretary, doctor, teacher and forestry commissioner. This is done by trying to create a situation where they have some kind of moral obligation to act in a certain way which will work more positively than would an otherwise impersonal professional relationship. This might be done by giving gifts of favours or by making key individuals god-parents.

There is great distrust of those in positions of authority, then as it is assumed that they will be motivated primarily by interests other than those of professionally performing their duties. This also feeds into my discussion on honour and shame where I described the way it is assumed that what people say they do and believe publicly is always hides a very different private world.

Nepotism

Since it is often assumed that people will have their primary obligation towards their family, and that progress is made through links of patronage, it is thought that anyone who has achieved anything has done it through such channels. I often heard comments such as, "well those politicians just look after their own don't they. They don't care about the likes of you and me" or "its all like one big club. They watch out for each other. You've got to know the right

people". These demonstrate the assumption made in much conversation that nepotism and self-interest is the norm. Pitt-Rivers (1954) suggests that: "It is commonplace that you can get nothing done in Andalusia save through friendship" (1954:140).

Boissevain (1966, 1974) gives many examples from his ethnography in Sicily of the way that most things that would be impossible otherwise can be achieved through a person having the right connections. In his examples, amongst other things, this helps people to get jobs and submit theses after submission dates. Campbell (1964) suggests that in the Mediterranean: "Nepotism is an obligation not a moral fault" (1964:257).

Many people that I knew complained of the way someone they knew had got a position in this way (*un enchufe*). Yet they themselves had often done similar things.

So on the one hand the dislike of authority is very much a collective representation based on a certain cultural past, where patrons were very much the norm, and where it was assumed that those in positions of authority would be essentially self interested. And on the other hand there is personal experience of nepotism and the nature of the state apparatus which itself will be interpreted through this representation. In contemporary Spain we in fact find a situation where, as Kenny (1968) points out, the personalised loyalties work alongside the impersonality of official systems of authority. And as Kenny points out, the success of anyone in one of those positions of authority will depend upon their ability to interpret the law rigidly or flexibly depending upon the needs of the situation.

There is a paradox, however, in the way that those in authority are perceived. Much of the anthropological work on patronage describes the way that on the one hand these people are ridiculed and distrusted, whilst on the other hand they are respected and people often aspire to be like them or to emulate them. Pitt-Rivers (1954) describes the way that the wealthy *señoritos* in

a Spanish village were simultaneously ridiculed and distrusted, and used as a source of values and role models and a measure of to what one might aspire.

Conclusion.

In the last two chapters I have begun to create a sense of the features of the setting where the theoretical discussions I gave in the previous chapter are to be located. I have described the nature of the Spanish press showing why it has some of the characteristics it has today. I have also given details of the newspapers in the City of Valencia and how they are used by readers. This provides the context in which the journalists and readers we look at in later chapters perform. I went on to look some of the particularly Spanish characteristics of my data; at the way Spanish people are often concerned to present certain kinds of public faces and that in Spain there is a certain collective representation of officialdom as lacking any professional ethic. I now want to look at people operating in that setting. I will begin, in the next chapter by looking at the practices of journalists working the Spanish Press showing how they consider what kinds of cultural themes can be used for their readers and consider the kinds of categories of people that they use.

Section three: Journalistic practice and journalists

Chapter 5

Transforming events into news narratives by imagining what readers bring to texts with them.

Introduction

In the first chapter I discussed the way that humans are engaged in an ongoing exchange of stories about how the world works and the kinds of people that exist in that world. People exchange these stories as they are involved in the business of interpersonal interaction and the navigation of self. In this chapter I want to consider the voice of the newspaper journalist in Valencia as they play their part in that ongoing discussion, where meanings and selves are navigated through the exchange of narratives. I argue that journalists often transform events into news by assembling them into cultural narratives or templates for social life involving certain temporary categories of people. Narratives will be chosen by considering what readers will bring to the text with them. It is often the nature of the narrative chosen by the journalist that will determine the nature of the news text more so than the events themselves.

Exploded interactions

This process by which the journalist produces narratives, I want to argue, is not unlike the way that, in face-to-face situations, we produce discourse using our cultural system of knowledge as a resource in the context of how we might orientate the hearer to a certain understanding. To do this we use cultural narrative themes which invite hearers to imagine the events or people in a particular kind of flow, which gives them a certain kind of significance or shape. In such contexts the concern of the speaker is 'what does the hearer bring with them to the conversation — what kind of cultural narratives move them or how can I sensibly assemble *these* events to make it seem like they are part of *that* narrative?'.

So the journalist, like any other voice, must tap in to the ongoing talk, if they are to participate in it, and the discourse that they themselves produce will be received as part of the discussion. So despite the distance, and the fact that the majority of the individuals involved in the discussion will never in fact meet, many of the qualities of the face-to-face situation are preserved in those interactions. Carrithers (1992) refers to such interactions as being 'exploded interactions' :

> The image I have in mind is one of those mechanical drawings of a machine, say a child's bicycle, which are used by fumbling parents as a guide to assembly. The machine is shown as though caught in a moment of explosion, flying apart, separated, but with its nuts and bolts still properly related to each other in their right order and position (1992:141)

For Benedict Anderson (1983) it was the way that newspapers give audiences this sense of being face-to-face with one another, despite their

102

distance, that was important for the formation of imagined communities such as the nation. He argues that:

> The significance of this mass ceremony (of newspaper buying and readership) [...] is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity, he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned? At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life (1983:35-36)

The problem with Anderson's discussion, as Kemper (1993) points out, is that he assumes that it is the journalists that provide the sense of what the community is. Kemper argues that like in many studies of nation

> negligible attention is paid to the process by which individuals on whom [...] high culture was imposed adapted, misunderstood, and resisted that culture (1993:378)

I would add to this that Anderson does not consider the way that those at the centre, such as, journalists, can not simply feed the periphery with what ever they like, but must tap into the ongoing discussion if they are to produce successful discourse, i.e., that which is likely to have the desired effect. I hope to demonstrate this in this chapter.

What I want to do now is look at the sources of the events that journalists use to produce their texts. I will go on to show how they use these texts, sometimes 'cold' in the form received form sources, and at other times by transforming them using different cultural narratives, where they must be to some extent tuned in to kinds of narrative themes that will work for readers.

News as a commodity

Here I want to look at where news events come from. What I will present contrasts greatly with the view of news as the product of digging investigative reporters providing revealing news through their 'nose' for a story or professional intuitions. I will show that due to practical reasons this simply cannot be the case. Journalists must seek out the most practical and reliable ways of filling the page of their newspaper. The consequence of this, as I will show, is that there is a great dependency upon news agencies and bureaucratic organisations.

One editor of a local newspaper in Valencia told me that around 70% of the material appearing in his newspaper each day came directly from news agencies. This was mainly from the Spanish agency EFE, although this material would itself come through other larger international agencies such as Reuters, Associated Press, United Press International and Agence France. Another editor told me that he disliked this fact but acknowledged that there was simply no other practical answer. He said that most of the material in each edition was agency material which had been cut down for brevity. An editor of a recently founded free paper told me that his greatest expense when setting up had been gaining access to agency material. But he said: "without this you simply can not have a commercial newspaper. You can not have journalists all over the world". He said: "on this paper we are basically, apart from a few features writers, a team of agency text editors".

Newspapers simply have no choice other than to use the agencies due to practical and financial reasons. They can not afford the staff to find news for themselves or indeed to have people working on every piece of material that is to go into the newspaper. News agencies, I was told: "produce news regularly and predictably and when you are faced with turning out the day's edition this is what is important". Bell (1991), studying newspapers in Anglophone countries, emphasised the importance of pre-existing text for newspapers:

Input texts which are already cast in news format and style stand a much better chance of selection than texts which are not appropriately packaged. The extent to which input materials can be reproduced rapidly and with little editing is a major factor in their being selected for publication (1991:59)

Bell (1991) demonstrated that most of the news that arrives in the pages of the newspapers he studied was from the large news agencies. He calls such news 'cut-and-paste jobs' referring to the way journalists or editors will go through news agency release and basically cut sentences or paragraphs out here and there depending upon how much the feel the newspaper needs.

The bulk of news events then are received from news agencies which, one experienced journalist complained to me: "allows them to set the agenda for what everyone will cover".

One sub-editor showed me the original agency texts along with the texts derived from them which were to go in the next days paper. The difference was only in the absence of a paragraph here or there. The next day he showed me articles covering the same news in different newspapers. They all contained most of the same original agency release.

What I have discussed goes for national and international news. As we will see similar considerations remain important for obtaining news of a local nature. Journalists have to produce a regular supply of stories which has to coincide with the deadlines of the newspaper. Thus, as with the national and international news, they need predictable and reliable sources for local stories.

All the journalists I worked with had procedures for ensuring that they produced a steady supply of articles for their newspapers. They all had, in some form or another, what Fishman (1980) called 'beats'. These are the sites that they will regularly visit or communicate with each day where they know material will be available for news. These will always include, or be exclusively formed by, a number of bureaucratic organisations which provide a predictable source of systematically produced information which is easily digestible. From his American fieldwork Fishman gives the following example:

> A city hall which schedules its city council meetings, formalises agendas of business, files its reports and communications, and keeps consistent office hours is a beat setting which makes sources of information predictably available to the reporter (1980:36).

Many of the journalists I studied were in continual contact throughout the day with the local police and hospital. They also went to the local courtrooms. All of this would be very routine. They would always be on friendly terms with those whose jobs it was to give them access to the information.

Many journalists told me that it is important that sources in certain contexts have a good sense of what may be useful as news. One journalist told me that the police spokesperson he was dealing with at the time was not very good. He said: "The last one was really good. He would notice all the good stories that might not particularly sound important such as where a woman pulled a wardrobe over on herself and was stuck inside it for a day or where a

bell-ringer got hoisted up into the bell tower where he stayed for a few hours until someone heard him shouting". The present spokesperson however tended to only reveal events which included deaths or violence.

Whenever journalists find out about a new event or need more information it is always to other bureaucratic organisations that they will turn. For example, one journalist was working on a story about the suspected murderer of the three girls of Alcácer, who had managed to evade the police. She needed a different angle on the story in order to produce enough material to fulfil editorial demand. She had decided that she would write a story on the cost to the taxpayer of keeping such a person in prison. So she rang sources working at the local council to get a telephone number of someone in local government who could give her some figures. She also got a telephone number of someone working in the prison service who might give her information on recent prison improvements which may have cost money.

Fishman argues that the world, for journalists, is bureaucratically organised. He suggests that: "Whatever the happening, there are officials and authorities in a structural position to know" (1980:51)

Fishman suggests that this dependency on bureaucratic organisations has the consequences that journalists carve up reality using the same common-sense 'phase structures'. By 'phase structures' he refers to the way organisations divide up the flow of information they have to deal with into phases which are easy to deal with for administrative purposes. Examples of this might be the way hospitals reduce patients to sets of symptoms or the way teachers and schools deal with students in terms of defined learning/ability categories. The phases would be the points at which information is recorded by the organisation. The categories into which it is recorded become the reality of each case. Fishman points out that bureaucratic accounts

are idealisations because they are intended to be administratively useful not objectively descriptive... The object can be dealt with appropriately only if reconstructed in terms of some standard vocabulary of action (1980:136).

Such organisations could not operate in any other way. As Tuchman (1978) argues:

Any organisation that sought to process each and every phenomena as a 'thing in itself' would be so flexible that it would be unrecognisable as a formal organisation (1978:45).

Fishman argues that it is these phases which are accessible to journalists. The news reality thus reflects the world created by the organisations. Anything which stood outside of the procedural categorisation of the organisation would go unnoticed by the journalist. What readers in fact see is normalised bureaucratic work. Journalists will use these sources simply because they help them to get the job done but also because as one source told me: "This is simply how you do it. Who else could you ask?".

So what I have shown so far is that newspapers will use news agency and bureaucratic organisations' material simply as it saves time and money and makes the jobs of journalists easier. What I need to do now is mention a little more about these sources. By sources I refer to the individuals in organisations whose job it is to provide information to journalists — although in some cases it is, in fact, not their job.

Whilst I shadowed journalists during their coverage of ongoing events I was struck by the way that organisations produce material for journalists and whilst keeping those journalists happy, gave themselves control over the kind of information that was available on the events. Whilst following the search for

one of the murderers of the girls of Alcácer I noticed that the police spokesperson regularly made releases to the press — some faxes to the newspapers, others at press conferences — but they carefully delayed the release of the actual details often repeating the same ones with a little added each time. Also the journalists were invited out to certain scenes of the crime but not to others. Journalists told me this is the way the relationship with sources works. One told me: "You respect what they give you and they will continue giving. Its like a friendship, and it takes a long time to get good relationships with sources so you don't really want to spoil the relationship".

The point I am getting at here is that bureaucracies organise themselves to produce news discourse for journalists in order to manage how they are visualised in the news. This has been studied, again regarding the press of Anglophone countries, by Ericson (1989). It is important, he argues, that sources are able to have some control over news discourse about them in order that they appear to be doing what the public expects them to do. He suggests that organisations have front and back regions. The front region is open to journalists, the back region generally is not. For example, a back region might be the actual practicalities of police work or pre-hearing deals between court officials and lawyers. The front region are those activities which are offered as the way things are done. Ericson argues that:

> By keeping reporters preoccupied with things they are bound to be interested in, and by easing their workload in the process, sources can offset the likelihood of incursions into private spheres (1989:18)

Ericson points out how over the last few decades organisations such as the police, for example, have realised the importance of such relations with the media:

In the past few decades the police have become much more involved with the news media, loosening some aspects of their back-region enclosure over knowledge while effecting front region closure through more proactive 'feeding' of reporters. In the process the police have come to appreciate that the news media are part of the policing apparatus of society, and can be controlled and put to good use in this respect (1989:93)

Ericson suggests that:

even routine crime-occurrence news releases have promotional character for the police. The world is depicted as rife with crime and deviance and the police as the authority for keeping the lid on it. It makes the role of the police seem self-evident, and their efforts at crime control appear objective, compassionate and effective (1989:144)

Older journalists often told me, when I asked about the way that the police regulated the amount of information available, that in contrast to ten years ago the police are now extremely helpful and free with information. he told me: "I suppose they realised that it is better for them to not to shut off from us as then we have to go somewhere else for information. If they tell us something it saves us the trouble".

I interviewed one local government spokesperson whose job was to consider how information about the workings of her department could best be presented to journalists. She told me: "I would never lie but I select details or facts to give a favourable representation of our activities. Often the things that go on are pretty shameful so it is my job to make them look different". She said that : "this often involves predicting the kinds of questions that journalists are likely to ask". She had herself been a journalist for many years and told me: "I was chosen for the job for this reason. The bosses want someone who knows

how the press works and knows what people on the street (*la gente en la calle*) want to hear".

Sources may, however, not be in an official position as representative of their organisation. Many journalists had got to know their sources as they went along, by simply making contacts or friendships. Many sources, one journalist told me: "simply want to see themselves in the news. It may be good publicity for them, or they may just like the power of being in a relationship with the press".

In their need to maintain such relationships journalists must take care to present the source's organisation in a favourable light. Gans (1980) describes this journalist/source relationship as a symbiotic one. The journalist must practice some self-censorship to keep the source willing whilst the source must provide material to satisfy the journalist or the journalist may go elsewhere. However occasionally, if the story is too good to resist, journalists will abuse this, even though a source may be lost. One journalist told me that she had once lost two good sources in local government when she had run a story on corruption. She said that: "I could have left what they had told me out of the story but it made it complete. I was really proud of the story at the time". So sources do not have complete control. Ericson points out that:

As a producer of a news text about activities involving the source organisation, the journalist has control over aspects of how it is framed and how the other texts that are used are contextualised. Thus the source is very likely to have her own understandings and meanings escape her as they become translated and objectified in the news text (1989:14)

This brings us on to the next point which is that journalists do have control over how the events are used and what kind of narrative they put the events into although this will be constrained by the political orientation of the newspaper

and the need to not alienate advertisers. This is what I would now like to look at. I want to look at a few kinds of text and consider how they were put together by the journalists. The first texts show the way that journalists will use some source material 'cold' (*frío*), if it is not particularly newsworthy but space needs to be filled, or if they simply don't have the time to develop them. The later texts show how the journalist is transforming events from sources into news narratives for readers in the context of what the journalist imagines the generic or particular reader brings to the text with them.

Events: cold and transformed

A lorry driver dies after a collision of two heavy vehicles in Benifario

I want to start with some texts which were described to me as 'nothing else' (*no hay nada más*) stories. These stories appear purely to fill the pages and journalists do not consider that there is any point in developing them, although they may occasionally be grouped together in a 'Black Weekend' (*fin de samana negra*) kind of narrative. Road accidents, unless they have some specific feature are classic of this kind of story. For example, "A lorry driver dies after colliding with two heavy vehicles in Benifario". Also a text like this would only be included if the paper had a photograph. The writer of the text told me that it is often difficult to get photos of crashes due to the traffic-jams that they generally cause. The photo, he told me: "improves the news value of the event, after all everyone likes to look at a crash". However he said that he doubted if anyone read such texts unless the crash had happened in a familiar location.

Judge sends policeman to jail after he fires gun at door during argument with girlfriend

This text is similar although here it is included due to the involvement of the policeman . The writer said that "their actions always increase the significance of a mis-doing". This could be included in the category of news which Gans (1980) calls 'role reversal'. Here the 'goody' becomes the 'baddy'. The journalist told me though that such a text was still a page filler but a more attractive one to the accident and fire texts. This, he said, was because: "people can imagine something. An accident may be no more than a casual event for them. It has no protagonists". So here we see the journalist aware of the need for people to be able to associate with the consciousness of protagonists for the story to really come alive for them. This, as we shall see shortly, is extremely important to journalists when they are considering how to bring readers closer to events.

Dustbin lorries disappear without a trace from the streets of New York

This was described to me as another page filler (*llenan las páginas*). It was spotted as such by an editor searching through the agency wire service material for international news. This text, however, falls into what was described to me as the "look what strange things happen in this world (*mira que cosas tan raras pasan en el mundo*)" category. These stories are important for readers as they can be commented on and joked about. I found that one of the most talked about news texts was one which reported that a shark, rare in Valencian waters, had bitten a doctor's toes off while he was swimming. It was a source of much humour. The dustbin lorries story may have been considered more newsworthy had it happened in Valencia.

In contrast a different 'the strangest things happen' text telling how a cockerel had provoked a huge village dispute due to the volume of its morning call was taken more seriously as it did happen within Valencia. However there is a further reason for the importance of this story. The local or regional newspapers such as *Levante* or *Las Provincias* dedicate some space in each edition to *conmarcas*. These are areas or villages outside of the city. "Since it is rare that anything really newsworthy happens in these areas", said one editor, "if anything does happen it is included. This shows the people of these parts that they are part of the community which our newspaper represents. If we did not do this they would probably start buying one of the nationals".

A pensioner and a boy die asphyxiated in the changing rooms of a football field in Chiva

This text is a 'nothing else' story although it appeared taking up a whole page. Many texts occur like this. Let us see why.

The journalist told me that he had received a call from a source at the local police station telling him that the naked bodies of an old man and a young boy had been found in the changing rooms. The journalist said to me that he had thought that there seemed the possibility of a 'homosexual love-pact suicide (*un suicidio de amor homosexual*)'. So, as it was quite late, he told his section head to reserve a page for the story and rushed out to the scene with a photographer. When he got there the police told him that the man and boy had died changing their clothes after turning on a gas heater which had gone out. The journalist told me that he was disappointed and that they still had to use the story even though it was "very weak (*muy flojo*)" as there was a whole page reserved for it. He told me that: "this just happens but its worth it as if the story turns out a good one you have a cracker (*uno de puta madre*) which the other papers don't have".

The journalist recalled several other recent texts which had followed a similar pattern. In the case of this particular text he expressed amusement at his own disappointment that it wasn't anything really sordid. He said:

> You get like that though. You hope that someone died in that place or that this person turns out to be a gay child sex offender. Its like, if something goes wrong and its the fault of the local council its better if it killed a few people and even better if they were very young or old. You get the habit of hoping for the worst to make something better news (*noticías más notables*).

I asked the journalist why a 'homosexual' story would have been good. He said that he couldn't say why exactly: "I suppose its different from people's everyday lives. It's the same if something out of the ordinary happens in your street. It's the kind of thing you can tell someone and they want to listen. Like your neighbour is having an affair with this other neighbour. It's good to hear about. Life can be boring. It makes a change, something to occupy you". Another journalist said that:

> Well I suppose people like to read about other people breaking guidelines. It all intrigues us really doesn't it, if we accept it? We like to hear about murder or where sexual guidelines have been broken or overstepped. I suppose all good stories are about the limits of acceptable behaviour. I think its because really we all want to go there but can not.

The following are a different group of texts which are not especially newsworthy but which have one feature which makes them work for readers which the journalist has noticed.

Left-wing councillors claim that the Ministry of the Interior is using ways of the Wild West.

The councillors had accused the Ministry of using such methods in the search for a fugitive accused of murder. The journalist told me that at the time just about everyone was making some sort of statement about the issue. He said that what made this stand out was the 'Wild West' description. For him this did something to the events which I think suggests an important feature of how journalists consider how events can be transformed into news for readers. The journalist said to me: "people know about the Wild West. I suppose it gives them a reference point or brings the story alive a bit".

I think that two important points are raised by the use of this text. The first is that ordinary and non-newsworthy events are made newsworthy by the fact that they are transformed into something else for the reader by the 'Wild West' narrative. To the reader this headline gives a strong impression of the flavour of the procedures of the Ministry even if no further information on what was in fact happening is given. In our culture we know about the mythical Wild West, about 'wanted' posters, possees, 'gun slingers', and ' bounty hunters'. The point being made was that the Ministry were perhaps relying on methods to apprehend the fugitive that were not so far away from this. What is interesting for us is that it is the transformation into the world of this cultural narrative that makes it newsworthy.

The second point is that whilst looking for news events the journalist is considering what the readers bring to the text with them. In the case of our Wild West text the journalist immediately realised that this narrative would work for readers.

The same was said about the following text:

The police detain a private detective and his helper for kidnapping a child

The journalist told me that this story was chosen due to the 'private detective' aspect. He said: "this gives it that something else (*lo da algo más*). It works a bit like a film for the reader. They know about the romantic world of private detectives so they can think about the story in that way". So as with the previous text the journalist considers what readers know and how certain mechanisms can orientate their understandings of events in a particular way.

I will now move on to look at some texts where journalists are considering more carefully what level of knowledge readers already have about the events in them. Those events which do not already fit into a narrative for the readers must be put into one. Journalists referred to this as creating a climate (*una clima*) for the events. This which may involve the events being transformed into something quite different in the process.

Texts that can already be recognised as being in the flow of news by the reader due to the fact that a climate has already been made can be run cold (*fríos*). That is they need no climate creating or introduction. For example:

During the month of January there were 4 crimes every hour in the city of Valencia

The writer of this told me that they run this kind of text every time the police or state release new statistics. She says that: "such statistics don't need introducing as everyone generally feels that crime is on the increase. This is what is on people's minds (*se preocupa la gente*). They think that standards are falling along with a decline in moral values". She said to me that : "this is what people say in *bares* or at the hair dressers or in the gym". So the journalist

imagines that such a story can be 'run cold' as it is already part of a 'general decline' narrative for the readers.

Son stabs father after argument

The writer of this text told me that similarly people feel that family values are on the decline and that children respect nothing and no-one these days. She also said though that the text works in the sense that it breaks the norm. Sons don't usually stab fathers. She said that: "such a text will appeal to many people, well as everyone has a father don't they. Everyone knows about parent-child relationships. It can create a powerful scenario for them". Again with these texts we can see that the journalist is imagining that readers already have a certain cultural narratives through which they will be made sense of. In the same way that any individual gets develops a knowledge of cultural narratives, the journalist gets hers through being involved in the ongoing discussion in various social settings.

People have to get used to leaving the house at 10 o' clock and return at 3 o'clock at the latest.

This text reflects on an ongoing debate within the community about opening hours of *bares* and the disturbances caused to neighbours (many bars are open until 4am and most of the clientele are outside in the street due to the heat). The journalist told me that: "there has been a long running series of comments from various parties: *bar* owners, neighbourhood representatives, local politicians, so this comment from a local politician can be run cold with no introduction or climate making". Here the story is considered by the journalist to be part of an ongoing debate in the community so it needs little transformation or location in terms of how it is relevant.

Polytechnic Student dies after falling from 3rd floor

In this text the journalist was also confident that these events would be seen as part of a general narrative by readers. He told me that he thought that it might have been a suicide. The text does not directly say this. It is only inferable from the way that the principal has denied that it was suicide. The journalist told me that he couldn't himself legally allege it was a suicide.

But why was it that this incident was newsworthy? The journalist said that suicides are generally not covered as there are a fair number of them and because people were generally not interested. Also he said that often he felt that giving details of them was seen as bad taste *(de mal gusto)*. But he said that over the past few years there have been a number of such deaths at the polytechnic. In the past it has been speculated that the students are often put under too much pressure. So, he told me that:

> the text need not include details or real speculations as the reader already knows the score *(saben de todo el rollo)*. Just details of the death and the principal's denial of suicide are enough. If it had not been covered before I would have had to mention some things about the polytechnic, about students being put under pressure and also some police comments to suggest that the death was unlikely to be an accident. Such comments are pretty easy to obtain. If you make a phone call and ask the right kind of questions in the end they say something you can use.

We have looked at some texts where the journalists have considered that the events will already be imagined into a narrative by readers. Let's now go on to look at texts where the journalist is considering how to create the 'climate' or the narrative theme for the reader.

Children forget parents after putting them in nursing home.

This text was based solely on a letter received from the president of a residents homes association. The letter mentioned several features of living in homes and the increase in demand for places in them. The journalist rang the president and arranged to interview him. She also arranged for a photographer to get some photographs of some residents. Then she ran the text as a "new problem story (*aquí tenemos una problema nueva*)" introducing the text with quite prosaic language about the way such homes were a suitable final place for people with such a sea of knowledge and wisdom.

To help locate the text the journalist rang a lecturer at the local university who was investigating changing family values from whom she had received a letter some time before. Comments from this 'expert' were used in the text. The journalist said: "This is how you create the climate. Later I can do more stories on the topic without such an introduction. It's always good to be on the lookout for new topics then later lesser events become newsworthy due to them being part of the whole". She said that: "these texts appeal to everyone as everyone has a family or grandparents and in these days of crime and juvenile delinquency people see the break up of the family as another part of the foundations slipping away". She said she had received hundreds of letter and phone calls regarding the text showing their concern or wanting to be involved in the study being done by the lecturer.

So here the journalist considers how to contextualise certain events to make them newsworthy by presenting them in a cultural narrative about the decline of the family. Again this is done by imagining what will work for the readers in the sense of what they bring to the text with them.

This journalist told me that she often developed texts from sets of statistics, e.g., percentages of pensioners in homes. She said that she always put the

information in a personalised context: "Numbers or statistics don't draw anybody in, even if it means hundreds of people dead. People don't get moved by facts or events, they need individuals, someone they can identify with, someone they can feel for". She picked up a newspaper on her desk and told me how a particular text could be improved, although she said: "this writer probably didn't have much time, as is usually the case". This is the heading of that text. The text itself just gave the details of what had happened.

Minor 8 months pregnant working as prostitute in *El Chino* (local red light area).

She said that this looked like a potentially good story which had not been developed from the outline details received from the source (the writer of the text told me that he had intended to do more with the text but it had been the day that the bodies of the three girls from Alcácer had been found. This had taken up all his time)

She told me that such a story had huge potential and that it needed a protagonist for the readers to make the most of the events. She said that: "one personalised story of an under-age prostitute would draw in the readers and create more of a reaction than statistics which referred to hundreds of them". She said:

> I would have given a profile of the girl. With just the facts a reader may show momentary shock but they don't get into the story, they don't see it as a story. Imagine if there had been a huge narcotics scandal in Colombia for example, which has world wide significance. You tell them that it creates this and that oppression and that such and such a percentage of children become involved in some stage of drug trafficking. They will say 'oh dear' but they won't really feel anything. You have to

give them something concrete. I would find out about some kids who are affected by the narcotics trade. I will tell how those kids live, suffer and die. The readers will be able to enter the story completely and I would get lots of letters and phone calls by people commenting, giving approval, showing concern or whatever.

She said:

its like having a photo of a garden which is full of plants and flowers. I will choose one flower and make it the protagonist to give the audience something concrete. If the garden was being destroyed by some pesticide I would say how it affected one particular flower and its life. I would also talk about what pesticides do and ask whether they are necessary and look at who uses them but all this would need a protagonist for the audience to focus on, to give them something concrete.

So here the journalist is clearly considering two landscapes for the readers: the landscape of action which are the events and the facts, and the landscape of consciousness which allows the reader to get closer to the events as they empathise with the protagonists. The journalist also shows the way that this landscape of consciousness brings the story alive for the reader. This shows clearly what Carrithers (In Press) points to when he described the difference between paradigmatic and narrative thought. It is the narrative thought that has the capacity to move people in a powerful way. In chapter eight I will show that this is the key to part of our understanding of the response shown by people to the murders of the three girls of Alcácer.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that news events are obtained from news agencies and bureaucratic organisations as these are the cheapest and most reliable sources. I suggested that will have certain implications for the kind of events that journalists as this will reflect the world representation of the large press agencies, the organisation of reality by bureaucracies and the way sources will provide information which is convenient for journalist which allows them to control their public face. I have also shown the way that journalists use these events, either cold with only minor editing, or by considering how they can be transformed into a cultural narrative. I argued that they do this, like any discourse producer, by considering what those they are involved in the discourse with bring to the setting with them. They must thus, like any other speaker, consider the state of the ongoing discussion and narrative themes that will be considered as compatible by those for whom they intend their discourse.

What I have done in this chapter then is to present an idea of the voice of the journalist as it participates in the ongoing discussion. In later chapters I will go on to look at some of the other voices in the discussion, the readers, and consider how they talk about the news the journalists offer. What I want to do in the next chapter is to look in detail at one particular text from a Valencian newspaper that is part of an ongoing discussion about an individual. We can see how the journalist is aware that certain procedures of news production can be ignored due to the way people are already thinking about the events with which she deals. In this case we can see clearly that the journalist produces narratives that fit into the ongoing discussion. The chosen narrative would have seemed bizarre should it have appeared at an earlier stage of that discussion.

Chapter 5

Describing an individual already firmly located in one category of person

Introduction

In this chapter I want to look at one text in detail. The text is typical of many which appeared during the search for one of the murderers of the three girls from the village of Alcácer. I want to look at it in detail to show how a whole range of features become transformed as the journalist assembles them into a particular kind of narrative. In this case we can see the way that the journalist was aware that certain of her more usual news conventions could be abandoned due to the way that the text fitted in with the ongoing discussion about that particular individual. The narrative that the journalist used simply would not have been usable at an earlier stage of the ongoing discussion.

I will not suggest that there is any one true reading of the text but present it as the voice of the journalist as they attempt to offer a certain narrative interpretation of events. In this sense the voice can be responded to by an audience in the way that any voice can be responded to. And, as I want to demonstrate clearly in chapter nine, the ways that readers talk about a news text depends very much on the setting and what they want to achieve in that setting.

AMPLIO DESPLIEGUE PARA CAPTURAR 🔲 AL ENEMIGO PÚBLICO NÚMERO UNO

Con su rostro de buen chico y su apariencia de no haber roto nunca ningún plato, Antonio Anglés Martins ha practicado durante toda su vida un solo deporte: ejercer el terror y la crueldad entre sus congéneres. Perverso hasta la saciedad, egoísta, primitivo e incapaz de ser sometido a norma alguna, el presunto asesino de las tres niñas de Alcàcer consiguió hasta librarse de la «mili». Simuló un suicidio y le salió bien. Su madre se ha visto obligada a guardar el dinero en la vagina para que Antonio, que ha practicado vejaciones con sus ocho hermanos, no se lo robara. Las amenazas de muerte eran sus «buenos días».

Un juez recurrió a un cúmulo de multas para meter a Antonio Anglés en la cárcel y aliviar el sufrimiento familiar

Dormir con el dinero en la vagina

PILAR G. DEL BURGO

Es analfabeto, perverso y primitivo. Y el pánico es la moneda de trueque que utiliza con quienes le conocen. El amigo inseparable de Antonio Anglés ha sido, desde siempre, un cuchillo de grandes proporciones, que llevaba escondido en una de las mangas cada vez que iba a casa de la señora María, una de sus vecinas en Catarroja, a pedirle que le subiera el bajo de los pantalones.

A Antonio Anglés, el tercero de nueve hermanos (Divina, Kelli, Roberto, Ricardo, Juan Luis, Enriquito, Mauri y el Tata) que han vivido profundamente estigmatizados por sus arrebatos de violencia y crueldad sin freno, le gusta ir limpio y cuida con mimo su aspecto personal. Siente debilidad por la ropa de marca y siempre que puede combina los colores de las prendas que, en ocasiones, robaba a punta de navaja y a bordo de una moto en marcha a los escolares del instituto de Catarroja, a quienes les quitaba cazadoras, camisas y hasta los zapatos. A este delincuente, que durante años nadie del pueblo se ha atrevido a denunciar, no se le ha conocido novia, y los que le han tratado aseguran que no es homosexual. Sus perrerías se cuentan a cientos. Su especialidad: la extorsión.

Mil pesetas por día de cárcel

La madre y los hermanos de Antonio Anglés Martins han vivido durante años aterrados por sus palizas, robos y por la maligna utilización que hacía de todos ellos. De un bofetón le arrancó los dientes a su madre. La mujer estuvo durante muchos meses escondiendo los billetes de dinero en la vagina para que su hijo Antonio no se los robara. Otros métodos anteriores que probó, como fueron guardarlo en los calcetines y acostarse con los zapatos puestos y en una bolsita de tela junto al sujetador, no dieron resultados.

La primera vez que A. Anglés entró en la cárcel Modelo estuvo cincuenta días y fue para pagar un cúmulo de multas, por valor de 50.000 pesetas, que le habían puesto por ir en dirección prohibida con motos que robaba. Fue una decisión que adoptó el juez para «quitarlo de en medio» y dejar a su familia tranquila durante un par de meses.

En presidio, Antonio, a través de unos colegas, mandó recado a la madre: «si no pagas la multa, mandaré a los de ETA que he conocido en la cárcel para que te maten».

«Antonio siempre tenía en la boca una amenaza de muerte para la madre, para los mayores y para los dos pequeñitos, que son los que más han sufrido, porque era a quienes más ha utilizado», declaró a Levante-EMV una persona que ha conocido de cerca y durante años los avatares de este delincuente sin ley y que prefiere mantenerse en el anonimato porque sólo su nombre ya le infunde terror.

Con un amigo, asegura dice no conocerla, atracó en una ocasión a Neusa, su madre, provisto de un palo. Le dijo que si no le daba las 50.000 pesetas de sueldo que acababa de cobrar le metería el palo por la vagina. La mujer reconoció a su vástago a pesar de la oscuridad, hizo de tripas corazón y le denunció.

En el juicio, al que la madre acudió con protección oficial, el abogado de oficio que defendió a Antonio Anglés se dirigió a ella y le increpó: «¿Hasta dónde ha podido llegar para denunciar a su propio hijo?». Neusa retiró la denuncia. Antonio volvió a amenazarla con matarla.

Una noche, después de aquellos 50 primeros días de reclusión, Antonio encendió el colchón en el que dormía su madre, para que se quemara viva. Su padre, que dormía borracho y tirado en alguna parte de la casa, se despertó con el humo y logró sacar a su mujer y ponerla a salvo. La ira de Antonio se desató como una tormenta sin fin y arremetió contra ambos en una cruel paliza.

En esta ocasión, otro de los hermanos, Juan Luis, no toleró los golpes que Antonio daba a la madre y le asestó una puñalada. Antonio ingresó en el hospital Doctor Peset de Valencia. Durante su convalecencia dormía con un cuchillo bajo la almohada. Esta vez también mandó recado a su casa con unos conocidos. «Cuando vuelva los mataré a todos», a Juan Luis y a los dos pequeños.

El juez envió a Juan Luis a la cárcel de Foncalent para mantenerle a salvo del hermano.

Antonio Anglés, que no tiene oficio ni beneficio, habla en castellano y no se somete a norma alguna. Ha logrado librarse hasta de la mili. En un principio creía que quedaría exento por ser analfabeto y haber nacido en Brasil, pero se hicieron los trámites oportunos para que fuera al Ejército y separarlo así durante más de un año de su familia, que en vano intentaba normalizar la situación. Sin embargo, se salió con la suya. Antes de ir dijo: «Haré como si me suicido.» Efectivamente. A los pocos días de llegar al cuartel apareció con una soga debajo del mentón. Salió exento y se libró de la mili.

«Su astucia y maldad no tienen parangón; de puertas para afuera daba la imagen de buen chico, con su canta de guapo y bien arreglado, pero puertas para dentro era un demonio. El mejor plato de comida siempre era para él; los tenía aterrorizados. Su madre ha intentado cientos de veces llevar una vida normal, pero él nunca les ha dejado. Es un animal y un narcisista. No quiere a nadie.»

Neusa, la madre, guardaba el dinero en la vagina para que no se lo robara Antonio.   RUIZ PALMERO

El presunto asesino de las niñas se escudaba en su cara de «buena persona» para sus tropelías.

Hermanos y víctimas

● **DIVINIDAD ANGLÉS.** De pequeña permaneció ingresada en el hospicio de monjas El Buen Jesús. Se escapó de casa. Nadie sabe dónde vive. Ha cortado totalmente el vínculo con su familia.

● **DOLORES, alias KELLI.** Es muy atractiva. No ha trabajado. Cuida mucho su físico, vive del sueldo de la madre. Desaparece de casa para ir a vivir con alguno de sus novios.

● **JUAN LUIS.** Oligofrénico. Fue el único que se atrevió a plantarle cara a Antonio. Ha trabajado eventualmente como chapero. Está recluido en Foncalent por haber intentado acabar con la vida de su hermano.

● **ENRIQUITO.** Esquizofrénico. Vivió durante muchos años en los billares de Catarroja. Se encargaba del cambio y del mantenimiento del local, donde también pernoctaba. Tras la venta de los billares a un banco, Enriquito (como le llama su madre) volvió a una casa que siempre tenía la puerta abierta y servía de refugio a todos los invitados que Antonio llevaba. Los malos tratos que éste infligía a todos los miembros de la familia agudizaron los cuadros mentales de los discapacitados.

● **ROBERTO.** En la actualidad está recluido en una celda del departamento de aislamiento de la cárcel Modelo de Valencia. Fue acusado de un presunto delito de tenencia ilícita de armas. Quiere imitar a su hermano Antonio.

● **RICARDO.** Una escayola llevó durante once meses cuando era adolescente y que nadie le quitó ni en su casa ni en la casa de la Misericordia, donde estuvo alojado, le provocaron un acortamiento de siete centímetros en una de las piernas. Tiene una edad mental de seis años. Recientemente ha ingresado en la Iglesia Mormona, pero quiso salirse porque no le dejaban ver el programa de las mamá Chicho. Ha vivido desconectado de la familia alojado en casetas abandonadas de la Albufera. Hace más de medio año una mujer lo recogió en el Parque Alcosa. Cobra una paga de la Seguridad Social por invalidez y Antonio le obligó a que le diera 300.000 pesetas para comprarse un Audi de segunda mano, con el que tuvo un accidente del que salió ileso.

● **MAURI y el TATA.** Los dos hermanos pequeños ingresaron en el hospicio del Buen Jesús. Han sido utilizados por Antonio para vender heroína y para perpetrar robos.

Ataques de ira

P. G. DEL BURGO

Los dos hermanos pequeños de Antonio Anglés han sido múltiples veces utilizados por él tanto para conseguir dinero como para robar en el interior de los hipermercados. El método lo había patentado Antonio y consistía en que los dos menores acudieran a comprar con toda normalidad. Antonio les esperaba cuando iban a llegar a la caja a bordo de una motocicleta en marcha. A la hora de pagar los pequeños le daban las bolsas de comida a Antonio, quien huía a toda velocidad.

El sistema no siempre salía bien, y cuando esto sucedía, Antonio lanzaba toda su ira contra los dos pequeños, según relató a Levante-EMV una persona que durante cerca de cinco años mantuvo estrechas relaciones con esta atípica familia. Su venganza se fraguaba en varios actos. En primer lugar y rabioso por no haber conseguido su objetivo, sumergía las cabezas de los niños en agua caliente y, a continuación, les rapaba el pelo a tijeretazos.

Esta misma persona, que no quiere desvelar su identidad por miedo a posibles represalias de Antonio y que conoce a los más fichas de la zona, una semana antes de que los cadáveres de las tres niñas aparecieran y cuando ya empezaba a ser verosímil que estuvieran muertas, pensó: «¿quién de todos los que conozco sería capaz de acabar con la vida de estas tres preciosidades?». El único nombre que le vino a la cabeza fue el de Antonio Anglés. Al oír que era uno de los sospechosos, sufrió un terrible impacto emocional.

The text

The text I want to look at involves, like some of the later texts in the previous chapter, the transformation and assembling of events, or more precisely in this case, features of a persons life, into a narrative to make them something quite different. This person's actions are transformed from the ordinary into being indicative of the worst evil possible. In this text the journalist does the transformation in the context of a narrative that has been running for some time.

The text is about a murderer who is on the run: Antonio Anglés the presumed murderer of the three girls of Alcácer. His character has received prior development, and the text must be understood in this context. Thus this text needs no thematisation to allow readers to read the events that it contians in the context of a particular narrative. At the time when the text was produced Anglés was already confirmed as one of the most evil beings ever. The text thus just tells us what everyone already knows. Anglés is already firmly located as a member of the temporary categories of people that are used for the practical purpose of self navigation in conversation.

In this text however, the events are not run 'cold' like other stories which would be automatically read into a narrative. In this case the journalist needed to work them, she told me: "to make the story seem different from others", that were being continually produced. This story, she said: "had to seem to go a little further". In reality the story is in fact not new news, but is an assemblage of older material put together to fulfil editorial demands to write as much material on the subject as possible, due to the huge circulation increases that it was producing.

The nature of this story might seem quite usual for any reader of the British tabloid press. However there is something quite unusual about it in the context of the Spanish Press. Firstly, as we have discussed, there is no sensationalist press in Spain, and usually the reporting of such murders is done relatively

coldly as they are not considered to be particularly newsworthy. Such events simply do not receive the same kind of 'play' as would the same events covered in say *The Sun*. It is possible that at this time that I was witnessing a change in the nature in the Spanish Press.

Let us now examine the text. The headline, **I Slept With My Money In My Vagina,** was, like all those relating to the Alcácer story at the time, placed on a page with the heading 'The Intensive Search For Public Enemy Number One' which included a small photograph of Antonio Anglés, the presumed murderer of the girls. There was also a large photograph of his mother under the headline. People had by that time come to know her face well as they had come to know the faces of all those involved.

The headline itself tells us that we are about to read of more of the depravity of the Anglés family, who had been receiving a lot of coverage over the preceding weeks. The same page had a run down of the various crimes and prison sentences of the family members. The journalist told me that the 'slept with money in my vagina' is used purely to raise curiosity and told me that it was used due to its power. The fact is actually only a minor part of the text itself, which is in fact an assembly of various incidents in the life of Antonio Anglés, which are all presented as evidence of his evil nature.

The journalist also said that the headline is particularly powerful in the Catholic context. She said: "You know how in Spain motherhood is a thing that is very powerful to us in the way that it is connected to the image of the Virgin which is central to our faith". She said that here: "the headline tells of a defilement (*ensuciamiento*) of that sacred mother image". She told me that: "you only have to walk around the streets and look at the way boys behave with their mothers. Even grown men are dominated by them". So for the Spanish reader it may suggest something particularly distasteful.

The text itself is made up of comments from an anonymous acquaintance of the Anglés family. Many of the statements made are given no clear origin and

are largely made up from the odd comment collected here and there by the journalist as they spent time the village where they lived.

Many of the journalists who wrote these kind of texts during the height of interest in Alcácer told me that Anglés was just a usual marginal kind of person (*la gente marginal es así*). They emphasised that he probably lived a life not untypical of the very poor people that are still very common in Spain. This shows that despite having an awareness of this angle to the story journalists still choose quite different narratives when writing texts due to the way they assume they will work for readers. Journalists also told me that they believed that Anglés was simply evil telling me: "if you had been involved with all this you would see how bad he is. It just makes me so angry what he did *(lo que hizo me da tanta rabia)*". In fact most journalists expressed both of these views at some time or other. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

Now I should make it clear here that I am not suggesting that to call someone who has allegedly abused and murdered three girls a bit of a bad guy ı unreasonable. What I want to illustrate is the way that this person became transformed into something more than just a dangerous marginal person from a poor area — from a person who committed an action which in fact is not that unusual in Valencia.

Lets see how the journalist invites us to consider Antonio Anglés then although we already know a lot about him and his family. I will give each paragraph and then comment on it. It is my own translation. The first paragraph was in bold:

With the face of a good boy and his appearance of never having broken even one plate Antonio Anglés Martins has taken part in only one sport in the whole of his life: exercising terror and cruelty towards his fellows. Perverse to the hilt, selfish primitive and incapable of being submitted to any norm, the presumed killer of the

three girls from Alcácer managed to even get out of doing his military service by feigning suicide. His mother had to hide her money in her vagina so that Antonio, who had already robbed his brothers, did not do the same to her. He would threaten to kill people on his 'good days'.

So Anglés is a genre of evil-doer that is particularly despicable. He looks like an ordinary person, even a good one, yet inside he is terrible, very terrible. The fact that he robbed from his own family particularly illustrates to us how much he perverts normal family relationships. That his mother had to sleep with her money in her vagina makes it all sound so horrible. As the journalist told me, the mother has a particularly revered status in Spanish culture. Here Anglés pushes his selfish irreverence for everything that should be valued to the limit. Here the journalist shows a clear and conscious idea of what people bring to the text with them.

In this paragraph we also see how features of his life which could be described quite differently become evidence for his evil. Many people I knew had evaded doing their military service, especially those from the educated classes. Most were proud of this fact. Military service is thought of as a waste of time and money. Yet here it is offered as an example of the way Anglés flaunts every rule and norm. He does exactly as he wishes. Here military service is presented as something that all decent people have to do. I asked several journalists about this and they only seemed surprised that I should want to point out the obvious. One told me: "If you want to make someone look bad you will use the same facts (*hechos*) as you would use if you wanted to make a person look good, but you say them differently (*los dices en otra forma*). If I wanted to make *you* look bad and say you had twenty cats in your house, I would say 'he must be mad and unstable to have twenty cats'. If I wanted to

make you look good I would say, 'what a kind and gentle person looking after all those lovely animals, giving homes to them' ".

Also it is suggested that Anglés feigned a suicide. We are not given any evidence for this and the journalist only has it only on hearsay and she suggests no source. One would imagine that a person capable of such cruelty and murder might have been suicidal at some point in their lives. However this narrative is conveying Anglés as an example of a calculated evil-doer. I did not want to question the journlist on the nature of the source openly, but when I asked about the inclusion of the suicide I was told: "To suggest that he tried to kill himself would suggest someone more human and that would be no good (*tener un malo humano no vale para nada*)".

He is illiterate, perverse and primitive and panic is the currency of exchange he used with those he knew. His closest and inseparable friend had always been a huge knife that he carried hidden in one of his sleeves.

This paragraph mainly throws out more descriptive terms. Here the journalist gives a sense of the anger the moral community feels towards such a person. This, as we shall see in chapter nine, was written at a time where everyone seemed to be living in a shadow of the horror of the events for which he was held responsible. Many journalists who had themselves told me that Anglés was a typical person who lived marginally often themselves got into the mode where they felt the hatred which they told me that they themselves had helped to create. Here they would talk about him as the epitomy of evil.

The paragraph opens by saying that he was illiterate, which is a quality many of the poor and marginal share. It could have been talked about in this sense: about how this kind of people, in times of high unemployment, and in a state where many do not qualify for welfare payments, end up involved in illegal

130

activities Yet here it is offered as a kind of weakness as evidence of his worthlessness.

Lastly we learn that his best friend was a knife. Perhaps we can conclude then that all boys who carry knives are potential killers. It is in fact not uncommon for people from such families to carry knives or even guns. Anglés' younger brothers in fact all had criminal records for possession of fire-arms. Again I have to comment, as one journalist told me, that "the text is not written to give a sociological understanding. It is news which has to sell newspapers".

Antonio Anglés, the third of nine children (Divina, Kelli, Roberto, Ricardo, Juan Luis, Enriquito, Mauri y el Tata), who because of their endless violent rages and cruelty have been stigmatised by poeple in their village, loved to dress well and care for his appearance. He had a weakness for designer clothes and was always able to match the colours of those he got hold of — often stolen at knife point or after waiting outside the village school in Catarroja on a motor scooter with the engine running, where he stole jackets, shirts and even shoes. This delinquent that no one ever dared to turn in had never had a girlfriend and those who knew him said that he was not homosexual. His misdeeds numbered at hundreds. His speciality extortion

In this paragraph the rest of Anglés' family cease to be just victims of his evil nature but become evil-doers themselves in the same way as they are presented in the text which appeared on the same page to the bottom left. This paragraph also offers a further transformation of a trait which could be described as quite usual. Here we are told that Anglés has a weakness for designer clothes. I would suggest that this sentence could have been preceded by the words 'like all other Spanish youths'. Yet here it is offered as part of the sinister way he maintained a respectable exterior. As with the 'twenty cats' it is something that

could be used either way. In this case it is yet another of his collection of abnormalities. And there is the paradox that he liked to match up the clothes that he stole. This somehow sounds peculiar. Matching up designer clothes is something done by going to exclusive shops, not by theft.

Again we are given no evidence of sources. It was however, as I have pointed out, written at a time when everyone was commenting on the events and when feelings were high. The journalist had no need to justify her comments. I was told by her that: "in a text like this people are not going to question the nature of your sources. If someone gave you a quote saying the sky was blue you wouldn't demand to know how much credibility the person who said the quote had got would you?" The paragraph also tells us that he had never had a girlfriend yet was not homosexual. Again he was not a normal person.

The last two sentences are just spliced on and do not really fit with the other sentences. This seems unimportant in the flow of the text as it was unimportant that the family have switched their status from victims to become evil-doers themselves. The whole is about evil-doing. It does not seem important if the parts do not go together so well. This is of the same nature as the *ad hoc* use of narrative themes to talk about news that I looked at in chapter one. I considered the way that people use their knowledge very much for the practical concerns of the moment and are not primarily concerned with consistency.

This will be of particular interest to us in the next chapter when we look at people talking about their lives using just such *ad hoc* procedures. The point here is that it is not important to readers that there is incongruence between the parts of the text. Several journalists who read this text for me told me that this works best if the incongruences are in different paragraphs. One told me: "when you move onto the next paragraph you are onto the next thing really. It's like giving a list of points. As long as they have the same theme running through them it isn't so important if some aspects of them just don't fit. Putting the

points in different paragraphs separates them a bit so they sort of exist slightly in isolation". One told me that:

> sometimes you just put anything in it doesn't matter. As for this text people felt angry towards Anglés and were willing to feel it towards any one else really. Here it just says how bad the Anglés family is, it does not matter if some of them are sometimes victims as long as there is always someone to feel angry towards.

This was a theme that I frequently found in my analysis of the British Press. For example, in one article 'rioters' in Tyneside were referred to as 'a third force' (with ring-leaders), 'communists', 'tattooed skinheads' and 'young people who have no respect'. In the light of what I was told by Spanish journalists the fact that these descriptions which were used in various parts of the account are incongruous is not important, as in each case the 'rioters' are described in a negative way. Even after studying such texts for several years it still often takes me several readings to actually grasp the contradictions within them.

One thousand pesetas for each day in prison.

Anglés mother, brothers and sisters have lived for years terrified by his beatings, thefts and general bad treatment. With one punch he once knocked out his mother's teeth. She had to hide her money in her vagina for several months in order that he would not steal it. Other methods of hiding it — putting in her socks and then sleeping in them with her shoes on top, or putting it in a bag inside her bra — had proved inadequate.

In this paragraph the family have reverted back to their status as victims. We also go back to the sordidness of the life that Anglés imposed upon people as his mother kept her money in her vagina.

The first time that Anglés was in prison was for fifty days to pay an accumulation of fines adding up to 50 000 pesetas that he had collected for going down one way streets on stolen motor scooters. It was a decision made by the judge to allow his family a few months peace.

Here Anglés' family have become complete victims. Even the judge thought they needed to be given some respite from him, even though at the time he had been convicted for only minor offences. This short paragraph prepares the way for that which follows:

Whilst in prison, Antonio, after acquainting himself with some *colleagues* sent a letter to his mother threatening 'if you don't pay the fine I will send some of my E.T.A (Basque equivalent of I.R.A.) friends I have met in prison to kill you'.

We learn here that Anglés, whilst in prison, immediately found those like himself, terrorists. They are the same as him in this case. All sociological or psychological reasons are ignored as are the political motivations of E.T.A.. In both cases we are dealing with just evil-doers of the worst kind. We are expected to accept that Anglés had interaction with E.T.A. members whilst in prison even though it is unlikely as he was only serving time for an accumulation of fines. Here, as we learn in the next paragraph, we are given this information courtesy of a source who wishes to remain anonymous. Again I raise the point as to whether this would be legitimate in other cases.

It seems that with the increased sensationalism that occurred in the Valencian press through the coverage of the events surrounding the murders of the girls of Alcácer, Spain saw the rise of a phenomenon often referred to in the U.K. as cheque-book journalism. Here people are paid for their story and the

newspaper runs it as that person's story without any concern with its truth value or relationship to actual events. One journalist working for a U.K. tabloid told me that all of the texts he worked on were of this nature. I am not suggesting that the source in our Spanish example had been paid large amounts of money. Journalists were speaking with anyone in the village who was willing to make some kind of comment, and this was not difficult to obtain as the village had been severely stigmatised due to the fact that Anglés had lived there. People from the village visiting other places had been called murderers. What I want to say here is that the comments of the source are simply taken and presented without analysis, although as I have said journalists told me that they were aware that due to the atmosphere and strong feelings they could write quite extreme things.

> Antonio was always ready to hand out death threats to the members of his family even to the younger ones who suffered most, as it is they he took most advantage of, a source who had known Anglés told LEVANTE EMV. The source was familiar with the up and downs of the delinquent who had no sense of law and order. They preferred to remain anonymous as the mere mention of the name of Anglés filled them with terror.

Here the family remain the victims. The points are still the same although we are offered them as a direct quote from the anonymous source. Such was the nature of Anglés that even the source was terrified to be known. The rest of the text continues pretty much the same, ending with a quote from the source saying that Anglés had a polished exterior with a terrible interior.

In this text then the journalist, through a need to produce material on this subject, assembles a text based on a comment that the mother of Anglés had to sleep with her money in her vagina. The suspect had been discussed for some

time in Valencia as the details of the murders that he was believed to have committed were discussed. This was done progressively as they were steadily released by the police. Journalists told me that they felt that people were always keen to know all the details about evil-doers just as they are keen to know every gruesome detail of their actions. They also told me that: "in such cases people really want an evil-doer so we give them the worst evil-doers possible (*Los lectores quierren los malos y les damos los malos, y los más peores posibles*). So the journalist offers the readers an evil-doer and invites them to imagine aspects of his life, whatever they are, as further evidence of this evil. No social or psychological causes are considered. He is personally responsible for his own actions. But then to offer social explanations would bring readers into the debate in a very different way. Rather than being members of the moral community deeply offended and disgusted that someone could do this in their midst, they themselves may become accountable.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined a text which was part of on ongoing discussion, showing how a journalist was aware of how the topic was being discussed by people generally, and how they transformed features of a person's life into a narrative where that person was the personification of evil. This often involved using material in contradictory senses, yet this is not a problem for readers due to the way *ad hoc* assembling of accounts is general human practice.

In this chapter we also saw the way that events and the way that they are talked about can locate a person firmly in one of the temporary categories of people that are used in conversation. However, as I want to demonstrate later, people will still, in different contexts, place this person into different categories

of people, some of which contradict that used in the text we have examined in this chapter.

Before I move on to consider people talking about news events, I want to look at the way the journalists themselves talk about their work. I want to show them using a repertoire of narrative themes to do this. This involves them evoking themselves as members of various temporary categories of people.

Chapter 7

Journalists talking about journalism

Introduction

In this chapter I want to show people involved in the navigation of self I discussed in the first chapter. This navigation of self involves the accounting for oneself and one's actions using various cultural narratives and temporary categories of people. It is these categories of people, I argued in the first chapter, that are candidates for the kinds of communities that many researchers have tended to reify. These themes and categories will be used due to the way that they set one in relation to events. In this chapter I want to show journalists using different narrative themes about what their work consists of, which each evoke them as being particular categories of people, to present a sense of self, as they talked to me, a university researcher. They use these narratives *ad hoc* to account for themselves in relation to events and the kinds of temporary categories of people that these involve. In this chapter I want to show clearly the cultural repertoire of representations of news and the way that repertoire is used to stress a sense of self-in-context. I will do this by providing individual portraits of journalists.

One would imagine that journalists would have a particular idea on what their jobs entail, which would have a significant influence over the kind of work that they produce. What this ethnography shows however is that, as Bruner and Weisser (1991) argue, people locate themselves in relation to culture in a virtual

rather than real sense. The selves that they evoke in any context will be combination of how they wish to be perceived in that setting and the practical constraints on their ability to promote that sense of self. What we will see then is that journalists often have favourite narrative themes for talking about their work but will use other perhaps contradictory narrative themes *ad hoc* to account for aspects of their activities which do not fit into that narrative. And what the journalist actually produces in their work may in fact not be in accordance with the narratives they use to describe it.

The journalists that I include in this chapter have been chosen as they represent a range of the kinds of ways the journalists in my fieldwork talked about their work. All of them worked in Valencia either for local or national newspapers. The data I use is from tape recorded interviews and from notes which I made during time I spent shadowing journalists or whilst conversing with them while they worked. They assumed that I was generally interested in journalism but had no idea what I was in fact studying. They tended to assume that I wanted to establish how quality journalists did their jobs.

My work is always the truth, lies and irony

The themes that the journalists offered to me about the work that they do fit into more or less three categories. Most journalists will express all of them at one time or other. The first theme is where journalism involves producing information as a fourth estate. Here facts can speak for themselves and texts may be evaluated in terms of how they reflect the truth of events. The second theme sees the journalist as the professional writer who just offers a view of reality through the ideology of the newspaper even if they may not agree with this ideology. In the third journalists are entertainers. Readers essentially want to be entertained. If they are not they won't buy the newspaper. The journalist thus achieves their professional aim if newspapers are sold due to the fact that readers are satisfied by the material that they produce.

Pablo

Pablo is in his late 30s and is regional editor of *El País. El País* is, he told me, read largely by university graduates. It has the highest circulation of any newspaper in Spain with 800 000 copies. Pablo said to me that: "this is a strange state (*es muy raro*) of affairs for any country. In most like the U.K. it is the 'yellow' press which has the highest sales". For him the reasons for this were purely journalistic: "During Franco the papers were so dull (*sin vida*) and empty (vacios) people just lost interest in them". This reflects his view on what journalism should always be: "It is about informing readers... to open up the official world... to make it transparent". This is the classic enlightenment view of journalism where journalists dig away and investigate, informing and thus protecting the public from the evils of officialdom.

Pablo said that journalists should not have a political bias but should always be looking to make the political world transparent. He criticised the local papers, *Levante* and *Las Provincias*, since, "their policy is to directly attack (*atracar*) and pursue (*perseguir*) the opposition". He said that, "this is why *El País* has a place in Valencia even though it cannot compete at the level of local news. We provide serious and unbiased treatment of subjects". He said that he simply could not work for one of the local newspapers suggesting that journalists seek out jobs which suit their ideology. He said:

> Not all journalists are mercenaries (*mercenarios*). I just couldn't work making campaigns against people. No, for me this is against the spirit of journalism. Papers such as *Las Provincias* just twist and distort things. The only aim is to get across the message of the newspaper. To inform readers becomes secondary if not irrelevant

Pablo complained of the way the local papers were giving more weight to sensationalist material and ways of presentation. He showed particular annoyance at the introduction of the free paper *Mini Diario*. He said that: "The important thing for that paper is numbers delivered to people. The informing is irrelevant. They cannot guarantee that anyone reads it and the texts are so short what can anyone get from them?".

I found that readers of *El País* were generally as Pablo had described them. They considered themselves to be intelligent readers who wanted a paper that they could see as objective (*objetivo*). They also generally described themselves as socialists. *El País* is supportive of the socialist government in contrast to the neutrality expressed by Pablo.

I believe that it is relatively easy for Pablo to express the views that he did on journalism. The paper is safe from having to compete for readers due to its status for the graduate readers. Unlike the locals such as *Levante* and *Las Provincias* he does not need to consider market research and include more rapes, murder, sport to attract readers. Pablo argued that this kind of news "helps readers to stay in their own little worlds. They are ever more protected and move inward (*cerrados y introspectivos*). These readers don't want to find out things, they want to have their world views reaffirmed, their prejudices and worries supported and fed". He said that "without a good press there can be no democracy". He showed concern for the U.K. "with the mass of the population reading the sensationalist dailies of the multi-nationals".

However Pablo did not equate the informing of people and making the official world transparent with being objective. He said: "Objectivity is not possible so lets not speak of it". He said that "everyone has their own point of view and well as editor I wouldn't want to see certain things in the newspaper". I suggested to him that *El País* seemed to support the socialist government quite obviously. Was this so different than that which he was so quick to criticise in

142

the local papers? Again he referred to the argument whereby journalists do not work for a newspaper which has an ideology contrary to their own.

So Pablo introduced himself as being firmly of the enlightenment camp. Journalists tell the truth about the world to make the 'official world transparent'. *El País* is a paper respected for doing this in an objective manner. In this context he is strongly contemptuous of the local newspapers. Yet when it was raised that his own newspaper in fact only supported one political party, he suggested that objectivity was in fact not possible, and the supporting of one party, for which he criticised the locals, becomes the natural way that journalists express their ideological convictions.

I asked Pablo on one occasion if he thought that it was a problem that only ideologies or political groups who had control over parts of the mass media could claim any real legitimate power. He said that:

> these days. most news comes from the press agencies. It would be very difficult to produce a newspaper which could be commercially operable which, well impossible, which was not dependent on this. Also we are very dependent on advertisers

So his sense of the enlightenment seems to have been replaced here by an acknowledgement of the practical nature of running a commercial newspaper. Nevertheless he continually returned to the enlightenment theme. As I have said, this is relatively easy for him as *El País* is relatively free from many of the market struggles of the locals, due to its perceived status by readers.

What this shows, is that a person who is in a position to wield one particular narrative so confidently, still uses others when it became necessary to account for something that did not fit. Once this has been dealt with the favourite narrative can be returned to undamaged even if the other themes used contradicted it. Pablo was able, with relative ease, to present himself to me as

defender of democracy and as journalist, who in the true enlightenment spirit, was a defender of truth and the principle of journalism as the fourth estate. That he did deviate from this stance at times was not important for practical purposes. The important thing is that the parts are all dealt with and he presented himself to me as sensible accountable actor. For other journalists as we shall see it is not so easy to use the enlightenment theme even though it may be their preferred option.

Soli

Soli, is in her early twenties and works in the Valencia office of *ABC*. She had expressed to me that reporting should "accurately represent the world" and that "I see myself as providing knowledge for the public. They should know about what is going on out there. This is how we maintain democracy".

On one occasion Soli took extreme offence when I asked her about the way her reporting the murders of the three girls of Alcácer had itself become influenced by the climate the media coverage itself had created. The coverage, as we have already seen in chapter five, was highly sensationalist and helped to create a hysteria about the incident. I was questioning her on one of her texts headed **'The bones will talk'**. She reacted saying that: "The events speak for themselves. You just report them. You don't have to change them. This is how they are". I asked her if she thought that she would normally cover such an event in this way, with such detail? Did she think that the media had helped create something quite different out of this story? She said:

> Well the events are just there. You can't remove yourself from them [...] In that sense you can't be objective [...] When something has influenced a village so much, and there is so much solidarity amongst the

people you can't help but let it influence you. We are all human. Yes, the events speak for themselves

So here Soli has departed from her initial account where she presented herself as a member of a category of people who write to objectively represent the world in the name of democracy. Here journalists are only human and will be affected by what they see and naturally have their own opinions. She told me that "objectivity is not possible. No one can escape their own prejudices and feelings".

Soli moves away from the enlightenment theme in a way the Pablo did not. In his case the theme was always looming powerfully in his discourse. However she did not move too far away from it as did other journalists who sometimes said that the way Alcácer was dealt with was "one of the examples of how low journalism can get". Of the same story one journalist told me: "Well I suppose we end up writing off the back of the atmosphere we ourselves created. We ended up appealing to the so called solidarity and sentiment which we had pushed and to some degree invented".

I feel that Soli was in fact aware of the fact that the journalists had done this but resisted saying it to me. Journalists are aware of the way they are often criticised for not presenting the truth. The enlightenment view still holds strong in popular consciousness.

Whilst talking with me Soli did not use the themes which describe journalists as entertainers or mercenaries who will produce material appropriate to the ideology of the newspaper. She always tried to use the theme of journalism as the fourth estate and accounted for incidents which seemed to not fit with this by saying that "journalists are only human. You can't help but be influenced by what you see". Here she talked about the impossibility of objectivity.

On my later interactions with her, however, Soli presented me with source material from which she produced some of her texts, such as coroners' reports. She expressed amusement at the way she used items which needed little work on them, without questioning them, because it provided quick news, and because those sources had a monopoly over the production of such information. Here she seemed quite proud of being able to present me with the evidence for the kind of thing she thought I was looking for. On this occasion Soli began the interaction by being more cynical but soon returned to the enlightenment view once we started to talk about some of her work.

So Soli tends to prefer to present herself through use of the enlightenment narrative and thus as a person who is to do with truth and democracy. She will use other themes to explain phenomena that do not fit but quickly returns to it. And she avoids using narratives which evoke her as a person who will lie just to make money as a professional writer.

Perhaps in different settings, with people with whom she felt more comfortable, Soli would produce different themes. Nevertheless what she in fact does in her work is not different from the journalists which follow who often prefer very different narrative themes.

Esperanza

Esperanza is also in her early twenties and describes herself as "still learning (*todavía voy aprendiendo*)". She talked about her liking of being a journalist and the prestige that it brings. She told me that when she started working she believed that objectivity was crucial, "its what you are taught in the university". But she said that on her first day of work her boss had told her to forget objectivity and that her job was to represent the views of the newspaper. Her job was political writer for *ABC*, a right-wing newspaper still supportive of the Franco regime. She said that she didn't have to be told what the views of the paper were: "Well you just get a feel for these things by reading". Here she liked to talk about her work using a narrative which presented her as a cynical yet shrewd and already seasoned journalist.

Esperanza's job involved receiving telephone calls from M.P.s in the opposition party (P.P.) who want to comment on something in which case she might go to see them or do the interview over the telephone. Also she would spend time at the town hall (run by the opposition) where she might ask M.P.s what they are up to. She had become friends with many of them so this could be done informally. She will then use the comments, interview material, to create texts which favourably represent the P.P. (the newspaper is financed by the P.P. and the editor is a former M.P. for the party). She said that at first this was quite difficult for her as she didn't always agree: "but now I enjoy the professional aspects of this". she said: "Its not that I have to lie as all of my sources are from the P.P.. I just reflect favourably what they say. I feel that my job has been well done when I have represented the views of the paper well".

I later asked Esperanza about the role of journalists in society. She told me that journalists had a duty to inform people. She saw herself in this role: "People have a right (*todo el mundo tiene su derecho*) to know".

So Esperanza offers quite a cynical practical view of her job. She is a professional. She liked very much to be evoked in this way and spent much of her spare time with other journalists with whom she loved to talk as seasoned journalists. She also liked to emulate the views of her boss for whom she showed much respect, telling me that she aspires to one day be much like him and be in similar professional situation. However when I took her onto the level of the significance of journalists in society in general, to preserve that sense of journalists being of a certain status, she used the theme of journalists as the fourth estate, as informing, enlightening, etc..

So Esperanza uses various narrative themes to do work in different contexts and to invite me to imagine her in a certain way. Much of her dialogue generally, when she was not working involved using different themes, about relationships, family, economics, to evoke herself as this professional person. Nevertheless, despite her different way of talking about her work, what she in fact produced was of the same nature as that produced by Soli. As I have suggested, the themes people use to explain their behaviour need not influence actual practice.

Enrique

Esperanza's views are largely consistent with those of her editor for whom she expressed great admiration. Her editor, Enrique, told me that his newspaper is biased but then "it is crucial for a political party to have an outlet for its ideas. The government has got a monopoly on the T.V. stations so for us the newspaper is the most important medium". He told me that: "Objectivity doesn't exist, there are only different points of view". He said, however, that he does not expect his journalists to include their own opinion in their texts. He went through several of the days papers showing me where "reporting has been polluted (*contaminado*) by opinion". He said: "I don't see why journalists should have the right to express opinions when on any paper only several of the directors are allowed to do this".

Enrique himself often wrote small editorial comments by the side of texts. For example, a text about a violent act might be accompanied by comments by him on the way T.V. teaches children to respect violence and disrespect old values. He did tell me that his opinion columns were limited to not saying things which would be in conflict with readers' views and those held by the P.P.. If he wrote opinions against the party he said that he would find himself out of a job and: "the kids have to eat (*los críos tienen que comer*)".

Enrique was highly critical of the local papers and their increasing use of sensationalist techniques. He said that this was "bad journalism (*un periodismo muy pobre*)" and "they mix opinion with reporting all the time".

Enrique suggested then that newspapers should not be about opinion but they can give *their* side of the story. He thought that the P.S.O.E. were corrupt and bad for the country, and that his newspaper was a vehicle to help the P.P. to replace them in the government. This could be done by representing the facts of their side of the argument. However this is not the whole story. He said to me that he knew of many examples where editors had made up stories to sell papers.

He said: "And I end up having to make up stories as well in order to compete. The others do it so you end up doing it yourself". So in the end the giving of the truth of your point of view dissolves into the reality of sales figures.

Whereas Pablo's favourite theme was that of journalism as the fourth estate, Enrique's was that journalists work to promote an ideology. Enrique presented himself as the extremely wise and experienced professional who knew exactly what he was doing and who was using his newspaper for the good of the country, to rid it of the socialist government. But, like Pablo he would bring in other themes *ad hoc* to explain things not explainable by this theme, returning to it when possible.

Felisa and Guillem

Many journalists to whom I spoke held the model of *El País* in high esteem but saw the realities of their own work as dictating something quite different. Felisa and Guillem, for example, both told me that the ideal format for a newspaper was *El País*. Their own newspaper, *Levante*, was very different to this with much more emphasis *on sucesos* and sport. They talked about their work often in the sense of them being entertainers:

Our job is about selling newspapers; about giving people what they want from *Levante*. We don't produce cold hard (*noticías frias y duras*) news but browsing (*para ojear*) news. When people get in from work tired they don't want all that stuff about politics and economics, they want gossipy stuff or something which stands out from the ordinary; something they don't have to think about. You listen to people talking and they say 'did you hear about this or that' and they're never talking about what a politician has said [...] Our job is to package things (*dar una forma*) in an interesting way, sort of a light entertainment. But, most news is not exactly objective. If you are a journalist you write where the money is. You are just lucky if you happen to work for a paper which agrees with your ideology. Even El País has its ideology which some people do not like

So here we have the journalist talking about their job in terms of making a product. Objectivity didn't seem too much of an issue in this. Guillem told me with amusement of the way he selected events. He mentioned the way that at the moment he was interested in stories on child abuse since they were: "in focus. But then we made them in focus anyway. Its what you do, you look for a theme then you do the 'journalist bringing other sinister examples to light' thing. You know, the protector of the public".

Guillem also told me of the way sometimes he would write about events as being a good thing if he felt like it, where as normally they might be contextualised as terrible. He gave me an example of a teacher who ran away with one of his pupils. Guillem had decided to make it into a happy romantic story rather than contextualize it as a child abuse case and discussing the dangers parents should be aware of and asking if we should trust teachers. Guillem thought that there had been enough bad news after the murders of the girls of Alcácer and that people would therefore prefer to read something nice.

So Guillem is totally open about the way he is willing to transform events for readers. But then to him this is simply his job. He presented himself to me as a journalist who worked as a professional who is highly effective at doing the job for which he is paid.

However, during the reporting of the murders of Alcácer, Guillem and Felisa both told me that they were ashamed to be journalists. They told me that for a while they refused to put their names to the texts that they wrote. But Guillem said that:

> this was what people wanted. They wanted all the details. They were hooked (*enganchada*). And the directors wanted more. We were selling so many newspapers. Some days twice as many as usual. You always have to think what people want. If you don't give them that you can't compete

So here the narrative is that journalists do not provide the truth as suggested by other journalists nor do they just work as professional writers for a politically motivated newspaper. Here they are entertainers, but this need to entertain means that the journalist must produce material that they may not much like. However, they told me that for the treatment of Alcácer many simply went too far. They said that: "it was shameful what many of them did, for us that just isn't what being a journalist is all about". So they talk about their job in terms of being entertainers, although the model of *El País* provides a narrative for what journalism is really about. Their jobs take into consideration that they have to continually attract readers whereas *El País* has a status which in some ways exonerates it from this. This narrative also prevents them from accepting that which takes the journalists job too far away from it. They can do their jobs, even with a sense of humour when necessary. Here the enlightenment view of

journalism can be temporarily forgotten. But this can happen so long what they do does not move too far away from that narrative.

In fact at other times Guillem and Felisa often presented themselves very much as the enlightenment, informing journalists. If, when I spoke with them, they had just produced a text which they viewed as particularly informative they would present themselves much more seriously. Here they would sound very much like Pablo. But them this is the quality of the themes through which we can explain our behaviour. We can use them when necessary. Guillem and Felisa had a sense of their ideal narrative about journalism as the fourth estate which they would use when possible. Yet when this was not possible they would talk about journalism as being something very different where truth is in fact not possible. Here they present themselves as individuals who do their job efficiently but with a cynical sense of amusement.

Carmen

Carmen is a journalist who has worked for many newspapers. She talked to me with an ironic amusement of the lies which she has to produce. She works for a press cabinet which represents the regional government. She is employed directly by the M.P. to act as a publicity go-between and to make press releases on his behalf to represent his activities favourably. She said:

> The cabinet is like a small news factory (*una pequeña fabrica de noticías*) which has to show the regional government and its activities in a favourable light. This involves press releases about transport works, public works, etc. [...] I am employed as I know what the person in the street thinks. Politicians know nothing about ordinary people, about the way they live or about what they think. Its shameful really. They have no idea about things like the price of bread or the cost of a bus ticket. So they have to be careful what they say. It is my job to tell him what to say. And I know how newspapers work so I know the kinds of things I should and should not tell them.

Carmen told me that most of what she produced for press release or information she gave to journalists was in fact lies, "or better, a contrived (*arreglada*) truth which anticipates the criticisms on the other side of the argument". Once while I was in her office her boss phoned. He was on holiday. She told him that he needed to make a statement for the press about the destruction of a site of natural interest which would happen during the construction of a new motor way. She told him to talk not about what would be lost but what would be gained and put it in the context of opposition to the motorway being against the creating of new links for industry. He had not wanted to say anything but she thought that he should. She said that it would

give the journalists of the opposition something to deal with and keep them busy.

Carmen said that much of her work involved inaugurations of stretches of road. She said that sometimes this involved absurdly small stretches in order to give the appearance that they were always doing things. She said that; "no one ever asked why they kept building roads yet the politicians have the idea that people like them. I think that is true". Carmen told me that at the time she was working on some press material for some needless port renovations which may also cause environmental problems. But she said: "forget that it is the roads people like". She said that other things she did was to help smooth over where things had been done politically against the rules: "a good press release can divert attention, or anticipating a problem means that we can change it to make it look more deliberate or for the general good".

Carmen told me that she would like to set up her own newspaper based completely on lies. She spoke on several occasions about the great irony in journalism and of the way she had often linked unconnected events to form a narrative. She said for example at the moment in the news there has been a shark which had bitten a man in a part of the Mediterranean where sharks do not doesn't normally venture, some turtles which don't normally bite had bitten a boy and some cats had gone wild. She said:

> I would do a story on the way that animals have had enough of humanity they are turning on us. You could fit anything that turned up later into being part of the theme (*la tema*). A phone call to a police source and the hospital would bring up a fair few I would imagine. [...] This is just a joke but as a journalist you see worse done all the time.

So Carmen generally presented herself to me as a person willing to make money out of a crazy situation. However, at other times she told me that she saw

the press as the fourth estate. She respected journalists who badgered her to try and find out about what was really happening. She said that she always treated them with respect. She spoke admirably about one journalist who called round to chat with her unsatisfied with the figures she had given him referring to the amount of cars which were given to government employees. She had lied, or as she put it "given him the information in a certain way".

So Carmen talks about journalism as being something quite ridiculous. She does this in a sense of showing how far away from the enlightenment narrative it in fact is. She does however also talk about journalism as being the fourth estate, telling me at one time that "the profession is an essential part of democracy. We need newspapers to keep those in power in check, to make them accountable to someone". How she would talk about it depended on whether she wanted to express a positive or negative view. She could produce much evidence to support each. As she talked in each case she presented me with a view of a shrewd person who knew the ropes, even though in the cases of the two narratives that she used to talk about her work evoked her as two very different kinds of professional.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that journalists in Valencia use a repertoire of representations of news and journalism. This repertoire is formed by various narrative themes which they use to talk about the work they do which evokes them as certain categories of person. These themes seemed to fit into two categories. One of these focuses more on the news itself. This presents journalism as the Fourth Estate. Here news writing involves the objective representation of the world for the public which works as a kind of watchdog over the official world. Or it involves journalists writing to present a certain ideology. Here journalists are professionals, and will work for newspapers which conform to their ideology, or may be more mercenary. In this case journalists are the voices of different ideologies in a pluralistic society.

The second category of themes is more responsive to, more aware of, people in a personal way. Here themes are used that refer to the needs of readers. Here news is about entertaining and feeding people's *morbo*.

What we have seen in this chapter is journalists using this repertoire of themes to present a desired sense of self and others. This shows the way that people navigate senses of self in contexts by using certain themes that they imagine will work a certain way for those they produce them for in that setting. In this case the journalists were concerned to produce particular senses of self to a foreign university researcher.

To present this sense of self the journalists used their repertoire of narrative themes *ad hoc* to account for aspects of their work. This involved them making frequent contradictions and movement between the narratives as they improvised with them in the setting. This gives the different narratives quite different spins as they are used in different settings.

It is this continual working of self in settings, that allows people to locate themselves as regards to culture in that virtual rather than real way that Bruner and Weisser described. It is through their continual self-accounting using their repertoire of narrative themes that journalists think about themselves and their work. It is in the next chapter that I want to explore this further. I now want to look at the readers of newspapers and the way that they use the cultural repertoire of representations about news and journalists. Again this involves the *ad hoc* use of narrative themes to present a certain sense of self in settings.

Section four: Newspaper readers

Chapter 8

Newspapers and news: as resources for presenting self in interpersonal interaction

Introduction

In this chapter I want to look at the way people talk about newspapers and news in a particular context. As with our journalists in the previous chapter I want to suggest that it is not possible to discover concrete and static opinions. Individuals use cultural narrative themes, some of which are very similar to those used by the journalists to provide accounts which present them in a particular way to the interviewer. They have a powerful sense of the way certain kind of themes will work for that interviewer, an English university researcher.

The people that appear in this chapter were all contacts made through friends or people I met in *bares* or during my day to day existence. I generally knew a fair bit about each of them before I did any formal tape-recorded interviews. In the end I interviewed nearly sixty people. In this chapter I want to present people in their personal frameworks, mentioning details about their lives which help us to understand the way that they talk about news.

I have not chosen to use quantifiable data to present people's relationships to newspapers and news, as this would in no way allow me to show the repertoire of narrative themes available for talking about news and newspapers or the way that people do this *ad hocing* in different settings to present a sense of

self. A quantitative analysis of this would have served only to reify that contextual talk that people produce as 'responses' and 'opinions'.

In this chapter I want to give a series of portraits of people, in order that I can give a sense of the way that newspapers fit into the lives of various individuals in Valencia. At the same time this will allow me to demonstrate my theoretical points.

Buyers and non-buyers

The chapter will start by looking at non-buyers of newspapers and the reasons they give for this. It will then move on to look at some buyers. Again they give their reasons for this and say why they choose a particular newspaper. The reasons that people give for their behaviour must be viewed in the light of the points I developed in chapter three. There I argued that the group of people who form the bulk of the newspaper readership in most European countries, what in the U.K. we might term the working-classes, simply do not purchase newspapers in Spain, but rather read those provided in *bares*. I argued that this was due to the fact that high illiteracy, distribution problems, poverty, and rather unprofessional standards of journalism during the first quarter of the twentieth century, meant that these people never developed the habit of newspaper purchase. This was not helped by forty years of a poor quality press closely controlled by the dictatorship. Newspaper purchase is more often done by those of the professional classes. I don't want to present these historical reasons as something inescapable or deterministic, but as a reminder of what may lie behind people's behaviour.

Non-buyers

Firstly I will look at some non-buyers. As I have said they are an important group as they comprise one of the largest groups of newspaper readers who, rather than buying a newspaper for themselves, thumb through the copies of newspapers which are put in *bares* by the their owners for use by customers. All of the people who told me that they did not buy newspapers were what we might refer to in a U.K. context as working class.

Cesar and Luis

The first two speakers I want to look at do not see newspapers as an important part of their daily lives. They are simply more concerned with members of the opposite sex and socialising. They are part of the group who are known by market research not to purchase newspapers, both in terms of their social background and in terms of their age. Both of them however chose certain cultural narratives to account for their non purchase of newspapers to present this aspect of their behaviour as if were carefully thought out, although these narratives are not in fact coherent with their actual practice. But using them allows them to present themselves as sensible actors.

Cesar, aged 20, is a temporary contract worker in a food warehouse. He has spent relatively little time in Valencia, arriving about 5 months before I interviewed him. He had, like many young people, left his village in the provinces to look for work in the city. Cesar told me:

> I don't bother with newspapers, they don't do anything for me (*me dan un poco de lata*), they're all politics... Boring (*aborridisimos*). I just don't know what's going on anyway. And anyway you can't trust

anything that they say. The politicians just use them to sell themselves and the newspapers just want to sell more copies.

I asked Cesar if he preferred to watch the news on the T.V.. He said : "No, news is always the same: all bad things. Have you seen news that is good? You know it will all be bad so what is the point?". I asked him if he read newspapers in *bares*. He said: "Yes occasionally. I look at the sport or perhaps at the *sucesos*. Perhaps something will catch your eye (*llamar la atención*). But I don't read often, perhaps once or twice a week. Sometimes you hear the guys (*los tíos*) at work talking about something, so you notice it in the paper, or they point it out to you at breakfast — like the one where the guy was bitten by the shark". I asked him if his parents bought newspapers. He said that: "My father reads papers in *bares*. He often buys *La Marca* (a sports newspaper). He hates politicians".

Cesar is typical of people of his age group who are known by journalists to be non-buyers of newspapers. In his general talk he showed concern for everyday life issues such as where his next job was going to come from and when he was going to have enough money to bring his girl-friend from his village.

As with many young people, like Cesar, buying newspapers is simply not something that a person does, perhaps due to the historical reasons. Yet he is concerned to use a narrative suggesting that he is not interested in newspapers as they are probably lies and are promotional vehicles for politicians who are all self interested. His behaviour, in fact does not represent this, as he does read newspapers when he has the opportunity, and is keen to follow up certain stories. He thus presented himself to me as a sensible and self aware individual. To have said that he did not really know why he bought a newspaper would have evoked quite a different kind of person. As we shall see shortly, this need

to provide an explanation for all aspects of one's behaviour can lead to people contradicting themselves in a powerful way.

Luis provides a very similar example to Cesar, although some of his talk helps us to observe more easily the way that the narrative themes chosen for self-accounts do not have to be congruent with behaviour. Luis is 28 and works in a workshop which makes paper-mache statues for local fiestas. He works for a very low wage and claims unemployment benefits to which he is not in fact legally entitled. Luis's main interests were going out in the evening and clothes. When I asked him if he liked reading newspapers he said: "No, they're always the same: people being important or trivial things (*tonterias*), always the same". I asked if he was interested in politics. He said: "you can't believe what they say, so what's the point in listening, and they (the papers) are full of *morbo*". He told me that he never watched the news on T.V. for the same reasons.

So Luis, like Cesar, talks about the news as being repetitive and boring; politicians are self interested and newspapers often only want to appeal to people with a sick sense of curiosity (of *morbo*). He was more concerned with night-life and socialising. In practice however I did see Luis involved in many conversations where a news text was the stimulus — where a work colleague had commented on something, and a conversation had followed.

Luis also did in fact take politics quite seriously on occasions. During the period leading up to the general elections in 1993 he often talked about the way that the socialist government should be removed from office, saying that: "we need a change. They've been in too long. We need some fresh ideas. The P.P. (the right-wing opposition) should be given a chance".

So in a different context Luis is in fact willing to talk, not about all politicians as being self serving, but as some of them having the potential to remedy the country's problems. When I questioned him on what fresh ideas the P.P. would bring, he was unable to say exactly. He only had the idea that it was generally time for a change, which was a popular narrative theme at the time,

especially for those of this age group. I asked him if he was aware that there were members of the old Franco government in the P.P. (the association with the extreme right was what made many suspicious of this party). He didn't know. He only knew that "they should be given a chance".

So Luis, like Cesar, wants to account for the fact that he does not buy newspapers. This may be explained by features of Spain's press history. Luis, however, is not aware of these reasons. They are simply not part of the cultural repertoire of reasons for newspaper purchase. He would, of course, sound quite bizarre if he did produce an entire press and social history to explain his behaviour. Also he cannot simply say 'I do not know why I do that'. No one that I interviewed ever replied in that way. This would not evoke a sensible social actor, and people find such responses unacceptable. In Western European culture people are assumed to be active agents and responsible for their actions. So he uses a narrative theme about his dislike of politicians, as does Cesar. He thus evoke himself as a sensibly performing individual whose behaviour is intelligently motivated. He also, here, evokes the particularly Spanish theme of all those in officialdom being self serving. However, as we can see, in other contexts Luis will talk about politicians very much in a way that suggests that democracy is very healthy. But yet again this is a narrative theme that he uses to evoke a different kind of person in a different setting. He, in fact has no idea of what different politicians offer.

The following non-buyers are not greatly different from Luis and Cesar in certain ways. Their knowledge and interest in politics seems much of the same order. The way they use their non-buying is somewhat more creative.

Mitre

Mitre, 30, is a nurse. She told me that she likes the countryside and expressed a contempt of consumer culture "for its superficiality and stupidity". She was proud of the fact that she and a friend often drove out to remote villages to camp and get to know the "real locals (*la gente real del campo*)". She often showed contempt towards those others who blindly accepted consumerism.

Mitre also told me that she very much enjoyed the Valencian night-life of discos and overflowing pubs, and told me that she thought she was a bit of a T.V. addict. An important concern, that she expressed on several occasions, was that she was getting on a bit and there was no sign of any serious relationship in her life.

So to begin with Mitre evoked herself as a person who is not like the majority of other people who enjoy consumer culture. Here she evokes herself out of this particular temporary category of people. In the second case, however, Mitre is a fun lover and does indulge in that consumer culture. What links the two narratives is the category of person who knows how to live their lives and what has real value. That the first person she evokes, who rejects consumer culture, does not fit with the person, who is a bit of an addict, is not important to her for practical purposes. As Bruner and Weisser (1991) suggest, people locate themselves as regards culture in a virtual rather than real sense. In this case she has no problem aligning herself with contradictory categories of person in different settings. Lets look at how she talked about news.

Mitre told me that she never bought newspapers as they were just full of *morbo*. I asked her about the politics. She said:

> I don't want to know about a load of pompous idiots blowing their
> own trumpet (*que no necesitan abuelas*) all the time or criticising
> everything and everyone else says just for the sake of it. You read

Levante or *El País* and the government is wonderful; you read *ABC* or *Las Provincias* and everything they do is terrible. What's the point. Its just a game (*un juego*).

She said that she had always voted with a blank paper as a vote of no confidence in anyone. When I asked her, she had little idea of the actual policies of the parties but said that: "Well I'm sure that when it comes down to it they are the same anyway".

Mitre told me that she never even looked at newspapers in *bares* and that she never watched the T.V. news. I asked her if she ever discussed news with friends. She said: "Not really,(*pues, no*) but I suppose that if something important has happened they will tend to say to you 'have you seen this or that' ". I raised a few of the subjects which had been in the news over the previous few weeks. She recalled all the details of the recent events surrounding the murder of the three girls from Alcácer, although she said that it was shameful that people should be interested in such things. She said: "people like to read all that stuff about murder and accidents. I think its sad. They have a problem. Some people have a lot of *morbo*. People should find better things to do with their time".

So the narrative she used to account for her non buying of newspapers is not unlike that used by Cesar and Luis — she dislikes politicians and is suspicious of the truth value of news. In fact, like Luis, I also heard her, in a different context, talking about the way that the P.P. should been given a chance to run the country. Also, as we can see she is aware of many of the finer details of news events. So the narrative that she uses is not supported by her behaviour. Yet, like Cesar and Luis, she provides what for the practical purposes is a reasonable and sensible account of her non buying.

The narrative she uses to talk about the category of people who do buy newspapers, is very much related to the narrative she used to talk about herself

where she evokes herself as a person not interested in the superficiality of consumer culture. Those who read newspapers are stupidly drawn in to it. As she distances herself from the category of people who enjoy the news she evokes a particularly Spanish category of person: someone with a lot of *morbo*. Here people who buy newspapers are described as being motivated by a sick sense of curiosity and desire to know about the personal details of others. Her own interest in such details were not described as being indicative of this nature of person.

So Mitre uses cultural narratives to account for her behaviour. The important thing is not accuracy or truth but that she provides what appear as sensible accounts that allow her to evoke a particular kind of person. Like Cesar and Luis, she does not say 'I don't know why I do that', but provides explanations which sound good enough for practical purposes.

Jóse

Jóse similarly describes newspapers as purely a site where politicians perform. He suggests that the whole thing is quite sinister, a way of diverting people away from real issues in society — that certain people have more money and live in luxury while others suffer. Jóse is 34 and doing a technical job which has a permanent contract but which he finds very boring. He often talked about travel "to learn about yourself" but had never found himself able to give up his stable job, viewed at present, as a rare commodity in Spain. Jóse prided himself on doing what he saw as non-conformist things like going to the independent cinema and going on non-tourist type holidays. Jóse had no television in his flat and was: "attempting to get into classical music".

Jóse described newspapers as being a place where people might be "taken up into the circus of capitalist politics". The other parts of the paper — the

sucesos and sport sections — were described as evidence that people were generally stupid and content to live in an ignorant and stupefied way. Jóse had a general idea that the present system was no good and that some sort of socialism was the answer, although he had no clear idea what this might mean or how it might be implemented. He only had notions about personal freedom and escape from self-interested politicians.

He said that he was aware of all the sensationalist stories that appeared in the press, which he said: "you hear about at work. They are something for people to talk about", but said that kind of thing got on his nerves (*me molesta mucho*). I did in fact hear him chatting about many of the usual *sucesos* although he often expressed relatively left-wing views to law and order and argued that things were always caused by the selfishness of authority.

So for Jóse, like Mitre, newspapers are talked about in terms of being a part of a culture which might con people, and that generally people are unable or too lazy to see through it. They, as tellers of this narrative present themselves, in contrast, as characters who are able to transcend such a culture — this is done by going to the independent cinema, buying compact discs of classical music, and going on holidays to meet 'real' people in villages, as opposed to the behaviour of the evoked community of consumerism addicts of the cities.

So Jóse uses his non-buying of newspapers as a way to present himself. None of the reasons he gives point to the historical reasons why people like him do not habitually buy newspapers as they would in other European countries. He rejected that newspapers or news have any worth. In fact, after one interview with Jóse, we talked with some friends of his where he did express an interest in different political parties. In this case the kind of self that he had in mind during the interview with me became less important.

Miguel

Miguel is 45 and owns a *bar*. He also talked about newspapers as existing to dupe people. Yet Miguel described everything in the media as a lie. It is used by the ruling groups to "control us mentally".

Miguel spends all his days working in his *bar,* and the evenings in his rather opulent flat, alone or entertaining friends. He did not go to university, which he continually mentioned. As he puts it: "I got my culture myself". He likes to associate himself with elite art and opera, and is proud to know people involved in it who he meets through the bar. He talked about the population being divided into "thinking people like us" and "ordinary people (*gente normal*) who are 'stupid [...] they can't think (*no son capazes de pensar*)". When I asked if he minded if I spoke with some people in his *bar* about the papers they were reading he said: "What's the point (*¿para qué?*) they have nothing in their heads. They are empty. They have no personalities". I said that I was interested in what they thought about. He replied: "They don't think, it is beyond them".

In the interviews with me Miguel always presented himself as being an intellectual, in contrast to the category of ordinary people who were unable to think. He included me as a member of the intelligent category of people. This is not unlike the cases of Jóse and Mitre. They talked about themselves as individuals who had seen through a stupefying and deceitful mass culture, and of the rest of the population as simply drifting along, either suffering or blissful in their ignorance. In Miguel's narrative these two categories of people are the most important in the world and transcend national boundaries. He once told me that: "it is only people like us who can realise what they are doing to the world. Miguel told me once: "I'm different. I like being different. I don't want to be like everyone else (*no queirro ser como los demás*)".

In Miguel's *bar* there are four newspapers every day, although he told me that he never read any of them. He told me: "What's the point in reading them? They are only there to make money. They don't do it to give information. They do it to keep people confused so they don't think about anything clearly". He told me that the whole story told by the media about the murder of the three girls from Alcácer was to cover up what was really going on. The same, he told me, was true about the war in old Yugoslavia. He said: "everything in this world is because of money, they just try to hide this".

Miguel also told me that things that become news, like wars, murder and disease, are a natural way that the population is controlled:

> They're all part of the natural rhythm of civilisation. But,
> governments want us to see these things as bad. The governments and
> the multinationals they want the populations to grow and grow. And this
> can't be. The world can't cope. This is why I don't like newspapers as
> they want the population to grow to sell more.

Miguel's conclusion was that we should stay well away from news. He said: "Have you thought what would happen if tomorrow there was no newspapers; if they took the news off the radio how happy we would be?".

So Miguel talks about news using a narrative which conforms to the way he presented himself to me in his general discourse. He considered that intellectuals see through things, therefore he talked about everything as a conspiracy, which fooled ordinary people, but not him. But despite this favoured way of talking about things with me, I heard him talking about events using very different narratives in different contexts. At other times it was Northern Europe that was the enemy of a united Spanish people. Or he would talk about more trivial details about politics which he learned from the newspapers. I once saw him refer to a daily newspaper to prove a point in a

discussion. Again he wanted to appear as the intellectual. This is after he had told me that there was absolutely no point reading a newspaper. This is not important to him, however, for practical purposes. He locates himself, as regards culture, in a virtual rather than real sense. He uses cultural narratives to evoke himself as a member of a particular category of people in a particular context. His will be influenced by the way he imagines the kinds of narratives and categories of people he evokes will work for me, the university researcher.

Eva

The final non-buyer I want to look at is also representative of many people with whom I spoke who were non-buyers. Eva is 51 and works in a small grocery shop. She told me that she wouldn't buy newspapers: "because the *sucesos* make me feel funny (*me marean*)". She said: "I don't like to read about all that violence and things it makes me nervous". She showed contempt for the more scandalous stories, for example, "where that teacher ran away with his twelve year old pupil". She said: "People have a lot of *morbo* wanting to know about things like that".

I asked Eva if she ever read the politics pages. She said: "I don't want to know about those people (angrily), its shameful how they go on. I don't know how they dare to show their faces" — a narrative typical of the period leading up to the general elections in Spain. Eva said to me: "All this crime, I dare not go out, and what do they do: nothing or give themselves more money". I asked her a few points about the political parties but she had no knowledge of any policies, past or present. She told me that she also avoided the T.V. news as: "it is always the same horrible things. I don't want to know about them". So, like some of the other speakers, she uses a narrative to account for her behaviour although she

has no personal experience or knowledge of that which the narrative claims to explain — she criticised what politicians do but has no idea what this in fact is.

Eva said that she did like to read magazines like *Hola* (the Spanish version of the U.K. *Hello*) and *Pronto* or any other of the glossy photo and celebrity gossip magazines. This was usual for people to tell me that they didn't like gossip in newspapers but in the magazines it was okay.

Eva talked about disliking the scandal and more sensational stories in newspapers and magazines, as they are "shameless *(son sinvergüenzas)*". Yet she purchases and reads just about every glossy magazine which comes out, which is based on this very material. In the case of the murder of the three girls from Alcácer and the teacher who ran away with his pupil, the magazines would do special features giving the general story along with angles which the newspapers missed or were unable to cover.

So Eva was concerned to present a narrative of an honourable person who was sick of politics and who doesn't like sensationalist news, who might be contrasted to those for whom such material might be written: people with a lot of *morbo*. Like some of the other non newspaper buyers I have looked at, she has to give what looks like a sensible account of her behaviour. The historical and sociological reasons for her behaviour are not an available narrative. They are not part of the cultural repertoire of representations of people's relationships to newspapers. She chooses this narrative over those chosen by Cesar and Luis, for example, as people of her age frequently seemed more concerned with displays of honour and shame in this kind of context. As we can see the narrative had little relationship to her actual behaviour.

People who do not buy newspapers, in my experience were generally from the category of people who historically did not come to acquire the habit of newspaper purchase. As I have demonstrated with these interviews, these people talk about this behaviour in a way that evokes them as a certain kind of actor. They do not say that they do not know why they act in a certain way but

improvise using narrative themes from a cultural repertoire of representations of news and newspapers. I also showed that the narratives that people choose to talk about their behaviour need not have any consistency with the way they behave.

Newspaper buyers.

I will now look at some buyers of newspapers. I want to show the reasons people offer for purchase and the way these people talk about news. What we will see is that in fact these people generally don't read much more of the paper than those who only read in *bares*. Yet these people can offer narratives for why it is important to have a newspaper in their homes.

Amparo

Amparo is 60 and lives with her two daughters who work and are university graduates. She told me that she bought *Levante* everyday. She said that:

> it is a newspaper that they always bought in my house... I got
> married and my husband continued to buy it. It was a left-wing paper
> before Franco and then during Franco it was the paper of the *movimiento*
> (the name for Franco's party). My husband was more to the right so he
> bought it. We have always bought this one.

I asked Amparo what she read in the paper. Did she read it all? She said: "My husband he read it all but I don't read more than the first page and the

sucesos... I browse through the rest of it. I read something if it catches my eye".
She added that she never read the politics as it was always the same and: "you
can't really tell what's going on". She told me that she only bought *Levante's*
rival newspaper *Las Provincias,* occasionally "because on various dates they
have free gifts".

Amparo told me that they also bought the national paper, *El País,* on
Saturdays for the supplement, which is highly rated in Spain. There very few
'quality' magazines. She said that they didn't actually read this newspaper as it
was very similar to *Levante,* which they preferred to read as it contained local
news. Her daughters told me that they rarely read much of the newspapers
which were in the house. They said that they usually used the T.V. guide and
that they browsed through to the *sucesos* if they were bored. They only looked
at the politics if they knew something specific had happened.

Amparo told me that she also bought many magazines of the *Hello* format.
She said that they are generally more interesting than newspapers: "the photos
take your mind off things. I get tired of reading about what all those politicians
get up to, and none of it is true anyway". I asked her if she thought that
newspapers should include more photographs and gossip, if that would improve
them. She said: "I don't think they could do this as then it would be a magazine
and not a newspaper".

Amparo said that she really liked the *sucesos* section of newspapers and
spoke to me of various texts which she recalled from the previous week. She
remembered all the details of the events including numbers injured and times
and places.

Amparo was fairly straightforward about the reasons she offered as to why
she bought the newspaper. She said that it was simply something that they had
always done, a habit. It is interesting that in the light of her conclusion that a lot
of the newspaper's content is all lies this is a sufficient motivating factor.
Amparo thus offers a theme for talking about events which essentially she

ignores when acting. As I discussed in chapter four the way of talking about officialdom as corrupt and self-serving is a theme that people in my ethnography often used. However these people, despite talking in this way still often behave as if they expect otherwise. I think that Amparo illustrates that point in this case. She used the category of corrupt officials when talking about politicians and journalists, yet she is able to carry on buying newspapers and reading them.

What I also wanted to demonstrate with this particular example is that those who buy newspapers do not necessarily talk about the content and nature of newspapers in a more favourable light than those who do not buy them. Both groups used a cultural narrative theme about the corruption in officialdom to talk about news and newspapers. Yet in both cases, I have argued, these themes need not relate to their actual behaviour.

Pepe

Pepe is 42 and is a head security guard. He buys *Las Provincias*. He said that he does not like *Levante* as in it "everything the government does is fine. *Las Provincias* criticises them". He told me that "the socialists should not be in power. They have shown that they are corrupt and are now messing the country up". He said that: "We need fresh ideas. The socialists have used all theirs up". Pepe expressed this in the context of wanting to keep his job. His contract was renewable every three months. He had already been laid off from a number of other posts. The P.P., he suggested, would bring greater stability. Pepe told me that he didn't read *ABC*, the other P.P. paper as it was a national and he preferred a local paper. Also he said that it was a little too Francoist. So Pepe talks about his choice of newspaper in the context of his ideological stance. He presented himself to me as a politically aware person.

I talked to Pepe about the news that he felt stood out over the last month. He recalled mainly *sucesos* such as the events surrounding the murders of the girls from Alcácer, and the story about the teacher who eloped with a pupil. He mentioned the war in old Yugoslavia, laughing and saying: "but I have no idea what is going on there or who is fighting who". He couldn't recall anything from the politics pages, not even from the previous few days, apart from the debate on prison leave connected with the Alcácer case. He told me that: "well you don't always read much of the politics stuff. Most of it is pretty boring. You know what politicians are like (*sabes cómo son*)".

I asked Pepe if he thought that *Las Provincias* was relatively more accurate or truthful than *Levante*. He said:

> Well more than *Levante* yes: they only want to support the
> government... I think the international news is pretty accurate, well its
> just news isn't it, but I think a lot of the local stuff, the things people say,

is often dubious... most of the politicians are just self interested. They're not bothered about ordinary people like us.

Pepe thus says that he buys a newspaper for political reasons. He evoked himself as a politically motivated person. As with the non-buyers, he is concerned to provide a sensible account of his behaviour. However, when we went on to talk about politics, he neither remembered any of the political issues for which he claimed to buy *Las Provincias,* nor could he tell me exactly what distinguished the views of the party he claimed to support, or say how these differed from those of the socialist government. When I questioned him on this topic, as in some of the talk produced by the non-buyers, he used a narrative about how it was 'just time for a change', and when asked directly about policies, he talked about all politicians as being self-interested. Later in the interview Pepe returned to his political allegiance to *Las Provincias*, criticising the way that "Levante just does not deal with the political issues directly enough".

So in the interview Pepe talked about his newspaper buying as being indicative a politically motivated person with a particular ideology committed to reform. But, when he found himself in a position where he needed to talk about the nature of that ideology, he could not talk about this ideology, but used a general narrative that was quite popular at the time, suggesting that was time for a change. He then went on to say that all politicians were essentially the same. Here he produces narratives for the practical purposes of being able to produce accounts, even though at some level he may have been aware that in fact he had no idea what comprised the ideology that he claimed to support. Nevertheless by avoiding reaching the point where he had to say, 'I don't know', he maintains a sense of an individual able to account for themselves.

There is a further point I want to mention about the narratives Pepe chose. He suggested that he supported the P.P. as they are not corrupt like the Socialists, even though the local P.P. council had recently been involved in a

huge scandal due to large payments being made out to members of councillors, families who had been allowed to fill jobs which should have allocated in a quite different fashion. So here is one interesting point: that he still chooses to narrate on the corruption of one of the political parties when evidence suggests that both are equally involved.

Pepe chooses the corruption narrative to say why he aligns himself against the socialists: "corruption and self interest is what is bringing this country down". Yet Pepe's job and his financial situation themselves based on corruption. He got his job through a family member and accepts money for failing to notice various things going on around him in his work. I found this with many people. I would hear them complaining about the way a particular person, usually an incapable person, only had their job due to a relative (*un enchufe*), or about the way Spanish society generally suffered due to this phenomena. Yet later I would find out that they themselves held their position due to the position of their mother or some other connection. The point I am making here is that people choose to use narrative themes to account for events, to locate themselves, but these themes do not need to have coherence with other themes that they use or with their actual practice.

Something I would like to point out at this stage in the chapter is that we can clearly see several popular narratives for talking about news and the two political parties: that news is lies and that the P.P. should be given a chance as it is time for a change. As we have seen, individuals need no real knowledge of evidence to use these narratives. They will use them for practical accounting and because they like the way that they evoke them as individuals.

Violeta

Violeta, 56, a housewife and an *ABC* buyer, told me that the socialists had made a crime-ridden society where young people are unable to find jobs: "during Franco's times they would have dragged those villains off the streets and sorted them out".

Violeta was proud of her daily purchase of *ABC*. She told me that she could not tolerate the news on the T.V.: "you can believe newspapers more. They are more responsible. On the T.V. they just want to shock you with all those pictures. What *morbo* they have". Through her buying of the paper she also expressed a contrast to the usual behaviour of the majority who don't read and, "just sit like cabbages in front of the T.V.". She said: "Me, I read everything. If I see a piece of paper on the pavement with something written on it I just have to read it. People don't read enough these days".

So Violeta, contrasts herself with a rather stupid community of non-readers. Like some of the other respondents she contrasts herself with a category of people who are drawn to certain superficial aspects of consumer culture. In the other cases however, newspapers were generally included in this category. In this case they are not. Nor are they characterised by the *morbo* of the T.V.. Here Newspaper purchase is used to present a person who feels that reading is representative of a more sophisticated culture which is characteristic of the times before the socialists allowed the country to become morally corrupt.

Violeta told me that her husband, when he was alive, had also always bought *ABC*. In the Spanish context it seems likely that this is why she continued to buy it. She told me herself that:

> when I was with my husband you had no freedom. Women didn't
> have the freedom like they have today. In those days you had to agree

with everything the man said. Remember that women had no legal rights and the husbands had to sign everything before they could do it.

However purely continuing the tradition or habit may not be the only factor here. She did have very good memories of Franco and "times of law and order and respect". Nevertheless in this instance we see her using newspaper purchase in a narrative about a person who is contrasted to those who are falling into the ways of a decaying society.

Her son told me, when I asked if anyone read much in his house, that: "well no one does really. We buy the paper, which we never really look at, and Mum reads her glossy magazines and the occasional biography of someone or other". I offer this comment not to deny the truth of what Violeta was saying but rather to suggest that the narrative she offered me was to present herself in a certain way in the context of the interview.

Isa

Isa, 35 and is a lab technician in a ceramics factory. She is a university graduate and lives with her husband and two children. She buys *Levante* every day. She told me that she reads this newspaper as she does not like the right-wing. She said that: "Spain has come a long way since Franco but still has a lot of ground to cover". She said that the socialist government is still the best party to govern Spain: "I still remember the moral oppression in which I grew up: the catholic all-girls schools, the censorship". Isa told me that they had always bought *Levante* in her family. Her parents had always done so. "Its sort of a tradition", she said.

So the reason Isa gives for buying *Levante* is ideology, but also mentions that it is a tradition in the family. We might ask the question if her family had

always bought *Las Provincias* would she change to *Levante* due to ideological motivations? In my experience, and from the evidence of market research the answer would be 'no'. And in this case she would possibly have offered me what would appear as a legitimate reason for this behaviour. Isa is aware that ideological reasons might sound like a sensible reason to a university researcher. In a different setting she might emphasise the tradition theme more strongly. As we will see she is in fact ambivalent about the content of *Levante* anyway.

I asked her if she thought that it was important to buy a newspaper every day. She said:

> Yes I think it is important for the children. They should know about what is going on in the world [...] its too easy these days for the kids to just get stuck in front of the T.V.. The papers are good because you have to interact with them. The T.V. news can just pass through you (*pueden pasar por dentro*).

But, she said that: "I suppose that I'm usually too tired though to read the paper. Most nights when you get in you're just 'bluur' ". I asked her what she read. She said:

> I generally look at the international news, well at least the headlines and also (laughing and mocking embarrassment) I usually read the *sucesos*. They are easy to read. You don't always want to know about the activities of politician X or Y. Although sometimes I don't like the *sucesos*. Sometimes they go too far. Some people like that though. You know, people have a lot of *morbo*.

Isa then went back to talking about the papers as a medium of information: "Local papers are important to me as I like to know what is going on in

Valencia" (Isa was quite nationalistic about Valencia and always tries to buy local products whenever possible). She expressed that finding out what is going on around us is very important especially in the case of children. She told me that:

> many of the problems in contemporary society are caused by parents not bringing up their children to know about the world or what is right and wrong. If you know about the world you have common sense (*sentido común*). Parents just don't give it to their kids these days. They just stick them in front of the T.V. or give them those stupid video games. You have to tell them what it is all about, give them values.

For Isa this is why there is so much crime. The newspaper is thus part of a healthy psychological environment: "kids should at least see that such things are important".

I asked Isa later if she thought that *Levante* was a better quality paper that *Las Provincias*. She said that *Las Provincias* got on her nerves as "all they do is criticise the government. Surely they have to admit sometimes that everything the socialists do is not bad". She said:

> Most of it that they say is made up and exaggerated anyway. Mind you that is the game of politics isn't it. One side makes things up about those then they make things up as well. In the end you don't know who to believe. Most of the time you just know its all a load of rubbish (*basura*).

So on the one hand papers are good to give knowledge and 'common-sense', yet on the other they are just full of propaganda and lies. Isa is obviously familiar with the two narratives for talking about newspapers. One she uses, to

contrast herself with a category of other people who are irresponsible, while she uses newspapers as they give a more objective knowledge about the world: these being part of her responsible parent role. The second narrative talks about news in the sense that it is propaganda which is used by self-serving politicians. To present herself as a reasonable and sensible individual Isa has offered me two cultural narratives for talking about news. By using these she has presented herself favourably in both cases.

The question that must be asked is how do the narratives she offers about newspapers in fact influence her in her regular purchasing behaviour. The 'news as information' narrative would have to be the stronger as the other narrative would surely prevent further purchase. In fact it is this narrative that represents news as information which generally has the strongest currency in our culture. The enlightenment view of news still holds strong. Deviations from the truth are still considered to be not the norm in news.

Vincente

Vincente, 38, is a hairdresser. He told me that he bought *Levante* as he hated the P.P. and could not tolerate reading a newspaper which constantly supported them. He suggested that any return to non-left ideology in the government would result in a return to the inequalities and oppression of the dictatorship. He told me that the P.P.'s policies were similar to those of "Thatcher" which would increase the gap between the rich and poor.

Vincente told me that he never read much of the politics in *Levante* as "I can't follow what they bloody go on about (*No tengo ni puta idea de lo que hablan*). I don't believe for a minute that they do themselves". He showed me the recently introduced *Mini Diario* free paper, which contained summarised daily news, telling me that he read all of it "as you can see all the main points".

In fact *Mini Diario* is run by ex staff of *Las Provincias* and follows their ideology in supporting the P.P.. Vincente seemed unaware of this. Unlike the other dailies it is not traditionally associated with one particular party. Also he does not read *Levante's* politics pages anyway and the other sections are basically the same. Vincente told me that he didn't always read much of the paper but that he liked to have it there for when he got bored. Also, he said, "I'm used to buying it *(lo suelo comprar)*. If I don't I feel like something is missing". He also emphasised that it was important to know what is going on in Valencia. Like many he referred to the objective value of news as a way of knowing about the world.

Vincente reads *Levante* as he imagines himself as being part of what that paper represents — socialism — even though he does not read the politics pages, in fact preferring the P.P. supporting *Mini Diario*. So here Vincente actually prefers the news produced in an ideology that he claims to oppose due to the fact that he understands it. If he was aware, however, that it supported the P.P., I doubt very much that he would continue to read it.

So Vincente talks about his newspaper buying in terms of habit, but he also uses two narratives similar to some of those used by Isa. On the one hand he suggests that news is important for informing oneself about the world, whereas on the other hand, news can be described as all lies. Also he talked about supporting the socialist government and talked about all politicians as being self-serving. And he spoke about buying *Levante* as he like the ideology of the paper, whilst also saying that he understood little of it, in fact preferring a P.P. oriented newspaper. I think that is this *ad hoc* use of narratives by Vincente is an excellent illustration of Garfinkel's concept of indexicality. Coherence between the parts of his talk are not important. What is important is to be able to account for different features for practical purposes. This allows Vincente to present himself to me as a certain category of person. In the first place he is a sensible actor as he can give clear explanations for his behaviour. Also he

presents himself as a left-wing politically motivated person. He thus navigates a

sense of self in the interaction in that context. He relates to the world through

the narratives he uses in a virtual rather than real way. The narratives, do not

provide a consistent whole and are used to talk about things he may not have

direct knowledge about. For example, when questioned, he could not provide

evidence for his assertion that newspapers tell lies. What is important to him is

that the narratives explain the parts for him and the kinds of selves they evoke.

Toli

I now want to look at two people who choose to read the national rather

than regional newspapers. Toli is 26, an unemployed university graduate, and

buys *El País*. He told me that he likes it as it is a quality newspaper which is

informative and objective. He described *Las Provincias* as being right-wing and

poor quality, and importantly, as not including the independent cinemas in its

entertainment guide. He said: "To me this says everything about the paper". Toli

is keen on what he calls 'higher culture' (*Cultura popular*) and talks resentfully

of 'popular cinema' (*cinema comercial*).

Toli told me that he did not like *Levante* as, "although it is not right-wing it

is still low quality and too sensationalist and does not develop issues. There

tends to be lots of bits and pieces but they don't have any real depth". It seems

that Toli and one of the sub-editors of *El País* were in complete harmony. He

wants exactly what the editor told me his readers would want. He told me: "they

want to see that they are being informed in an objective way. They are young

university graduates who see themselves as above the sensational or politically

biased".

When I asked Toli about news that he had read, he said that he sometimes

looked at the *sucesos* in the local papers when he was in *bares*, but described

them with contempt. To him they were just part of the superficial popular culture to which the majority are addicted. Toli evoked himself as an enlightened intelligent person.

Toli has seen others presenting types of characters and narrative explanations and has tried them out on others himself to get a sense of how they work for others. The character Toli invited me to imagine will not be bothered with petty ideologies or sensationalism, thus he does not read the local papers. He opts for *El País* which is perceived as the intelligent persons newspaper. He imagines that I share this conception along with the kind of generic reader that it attracts.

Carmen

Carmen is 31 and is a post-graduate at the University of Valencia. She buys *El País* and *El Mundo*

> because each one offers a distinct point of view. *El País* is the paper
> of the government, practically they are the opinions of the government
> which they want people to read. We buy it for this, to have another
> opinion. Also we buy *El Mundo* which is the paper I most like because it
> is more or less impartial. The problem is that it doesn't have a section for
> Valencia.

She told me that she didn't like the local papers as "the opinions are without passion and they are never very objective. Occasionally we buy *Levante* for a supplement or something that you can collect". Carmen had a very strong idea of the things an intellectual person should be heard saying and seen doing. She seemed to regard her husband as the paradigmatic intellectual and often referred to something he had said as if it were evidence. She always spoke in the sense of "we believe" or "we think". She told me, while complaining about *musica de la maquina* (contemporary synthesiser music), as she took the conversation on to criticising popular culture, that she liked to listen to classical music for which she had recently bought a CD player. I asked her which classical music she liked. She said she didn't really know: "I like all sorts. Ah yes I guess I like Mozart (*Ah si, pues, Mozart supongo*)". I asked her which Mozart pieces she liked. She said: "Oh I don't know what they are called I just like to listen to them".

Carmen offered me narratives about a person who bought an intelligent person's newspapers and who listened to intelligent person's music. Yet she had no knowledge of classical music. It seemed like it had been a recent decision on her behalf to do this. It also seemed that her husband was very much her reference on just what that educated intelligent person should be seen as doing. Carmen had gone to Valencia as an undergraduate some eight years before the time of my interviews with her. She pointed out to me that she and her husband were the only two people from the village ever to have gone to university. This perhaps suggests why she was so conscious of what kind of behaviours her position called for.

Carmen showed strong contempt for the *sucesos*, of which there are few in the two national papers. She described this material as being for a different kind of audience: "Well all that's for the kind of people who...(smiles waving her hands about)". This reflects her sense that her newspapers set her apart from a certain category of person.

Carmen said that she sometimes spoke of news items with her friends She said that she could talk about different types of news with different friends:

> I have another set of friends — those since childhood. You can't discuss with them the same news as you can discuss with people of other levels. This is obvious. These people just pick up a paper without reading into the news.

I asked her what kind of news you could discuss with these people:

> For example, Alcácer, you can talk about this with this kind of people. Its a subject, normal, colloquial, that's of the street (*de la calle*) that everyone understands. For example, you couldn't really talk to them about the government's economic strategies. Well yes you could speak of it but at a different level. You wouldn't develop it so deeply as you might in a different circle.

So Carmen evokes herself as an intellectual who likes more sophisticated things. The *sucesos* type material is disliked as something for less educated people. What she really wants to know about is politics and other more serious matters. However, later when I asked her about politics and economics, she said: "Well I don't read much of that stuff. My husband reads it because he's interested in everything and he understands it. When they start talking to me about the stock market going up and down they lose me". She told me that something that she had read and enjoyed was the coverage of the war in old Yugoslavia. I asked her what she remembered. She said:

> Yes I remember some. The problem is no newspaper has done it seriously as it is a conflict, well between ethnic groups, political groups,

social groups. Well often you read the articles but still you have no idea what is happening or who is attacking who.

So Carmen reads the newspapers her husband buys. She is proud to announce this to me as she is confident of the kind of person I will thus imagine her as — the same generic person who likes to buy C.D.s of classical music. The person she invites me to imagine her as is contrasted to the kind of people who like to read *sucesos* and more sensationalist news — 'people who don't think very deeply'. As we have seen, in practice she doesn't really seem to be able to live up to the person she initially offers to me. She is unable to talk about any of the topics which she suggests distinguish her as a intellectual from ordinary people.

Carmen later told me that she did in fact like to read glossy *Hello* type magazines, which she told me with mock apology. She said that: "If I'm honest, in summer I fry myself with gossip. Its good to relax". So on the one hand those who like this kind of material are shallow thinkers — a kind of person with whom you can only have a certain kind of conversation — and on the other it is an amusing way to self indulge and relax. As we have already seen *morbo* is something that is attributed to other people not oneself.

So Carmen uses her, or rather her husband's, purchase of certain newspapers as a way to present herself in a certain way. She does this by contrasting herself to a category of people who have a different level of understanding of the world and who are thus titillated by sensationalist material. She also talks about other aspects of her life, such as her liking of classical music, in the same way . When she was called to talk about some of the things that she suggested people of the more intelligent category of person understand, she could not. I did feel at this point that she became uncomfortable as the self that she wanted to present in the context was not working for her. At this point her husband became evoked as the true member of this category of person. Her

own distinction from the non thinkers seemed less obvious. But, that she is going about buying classical music and the way she talked about this suggests that this presentation of self is important to her not just in this context, but something that she is working on more generally.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown people using a cultural repertoire of narrative themes to account for their behaviour as regards newspapers. In many instances this involved people using different 'spins' of narratives used by the journalists in the previous chapter. To begin with we have the enlightenment view of news as a source of knowledge about the world, or of newspapers as sites where different ideologies are able to make their position known. But, in contrast to the repertoire used by the journalists, the narrative is also used which refers to the corruption of officialdom. Here politicians are all the same and self-serving, and journalists are mercenaries caught up in this. News, in this narrative is no more than lies.

We then have the different spins given to the narrative used by the journalists which talked about news in a way that was more responsive to the reader. In this chapter we saw the way that readers themselves used a narrative to talk about news as being written essentially for people with a lot of *morbo*. Although this was always used to describe the behaviour of others. The speaker always described themselves as not being interested in such material or as using it only as an amusing distraction.

What we continually saw was people using these themes in way that located themselves as a person who is against morbo, who is intelligent , non-conformist and essentially aware of the problems in society. This person would be contrasted to a person who was stupid, morbosa, and a conformist, duped by consumerism. And themes would be presented woven into people's autobiographies or self-accounts produced for the setting.

Chapter 9

Conversations using news items as resources: competing and co-operating as narrators

Introduction

This chapter looks at people talking about news texts and the narratives that they offer. What we will see is that people do not produce the concrete identifiable static responses which have been long sought after in media studies, but use the news as a resource to produce their own narratives for the ongoing business of interpersonal interaction in specific contexts. Here I offer a response to the points made by Radway 1988, Ang 1990 and Schrøder 1994, that media audience research must find a way to get round the notion that people are influenced by stable 'discourse communities'.

In the previous chapter I looked at people talking abut news to navigate a sense of self as they spoke with me, a university researcher. In this chapter I will show the same process happening in naturally occurring conversations. A group of factory workers talk about items using cultural narrative themes to compete or co-operate in particular settings in order to evoke themselves as a certain kind of actors for themselves and others.

We will see that the literal meaning of the actual topic or narrative theme chosen is not so important as is the work that it can do for the individual. The chosen theme will thus be understood by other interlocutors not directly at 'face value' but by reference to already attributed assumptions that parties have of

each other and the work that they might want to do with them. Occasionally in the talk we will see that individuals may disgard topic or narrative and confront each other directly in terms of the work they intend to do with it.

As individuals produce narrative themes they will continually evoke categories of people of which they may or may not be a member. Here we will see clearly the kind of work senses of community can do for people as they locate themselves and others through the narratives that they use. Here, community must be understood not as something concrete or static but as a resource for the business of self navigation.

These narrative themes may be produced by individuals or may be produced by the group as a whole, or by part of the group. In this later case the group or part of the group develop a sense of solidarity as each narrates contributing to the telling.

The conversations which follow were recorded from naturally occurring conversations which took place each morning as I and five of my co-workers at a small factory near the centre of Valencia took breakfast for half an hour in a small cafe near to the place where we worked. I had been working at the factory for several months before I started to make the recordings by which time I was familiar with the dynamics of the group. They were unaware of the fact that I was a university researcher. They knew only that I was English and that I needed work. Obviously this in itself would have a dramatic affect on how they perceived me. The fact that I was foreign meant that they often produced narratives about national identity and behaviours, and talked about themselves as Spanish.

I made the difficult decision not to tell them that I was recording the conversations. I wanted the conversations to occur naturally rather than them being staged specifically for the tape-recorder. This was very hard at times, and I felt guilty about betraying friends. But it was the only way I felt I could get data on how people use news in settings. Research into audience 'responses' has

generally been limited by the way audiences have been studied in artificial settings or by the way studies have tended to consider responses in the context of stable and isolated discourse communities. The speakers are, however, impossible to identify from the text.

The Conversations

In the first section I want to show individuals using news as a resource for creating narratives which they use to compete in a particular context. I will show a group of interlocutors competing to narrate about sets of events. As we will see, the actual literal value of the narrative used is almost irrelevant. It is used to be seen as a 'knower', or a good narrator in the power structure of the group. I also want to show the same group collectively producing an account of a set of events in a news text to evoke the group as a whole in a certain way — to show themselves as knowers, as 'we are the ordinary people who know' in contrast to the stupid official world which is ignorant of how things really work. Here the news topic is used to generate a sense of solidarity. Following this I will show how certain types of news texts might work for readers by allowing them to be creative with the narrative.

In the second section I want to show how members of the group use narratives which involve evoking many senses of categories or communities of people, which invite the hearer to consider them as a particular kind of speaker and actor. As in the previous chapter these narrative themes are used creatively to orientate the hearer to imagining the speaker as particular kind of sensible actor. Again the speaker will produce narrative themes with a consideration as to what the others bring to the conversation with them and thus what themes will do work for them.

It is important to point out that with many of these conversations the individuals are producing narrative accounts of events and issues of which they have no direct experience. Their experience is only of narrative accounts they have heard assembled and offered to them by others.

Doing work with narrative themes

My first example is comprised of two separate conversations which happened on subsequent days. In these conversations we can see the speakers using the news as a resource to compete in the prestige hierarchy of the group. As we will see the hierarchy is already fairly well established, with 'D', the boss of the factory, in the end using his status as boss to ultimately define what the correct interpretation is and to affirm who has power. The individuals use the news text to create cultural narratives in order to compete as knowers. In the first conversation we will see at the end that the topic almost slips out of the way leaving only the competition.

I offer the second conversation, in this example, which was recorded a day later as evidence that the narrative themes used by the speakers are not static 'responses' to the news but are chosen on the basis of the work they consider they might do for them in the setting. In this case this is shown by the fact that the two speakers in fact express what might be described as the opposite points of view to those they expressed in the first conversation.

This first conversation was stimulated by a text about North Africans who work on the beaches of the South coast selling things, such as watches , sunglasses, hats. The conversation is initially aimed at me, but soon changes.

A: You are racists in England?

Me: What do you mean?

A: The English, they are all racists?

Me: Well I don't know, not all, I guess there are many different....

A: You treat the black people very badly.

B: It's like in Germany. They kill them there.

C: It's a good solution (laughs).

Me: Well there is racism...

A: In Spain we're not racists.

D: We can't be racists dick-head (*gilipoyas*) as there is no one to be racist towards.

A: When black people come here they sell drugs. They move into your area and down it goes*(lo hacen una mierda)*. I think they should be thrown out.

D: What do you expect them to do? They get nothing else. We give them nothing.

A: Yes but they bring the areas down.

D: What do you know about them? Nothing! Have you spoke to them? You know nothing!

A: You know everything?

D: Can't handle a decent discussion.

A: (under his breath) Fuck off *(vete a la mierda)*.

The following day the roles of the speakers were reversed after a comment made on a text about drug pushing by North Africans in the historic centre of Valencia.

D: Why don't they do something. The police should go round and ask people if they are from that area. If not off they go.

A: You can't blame some of them. There are no jobs.

D: Yes but why are you not like that? Why are you not on the streets

selling drugs? Everyone has a choice you know. Why are we all

sitting here? We may not have the best jobs but it is what we have

chosen. Everyone has a choice.

C: But everyone doesn't have the same chances.

D: Sometimes you have to make your chances.

So in the first part A starts a conversation with me about racism in the

U.K.. In fact he is not interested in my response but wants to present a narrative

about the Spanish people. A and B are friends and low status narrators in the

group. As they develop the narrative, D, who is the boss, decides that he must

demonstrate to me and the others that he is in fact a much better narrator. As he

speaks he smiles dissmissively at A.

The second conversation, as I have said, is evidence of the way people will

use narratives according to the needs of the situation. Here the speakers take

different positions on the issue of immigrants in the two conversations. In the

first conversation it is A who shows little tolerance for the plight of immigrants

with D defending them. In the second conversation the roles are reversed.

That the topics and the narratives used are not necessarily used or heard at

'face value' is clearly indicated at the end of the first conversation where D and

A actually confront each other. The literal meaning slips away leaving only the

competition as D tells A "You know nothing" and A tells D. "You know

everything?". However D then backs off from this meaning going back to the

literal meaning saying "Can't handle a decent discussion". In this way the actual

competition is backed away from in one sense but at the same time D again

attacks A. A aware of this tells him to *"vete a la mierda".'*

Confabulating and creating solidarity

In the next example a news item is used by the group to collectively construct a narrative about a set of events which creates a temporary sense of solidarity. They evoke themselves as knowers in contrast to the foolish ignorance of those in power. Here they offer themselves in a context of' solidarity yet in the end those who have status as better narrators in the end take over.

This conversation was stimulated by a text on forest fires. There had been one virtually every day in the province. The text as usual dealt with the problems of controlling the fires and of lost beauty.

D: There will be nothing left!

Me: Do you think they are started deliberately?

A: Are they deliberate! (Smiles at C).

B: It happens every year. They can't cut down the trees by law, so they burn them.

C: It used to be their land sort of, the people of the villages.

A: Yes but the woods no good for anything, just boxes. Its poor quality wood.

B: That's why they burn them. The outside gets charred, but the wood inside is okay.

C: They did it to the national park as well. The people used to manage the woods for cork and wood. When they made it into a national park they couldn't touch anything. So they said 'up your national park (*toma parke naciónal*)' (makes gesture as if lighting a cigarette lighter).

A: Cunt! (*coño*) That wood's no good. They don't make much money from it.

D: (To me) The woods used to belong to anyone. People know the only way they can take the wood is by burning it. It may not be worth much but think how much there is in all those km of burned land.

A: It would be no good.

D: How would you know?

Here the story about what really lies behind the news text is put together by the group as a whole. Each wants to add something. By creating this confabulation the group expresses a solidarity. I was invited to imagine them as shrewd knowers in contrast to the authorities who apparently had no idea what was happening and who had stupidly caused the whole situation in the first place. As we can see though the narrator status of the speakers is evident by how much their contributions are considered by the others. A has to say his piece twice and D is permitted to provide the final version.

The way that people collectively assemble accounts of events which suit the needs of the situation has been discussed in the book *Collective Remembering* edited by Middleton and Edwards. The papers in the book show how families and whole societies collectively tell about events and in the process transform those events as they create a satisfactory account which suits the needs of the moment. They suggest that it is these re-tellings that become the basis for later accounts. Carrithers (In Press) offers a particularly useful description of this process which he calls 'confabulation'. For Carrithers it is this collective creation of accounts that allows us to manage our social life and conceive of future collective responses. I will look at this point carefully as it can help us to understand what is happening in this particular piece of data and in the kinds of collective assembling of accounts that we will examine in the next chapter.

Carrithers describes confabulation as the process whereby a group of people collectively assemble an overall account of a set of events, what their consequences are and what the future response might look like. As they assemble 'what has happened' individuals will chip in adding to the whole which may push the emphasis one way or another or re-tell the narrative giving their own version or to simply be seen as being on record as having a particular

feeling towards the events. These expressed sentiments become an important part of the flow. The emotive re-tellings of 'what happened' and its consequences suggest compellingly just what the speakers should do — what the future should be. Carrithers uses an example from E. Schieffelin's (1976) ethnography of the Kaluli to make his point. I will look at this example as it illustrates his point quite powerfully.

The Kaluli greatly value personal autonomy and there are few formal institutions guiding their collective life. Groups are assembled *ad hoc* for the task at hand. Schieffelin asks how collective action becomes possible in groups so fiercely egalitarian and where such high emphasis is placed on personal autonomy. To answer this he uses an example where one of the Kaluli's wives had been killed by a snake bite which was believed to be the fault of a particular person who was a witch. Individuals sat round and shouted out their sympathies. Each would say what had happened and what the consequences were. A narrative about the events emerged through the growing anger as individuals stood up to be counted as being appalled. The narrative pointed forward as to just what the future should be, where the story should go from there and what people should do next. Carrithers argues that:

> We might say: as people composed the immediate past and present
> for each other, they composed the future as well. Their speech had a
> cognitive and an emotive or evaluative element, but also a conative
> element, an element of will and determination. In the excitement each re-
> telling of events demonstrated the speaker's own willingness to face the
> consequences. Each invites others to join in, and each contributes to the
> growing consensus over what had, and what should happen.(In Press)

Consider this in the context of our conversation about forest fires. In this case the narrative theme is not quite so compelling as in Carrithers' example, yet

the participants in the discussion are all concerned to go down on record as having a particular stance regarding the events. And they are compelled to show their knowledge of the screen created by the authorities in order to evoke themselves as part of the ordinary people who know about the stupidity of authority. And the tone of the conversation became more excited as it moved towards the conclusion which portrayed those in authority as useless and interfering in that which was not their business. It was out of these re-tellings where each went down on record as having a certain position regarding the events that the solidarity of the group was created, for a few moments, as they located themselves as regards a flow of events. A likely future is implied where those in authority might learn not to interfere in that which they do not understand. As the confabulation is developed speakers who go against the main current, in this case speaker A, who points out that the wood is in fact no good, are ignored and thus not included in the sense of solidarity. In the next chapter we will see this confabulation happening on a much larger scale, where there are much stronger sanctions for those not prepared to produce the appropriate re-tellings in the appropriate contexts.

Room for more narrative themes

In the next example the news text is again used as a means to create a sense of solidarity. Again the group are knowers in the face of the local council's belief that everyone must be stupid. This conversation also shows why some news items become widely known and popular — because they can be easily talked about and have elements which invite discussion. The text tells of a shark attack in the waters off one of the beaches in Valencia. Sharks are not at all usual in those parts. Lets see why this text was particularly inviting for comment.

D: Have you heard about this shark?

C: What shark?

D: A shark has bitten the toes off a doctor in the sea at the Malvarrosa (a beach).

B: When was this?

D: Yesterday. He was swimming and chomp! The shark has been sighted since by boats. It's moving south (uses mock sinister voice).

B: How big? Does it say?

D: No it's just a small one.

B: It's just a fish that has grown after eating all the rubbish that is in the sea at there [this is a joke which refers to the fact that the council are currently promoting the beach as a tourist spot after spending money on a promenade. Yet everyone is aware that the sea is in fact filthy there with sewage and it is close to the docks].

C: Or a little goldfish that is mutated. You never know what's in there.

D: It's lucky he was a doctor, sort of cuts out the middle man like (laughter)

A: Hey I was up there last week!

B: Shit so was I, right at that spot!

As we can see the text offered the chance to be titillated by the strangeness of the event. Also it offered the opportunity for the sharing of a joke and the solidarity giving 'we are not fooled'.

News as a resource

What I have shown with these conversations is people using news texts as a resource for the business of interpersonal interaction. They will tell narratives about sets of events depending on the needs of the situation for them.

During the morning breakfast sessions which lasted for about half an hour the main source of conversation was the day's newspaper which was available in the *bar*. The conversations were sometimes characterised, as in my first example by competition and in the later examples by the need to feel a sense of solidarity. The two genres of interaction could merge as one speaker attempted to create solidarity with the majority of the group while simultaneously competing with one or other members.

The conversations also show the problems that would be involved in looking for concrete responses made by readers or for opinions on the news events. The speakers use cultural narratives to account for events depending on the needs of the situation. They must present themselves as good narrators only in each context. For example, D uses two completely contradictory narratives in the first two conversations we looked at. I also, in fact heard him at a later point talking with some friends of his who he had described to me as 'cultured' and 'educated'. In this conversation the narratives were mellower, and it seemed more important in that context to be seen to be giving a reasonable analysis of the situation rather than ably imposing one interpretation. Here D shows his

ability to recognise that narratives must be used differently in different generic contexts.

Community

The conversations we have just looked at have also given a sense of something that I now want to look at in greater detail. The speakers in the conversations, as they located themselves as certain kinds of actors, evoked temporary categories of people which sometimes they were part of and at other times not, and which sometimes they aligned with and at other times against. In the first conversation the speakers evoked the community of Spain as opposed to the British and the Germans who were all racists. There was also the community of those who end up on the streets selling drugs. The speaker who first claims that the Spanish are not racists has no problem going on to side himself against the community of immigrant junkies. Each alignment did a certain kind of work for him in the two cases, or at least he used them to do work for him. In the last two conversations the group evoked senses of categories of people who know and those in power who do not. Again these do that particular kind of work for them.

It is the way people use senses of community and categories of people in order to do work in conversations in settings that I now want to look at. I want to show the way that individuals use senses of community as resources *ad hoc* in the business of self navigation. The following conversations show the group or individuals in the group temporarily aligning themselves with and against many senses of community This often involves them aligning themselves with a particular category in one conversation and against them in the next.

Normal v weird

The following example again shows members of the group competing to appear as knowers, but here we can see a sense of community being offered where normal people are contrasted to weird ones who might be eliminated. This conversation was stimulated by a text telling about the presumed murderer of the three girls of Alcácer. It gave some details of the murders themselves and gave some biographical points.

B: He's a bastard that guy (*que cabron el tio ese*). How could he kill them like that?

A: How did he manage to get away with things for so long. People must have noticed that there was something very strange about him? He must have been really weird (*Tenia que ser muy raro*)

D: Dick head (*Coño*) do you know weird people?

B: Yes (*¡hombre!*) but like this guy?

C: You see loads of people around who look like they could do pretty crazy things, especially when they were on drugs.

B: The junkies in my area spend all night stabbing each other.

A: I reckon (*digo Yo*) that society shouldn't tolerate it any more. It's time to say 'enough, we're not taking any more! (*basta, no tomamos más*)'.

D: There is a lot of rubbish on the streets.

B: You could create jobs for some of them by employing them to get rid of the rest.

D: [directed to A] They could get rid of people like you who talk rubbish (*gente como tu que siempre dice estupideces*)

Here there is the community of weird people which includes junkies, and the more general society that should not tolerate them. The suspected murderer, Antonio Anglés, and perhaps any other criminal, is imagined into this community. Speaker B evokes himself as the kind of person who strongly opposes such people. A evokes a community of non-weird people who should be capable of being able to distinguish anyone so different. D responds by seeing it as an opportunity to attack A — at the end of the conversation D makes his intentions overt. A goes on to contrast weird people with the community of non-weird people who should not tolerate more. He thus uses themes about certain kinds of community to provide a narrative of events. We have already seen that A is in fact capable of evoking junkies as part of a community who have had certain life chances denied to them.

So what we have happening here is people drawing on cultural notions of generic characters such as weird people and normal people who are evoked, temporarily and for practical purposes, as being a category or community. This allows the speaker, by aligning themselves alongside one of the categories, to evoke themselves not just as cold disinterested narrators, but as having a particular relationship to the events as they stand in terms of the narrative that the speaker has given for them.

Weird and ordinary people v authority

In the following conversation we again return to a narrative where people such as junkies are not in some ways different from ordinary people. This conversation was stimulated by a text telling of factory closures in Sagunto, a small town close to Valencia.

C: Shit (vaya!) they are going to close *more* places up at Sagunto!

(tapping page with finger)

B: We'll all end up on the streets with the junkies and the blacks all selling drugs and robbing each other.

C: There is no place for anyone who wants to do an honest day's work any more. It is the same in your country?

Me: In many places yes. Especially in the North.

D: They don't close anything in the Basque Country (at me)

C: Its the same story. We take things too calmly down here. We have to suffer.

D: The politicians don't care about Valencia because we take things as they come.

B: They don't give a toss (*Les importa un rabano*)

D: The socialists they call themselves. They're all the same, look after themselves and their own kind. But that is governments for you. You know all about that in your own country don't you?(at me)

C: Its been the same with Catalunya and Madrid as well they get all the best roads and investment. The government always has to think about the terrorists. ¦

Here the category of people that were weird in the previous conversation now don't seem so far from the rest of us. We could all end up like them. Here they, temporarily, and for practical purposes, are aligned alongside those who want to do honest work. Here they are in fact the victims. Here it is the irresponsible government that is the evil-doer. Also the community of Valencia is imagined against the Basque and other communities who are self interested. The Valencians are all easy going here presumably including the weird ones who stab each other.

Spain v Europe

The next conversation was stimulated by a text referring to Spain's involvement in the European Community. Here Spain becomes a community aligned against the rest of Europe:

> D: I just don't see why we have to go into the European Community. I don't want anyone in some other country, some German or Belgian telling me what I can and can't do. I'm Spanish, I don't want anyone telling me I have to be any different. We have our own way here we are different, we don't want to be like the rest. We can't be controlled. We can't be fed all that stuff (*no lo tragamos*).
>
> C: The people here have to do their own thing (*va por su propio camino*). We won't take it quietly. But I don't see why they have to control everything. Everything will lose it's identity.
>
> B: It will be Spain that loses out. We aren't strong like your country.
>
> D: I am just sick of hearing (*Estoy hasta los huevos*) them talk about the European community.

Here the communities which had been evoked in the other conversations are forgotten for the moment as Spain becomes a homogenous community of individuals who share certain characteristics which distinguish them powerfully from other countries. D evokes himself as part of a community of strong individualists that will not be submitted to the petty intrusions into their culture by the European community. The others quickly recognise the narrative and join in to make their own contributions. On a later date when the opportunity arose I asked them what the European Community meant for Spain or generally. They had no idea. This conversation followed:

C: I haven't got a bloody clue what its about (*no tengo ni puta idea lo*

que significa)

B: All those adverts on the T.V. they don't tell you anything. Its not...

A: Have you seen that one where the musicians stop competing and

play the same music when the walls come down.

B: I don't understand that one.

D: Surprise, surprise (*¡vaya sorpresa!*)

C: It means there will be better music in Spain and less English music

(laughs)

D: No one understands. 1 don't think anyone cares either.

C: I don't even think the politicians really understand. They just collect

their salaries.

D: Its just another way they've found of giving jobs to their friends and

families.

C: If no one understands what they are doing then no one can really

criticise them, can they?

D: No one understands what the government is doing but everyone

criticises them (C and D laugh)

So here the community of Spain dissolves and we are back with the
community of ordinary people who are conned by the elite group. As I pointed
out none of them had any knowledge of the implications of he European
Community although they were aware of a certain narrative theme for talking
about it in terms of it being a threat to the individual character of the Spanish
people. However they are also aware of the theme for talking about the E.C.
when asked details about it's intentions: that it is understood by no one. Thus
they are able to provide explanations for all aspects of the E.C. that need to be
dealt with. The individual explanations are contradictory but are good enough

for practical purposes. During my field work I generally found that people used these two particular themes to talk about the E.C..

Decent parents v irresponsible parents

The following conversation was stimulated by a text on Antonio Anglés. This conversation is slightly different as I am alone at the table with D, the boss of the factory. Here he is more concerned with offering me more details and talks as a more responsible adult showing less concern for competing against others or for being amusing:

> D: I want to know what kind of society we are making. We have to
> think about the kind of youth we are making. Its the parents. These
> days they stick *(ponen los críos)* the kids in front of the T.V. and do
> their own thing. It doesn't cost so much to give kids a little
> common-sense. You don't need to be intelligent, they just need
> some common-sense *(solamente necesitan sentido común)*. It
> makes me angry when they say society is to blame. These people
> have choices like everyone else. Their parents don't give them the
> common-sense to make them.
>
> Me: Yes but these areas are pretty rough.
>
> D: Yes but listen, many people who rob or kill come from good
> backgrounds. It makes me angry. And later they blame the social
> background *(el ambiente sociale)* The blame has to end
> somewhere. Many people live in those areas and are proud people
> *(es gente orgullosa)*. Some of them have nothing but their pride
> and honour. No, poverty is no excuse. And its not my fault they do
> these things. Why should I pay for them to be in some comfortable

prison somewhere. Its like the drunks and junkies in this area. I
don't see why I should have to pay for them. If they have problems
they should face them. What they do is cowardly and lazy. They
don't have the guts (*no tienen los cojones*) to do something with
their lives. I see it as very selfish.

Me: What about Anglés then?

D: Well I don't think they'll get him. I think he is now in Brazil.
Anyway

he'll shoot himself before they get him. Once he knows he's
cornered, bang! But I don't see why we should keep someone like
that alive. Like why should we pay?

Here he invites me to imagine him as part of the community of good parents
and of the community of those who have the courage to take responsibility for
their own lives. In this talk D leaves the previous more sympathetic narratives
about marginal communities being, like everyone else, victims of a society and
ruling elite that simply does not care. In this narrative social causes and the
influence of governments are absent. Each person is strictly responsible for their
own lives. Therefore, those who choose to act responsibly should not have the
responsibility of paying for the up-keep of those who don't.

In a conversation only ten minutes later, however, D returned to a more
sympathetic narrative in response to some rather less tolerant views expressed by
A and B. He told me that "you have to be a certain way to cope in an
environment like that". A shouted, "they should give the murderers to the
parents. That is what I'd want if it were my daughter. That would make them
think twice". D looked at me shaking his head and smiling to register the
extremeness of A's views. Here I got the sense that D felt that he had offered
himself to me as a thinking person. He had presented an 'intelligent' mature look
at responsibility for one's actions and life. But in the face of A's more emotional

comment he wanted to maintain his mature and intelligent stance and responded appropriately.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown the way that people talk about news in particular settings. They did not produce static responses but used narrative themes to talk in the business of interpersonal interaction. This allowed them to compete and co-operate within the group of workers. The narratives they used in the talk were not produced by any concrete stable interpretive community but by the work they wanted to do with them in the setting which involved aligning themselves with and against temporary categories of people. I showed that people do not attend only to the literal meaning of the discourse produced but to the work that they assume individuals will want to do with that discourse.

It is the discussion that goes on in settings such as this and the kinds of narrative themes that are used that journalists have to tap into when they consider the kinds of texts that they will produce. However as we have seen the journalist has an ability   to make certain narratives the topic of those discussions. It is in the next chapter that I will look at the different voices we have examined involved in an ongoing discussion about the events surrounding the murder of the three girls of Alcácer. I will show how the journalists offer certain narratives on the basis of what sources supply them with and in accordance with appropriate cultural narratives. In this transforming discussion we will see one of those temporary categories of people that are always candidates for community move people in a powerful way in the face of the events.

Section five: Journalists and readers in discussion.

Chapter 10

Discussion about Alcácer: the power of stories and a somewhat less transient sense of community.

Introduction

This chapter brings together the points raised in the preceding chapters. I will show society as an ongoing discussion between the different voices we have looked at. In this discussion we will again see the use of a repertoire of narrative themes. Sometimes that discussion is at a face-to-face level, and at other times in an 'exploded' form through the mass media, where although those involved in the discussion never in fact meet, they will experience a strong sense of each other's attitudes and preferences. Journalists will transform events into news stories using cultural narratives by imagining what will draw in readers and by tapping into the ongoing discussion about events and the repertoire of narrative themes that are available for discussion about the topic.

As we saw in the last chapter, people will not produce concrete or static responses to these stories but will talk about them using their shared repertoire of cultural narratives, as they navigate self in the business of interpersonal interaction. These narratives will be used *ad hoc* for practical purposes depending on the work that they will do for speakers in different settings. Here the discussion is motivated by the events surrounding the disappearance and murder of the three girls from the village of Alcácer several km from Valencia.

215

I will show one of the temporary categories of people, which we saw in previous chapters as available candidates for community, moving people powerfully due to the developing nature of the discussion about the events. We can thus observe the way that a usually fragmented sense of community can be brought together, more or less, under certain circumstances. However, people will always have the freedom to align themselves against this community should they feel the need to do so in a different context, although in this case, due to the intensity of the developed emotions, those contexts had to be chosen carefully. We will see the power of stories in this whole process. People can be moved powerfully by stories which allow them to imagine the experiences of protagonists.

Alcácer

On the 12th of November 1992 three teenage girls from the village of Alcácer several km from the city of Valencia in South West Spain set out for a disco in a nearby village. They never returned home. The event was reported for the first time in the newspapers three days later due to the mobilisation of the local police from four villages in the search — an unusual amount of interest. The text was not particularly significant. It was just a small piece in the inside pages. The disappearance of minors is a regular occurrence in Valencia and is not generally considered as newsworthy. Sometimes the bodies turn up later, usually mutilated or decomposed, which may or may not stimulate a further low key story. This will depend on the amount of other material available. Yet by the close of January of the following year the local newspapers were filled with little else. The story was front page material and editors demanded journalists to write whatever they could turn up on the subject as some issues sold up to twice the usual number of copies. Letters pages and opinion sections expanded to

accommodate the views of those desperate to voice their own opinion on the matter. It became the subject of fervent discussion for everyone. There were marches in the street as people aired their anger. Many were unable to leave their houses due to the atmosphere of fear.

I will go through the process of events and discussion about them as they happened chronologically. I will show what was happening in the newspapers and give comments from the journalists who wrote the texts, from people generally, with whom I interacted in my daily activities, and from letters and phone-in pages. I will suggest why it was that these particular events became so important and why they moved people so strongly.

I will emphasise here that discussion about the events cannot be fully reflected without considering all of the mass media, particularly the television. However, the point I want to make does not involve showing the whole of the discussion. To do this would in fact involve representing every piece of discourse produced on the topic and anything that related to it — in short all discourse. This is neither possible nor is it necessary for the argument I want to make. I want to demonstrate that voices in the mass media participate in the discussion much like any other voice, even if this is indeed a very powerful one. To do this it is not necessary to consider all mass media. I also want to show how the particular sense of community which is developed through a mass medium shares many of the qualities of those confabulated in face-to-face settings.

Missing: the power of stories.

The first time the events reached the local press was in *Levante* on November 15th 1992, 3 days after the disappearance of the three teenage girls from the village of Alcácer several km from the city of Valencia. The writer of this first text on the subject told me that it had not been used on the first day of their disappearance as: "such events are quite usual. Sometimes they turn up (*a veces aparacen*) later sometimes they don't". He also told me that on the day it had been included there was less other material available to use. It was still an additional news item for the inner pages.

The heading of that first text tells us why the disappearance of the girls in fact made the news on that particular day: "**The Strange Disappearance of 3 Girls Mobilised 4 Villages**". The journalist received the information from a source in the '*Guardia Civil*' (the rural/village police force). The three girls had gone off one night to a disco and not returned. The police had searched during the night and the following day had organised local people to help search the surrounding area. The text gives no speculation as to their whereabouts. The story, the journalist told me, was not considered worthy of spending time on it. The only reason it had become a story was due to the large number of police involved in the search and the relative lack of anything else more newsworthy.

It is difficult to know why so many police became involved. The writer of the text told me that he was also intrigued. He said that a police source from one of the units that was mobilised had told him that they had heard that two other units had gone out in the search, and had thought that they too should join in. The source said that once the thing started everybody was telephoning everyone else and the whole thing seemed important. He said that it was good to feel that all those police were out there looking for the girls.

A few months later when the interest in the events had died down, the same journalist speculated that the whole thing had started due to the sense of honour

of several units of the *Guardia Civil.* He said. "They all felt that they had to do as much as the next unit to find the girls. And it was three pretty young teenage girls from decent families. I don't think they would have done the same had it been boys".

The next time the events were covered by the paper was on December 1st, telling that the Bishop of Valencia had given a mass for the missing girls. The heading of the text was, however, **"Eleven minors disappeared in Valencia during November"**. The text went on to say that some had returned and then described the mass itself. The writer told me that he used the number of missing to make the mass seem more newsworthy . He also mentioned the way it was part of the way he always tried to put events into some sort of theme.

In December due to the interest shown, the regional T.V. news ran a small mention of the disappearance. So the events had become a news narrative in their own right.

Throughout December the subject appeared in the paper a further three times. First the parents of the girls had met with the Minister of the Interior where they had said that they thought there had been a kidnap (the text coming from a journalist in Madrid). Also a special group of the *Guardia Civil* was assigned to the task of looking for the girls and there was a small text saying that the people living in Alcácer belicved that the girls were in Cadiz in the south of Spain. The journalist had been told this by his source in the police who said that they had received many telephone calls from the South from people claiming to have seen the girls. Interest in the case had started to get going. The parents had appeared on the television asking for the girls to be returned home for Christmas.

Everyone around me at this time seemed to want to comment on where the girls might be. I heard a lot of talk in *bares* about 'the white slave trade (*un marcado esclavo por los blancos)'*. Many were concluding confidently that the girls were now the servants of a rich Arab. The feeling was of general intrigue. Several people told me of someone they vaguely knew, who whilst out shopping

with a friend, had gone into changing cubicles in a clothes shop and the friend had mysteriously disappeared. I heard someone tell the story to myself and a friend and then heard my friend tell it to someone else. The protagonist in the story always remained 'someone a friend knows'. The interlocutors enjoyed titillating themselves by going into the mysterious conspiratorial world of a slave trade directly on our doorsteps where shop changing rooms might be hidden elevators and where toilet cubicles concealed chutes.

One journalist told me that the interest generated in the story was partly due to the way the consensus view of the events had developed into them being a kidnap by slave traders. She said that it was this that had captured attention: "Had the girls turned up murdered the day after they had gone missing the story may never have even made the front page. The way people were interested in the girls being slaves made it very interesting".

Fig. 2. Missing poster, "Help us to find them", distributed throughout Spain.

The story was pretty much out of papers for the next few weeks apart from when the father of one of the girls visited the U.K. to ask for the police to help in the search and to display posters of the girls. Also it was considered newsworthy when a gypsy leader asked his people to help the police in the search. The journalist of the text told me that: "People always love a good gypsy story (*los lectores siempre les encantan*). Also the text works as the gypsies are usually associated as being against the law and the police". The text hinted that in this particular case even normal allegiances or differences must be set aside. Essentially we are all one big community. Remember it is important for the newspaper to evoke itself as being part of that community which it claims to represent. 'Missing' posters with photographs of the girls also started to appear in many places.

Let us stop to consider exactly what has happened so far. These events have received a rather different treatment than do those of a similar nature. As journalists told me, the disappearance of minors is something which is not given particularly great coverage in the press as they are relatively usual and it is thought that people do not take much interest in them. As one journalist said: "People just go blank to such things. It's like road accidents, they just blur into they expected flow of events". Yet in this case something quite different has happened. Everyone was speculating about what had happened.

What I want to suggest is that the answer to why this is so can be found in the way that some of the journalists in chapter five talked about the way they make events work for readers. I was told that people will generally not pay much attention to news events where they are *just* events. Journalists told me that to draw people in, they focus on particular protagonists. In this way the reader can imagine the experiences of that protagonists in the flow of events. The reader is thus taken closer to the events. As one journalists put it: "they can feel the events rather than read them as a load of facts. If they read that X

number of children have been killed they might think for a moment about how unfortunate it is, but if you can describe how this influenced the life of one family, you may have them in tears".

So in the case of the disappearance of the three girls from Alcácer the events ceased to be just cold events for the readers. As they came to see the photographs of the three girls and of the distressed parents they could imagine how those events related to kinds of people of whom they are familiar.

It was also the fact that there was a certain kind of speculation about the whereabouts of the girls that lead to interest in the events. As one journalist said, had the girls turned up murdered shortly after their disappearance no one would have taken much notice. But in this case everyone was talking about 'the white slave trade' and imagining the girls and their families located in a particular kind of plot. These ordinary, decent girls could be somewhere exotic at the service of some Arab. People were clearly being moved by the stories. They were being moved towards the girls through the re-tellings of what might be the nature of the events. And it was the mystery about these particular events that compelled the re-tellings. As we will see, later people gave very different reasons for the fact that they were interested.

Found: "Only Skin Covered The Bodies"

On the 28th January 1993, the story again became news, with the discovery of the bodies of the three girls in a hole 50km from Alcácer. The papers were filled with as much material as they could get their hands on. Everyone was stunned as they learned that the three girls that had been the subject of much discussion some time before had befallen this particular fate. The mystery had been solved but yet with another mystery: who and why?

The majority of the texts on that day were made up directly from information received from sources in the rural police. *Levante* ran three main texts. One was a comment from an official in charge of the search saying that he had always thought they were looking for bodies rather than girls, although most people, despite their earlier conviction that they were sex slaves in North Africa, expressed this opinion. Of the two other texts, one told that the bodies were extremely decomposed and that "Two of the girls had their heads separated from their bodies", and the other speculated that the killers must have known the terrain very well as it was an extremely secluded spot.

To give the texts some 'extra life' (*más imagine*) they had included various photographs of the girls with their friends and families. The protagonists had clearly become particular individuals for the readers: girls with comfy cuddly-toyed bedrooms with ballet shoes hanging on the wall. Being moved by the events was being made easy.

Levante also printed a photograph of some of the villagers from Alcácer waiting for more news. The journalist told me that he liked to create a "solidarity of the people (*la solidaridad de la gente*) against something" angle as this, he argued, made for "effective news (*noticias más effectivas*)" where readers could locate themselves, "they sort of call out for the reader to identify".

There was also an article written by the same journalist who had been sent out to get something more personal, as soon as the news was first received from

223

the source. This text emphasised how: "The initial silence [in the streets] of those who had gathered transformed into shouts for revenge". The text was quite an atmosphere creator. The journalist emphasised that it was important to have the personalised element, again to draw people in.

The other newspapers generally ran relatively cold texts which developed on accounts from sources. Many followed a similar line to *ABC* mentioning that: **"The Destroyed Bodies Seemed To Show Signs Of Sexual Assault"**.

After this point the media went Alcácer crazy. I went out to the village to speak with any of the journalists I could find. It was "a complete media circus (*un circo total*)", as one put it. All the T.V. channels with cameras and lighting were there, along with the press. Everyone was trying to get an interview with someone. Several of the journalists I knew said that they were ashamed to be journalists. They viewed that many were, "looking to provoke a riot (*una revuelta*) so that they could report it". One told me that: "the publicity of the case and the search has lead to anxiety in the country, so everyone is interested and the TV wants to cash in".

Journalists were questioning anyone who was on the streets. The mode of questioning was obviously, one journalist told me, "to wind them up (*provocar y nada más*). Ask them questions that will make them angry, then when they get angry ask them more sensitive questions". The journalists seemed to get what they were looking for. I saw various interviews where villagers were provoked into calling for the brutal death of the murderer when he was caught. The intense media presence and the previous months debates about the whereabouts of the girls meant that in some senses little provoking was needed.

One of the *Las Provincias* journalists told me that in terms of news, the events offered a perfect story. She told me that this was because the majority of people could identify with being either a parent or a young person.

The journalist added that people would also be drawn in as "its happening so close by, not like people being killed in Bosnia". She also said that at this

point in the story there was the *morbo* element: "people are always fascinated by the sordid details really aren't they? Its sad really. Its like a road accident, people always want to see what has happened. They hope to see blood".

The journalist told me that the day the Alcácer news had come out they had sold out of newspapers. The next day they printed twice as many. *Levante* had eight pages on the subject. One editor of the Valencia section of one of the nationals told me that his central office had told him to run anything he could get hold of on the story.

So at this point we can see that due to the way everyone came to know the girls and their families, through the discussion about the whereabouts of the girls, the discovery of the bodies was given a rather different treatment by the press compared to the treatment usually given to such events. Journalists were aware of the discussion that had previously gone on and that people already felt close to the protagonists. The discovery of the bodies was, for the journalists and the readers, already part of an ongoing narrative. Usually when a text appears about the discovery of mutilated bodies, there is no ongoing narrative. It is like opening a novel and reading an account of a road accident, for example. One might think that the details are particularly gruesome but one will not be moved as much as if one had read the novel from the beginning and knew who the victim was and how the accident would affect other protagonists. The reader would be familiar with imagining the feelings of those protagonists and how the plot affected them.

Cashing in

On the 29th of January the days headlines in the local papers was that they had detained 3 villagers from 'Silla', a village near to Valencia. The texts were

pretty much without detail. Sources had only been able to release that suspects were being held who, it was thought, were from Silla

On that day the two local papers used any angle they could think of to fill the pages with news about the events using further details revealed by sources, and material developed by journalists at the village. *Levante* revealed some details of the condition of the girls when found with the headings: "**The autopsy suggests that the murderers raped the girls and submitted them to a savage violence**" and "**Only the skin covered the bones of the bodies**". The journalist said that in the second case it was just something that struck him as a lead for a text when he heard it from his source. He said that this went well "to create a sense of the horror of the events alongside other texts showing the human side", for example, the text headed "**Village gripped by fear**" telling how many were scared of the possibility of further attacks. This text was generated by the journalist at the village, as was a text informing about an uncle who had the task of identifying one of the bodies. There was a photograph of him which showed him presumably prior to doing this. The *Levante* journalist told me that this is partly why he thought the text describing the body was particularly effective. "The reader can look at his face and imagine how he would feel. They can also imagine the fleshless bodies of the girls whose faces they have been seeing every day".

I asked the journalist if he thought that they were just appealing to people's sense of *morbo*. He told me that he thought that people wanted to know about the events as they were concerned and angry, but conceded that, yes, they were including such details to appeal to people in that way. "But", he said, "those are the facts of the case (*son los hechos*)". Finally he added that the journalists working on Alcácer were no longer signing the texts, which they normally did, as they felt uncomfortable with the way it was being sensationalised.

On this day there was also a text in *Levante* on the number of young people who had gone missing over the preceding five years. The heading was "**12**

children murdered in the last 5 years". The information was obtained through a few phone calls to sources and the use of past texts written on the murders. Some of the more gruesome ones were described. The journalist told me that this was the typical thing to do: "when something is in the public eye (*en vista*) you look for anything you can print on it". After this point, he told me, all stories regarding disappearances or sexual abuse became newsworthy whilst beforehand they had been fairly neglected. He said: "I suppose we make these things into 'what is happening in our society' ".

So it becomes emphasised that the events in fact form part of a general narrative that society is a lawless place. A journalist from *Las Provincias* told me that this helped to create the "something must be done feel (*hay que hacer algo en siguida*)". She said that this was important "for the newspaper to be seen to be looking out for the community". So the journalists help to transform the narrative towards one about a 'lawless society, where something must be done with these evil-doers' in order to locate itself in a particular way in order to sell newspapers.

At this time the feeling in Valencia seemed to be of general shock. The three girls whose pictures everyone had been seeing for some time had been found in a hole, no more than skin and bone. Everyone in the street, in the *bares* was asking "have you seen that, those poor girls. I can't believe it. How can they do that?". The opinion pages in the newspapers became full of comments on the events. All news items on the T.V. and in the papers were related to them. It seemed petty to comment or worry about other things. The whole of Valencia seemed to be living under a shadow of horror. The opinion pages discussed whether it should be "an eye for an eye". Some said we now live in a "culture of violence". One person criticised the power of TV to create: "sexual relations modelled according to pornography and the viewing of the woman's body as an object".

The same sort of conversations were to be heard continually all over

Valencia. People discussed what should happen to the murderers — whether

they should they be handed over to the parents — and why such things happen.

T.V. and the decline in moral values were the main causes.

So far we can see that through knowing the protagonists the events became

more than just the usual set of details about a disappearance or murder. The

events became transformed into a story, which moved people as they imagined

the protagonists and their experiences in the flow of events vividly supplied by

the media.

When the news was released that the bodies had been discovered, people

started to discuss the events in the way that they had as regards the white slave

trade, except in this case the girls had been brutally murdered. Here the anger

felt by the murder and also by the possibility of sexual assault to the girls was

aired in continual re-tellings about what had happened. The media contributed

to the re-tellings, adding new and more gruesome details. And this contribution

was made in the context of appearing to be a representative of the views and

anger felt by readers.

Here we can see that the ongoing re-tellings of what happened are similar to

those I discussed in the previous chapter as regards the way that people

collectively confabulate accounts. Here there are continual re-tellings about

what happened which may add something new, or which may just repeat earlier

versions. People felt the need to go on record as having a particular stance as

regard the events. There was a sense of people competing to provide the most

appropriate platitude, whether it should be an eye-for-an-eye or whether the

whole thing was caused by television. People used their shared repertoire of

cultural narratives for such talk ad hoc depending on the way they worked for

them in settings. And the emotional nature of these re-tellings itself was

component which compelled the nature of the discussion.

Escaped !?

The first of the texts to inform about the detention of suspects had suggested how incredibly efficient and professional the police force had been although no real details had been given. This feeling faded as on the 30th of January the newspapers reported that the main suspect, Brazilian born Antonio Anglés, had escaped, but had in fact been in the house when the police had arrested his brother, Enrique and his friend Miguel Ricart, believed to be involved to a lesser extent. Enrique's name had been found on a medical slip near to the site where the girls were found. He had since been released as innocent. This appealed to people generally, allowing them to add a further dimension to their re-tellings: that the police ineptitude had contributed to the whole fiasco.

At this point a debate over prison leave started, which is given to inmates in Spain for good behaviour, etc., once they have completed a certain proportion of their sentence. They are allowed several days each month to help them get used to the outside world and make reintegration easier upon their release. The suspected murderer, Antonio Anglés, had left prison on a few days leave, from where he was already serving a sentence for a sex related crime. He had simply not returned to prison after his leave had ended. He was also known to be involved in drugs, having a history of offences. Texts were run using press releases from various right-wing M.P.s asking for the whole prison leave system to be abandoned.
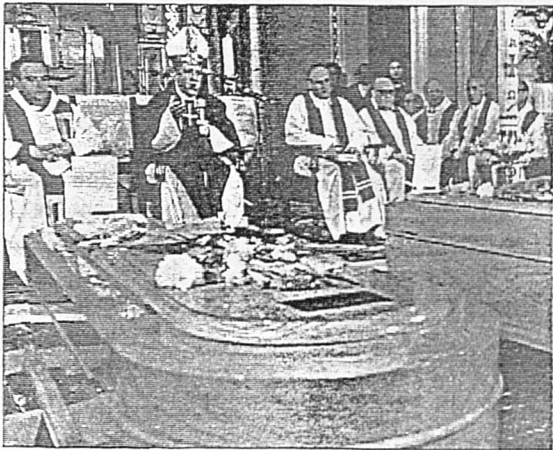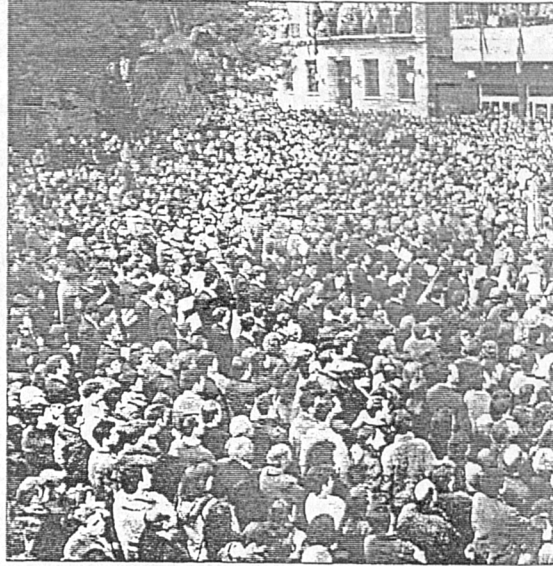
The topic raised considerable discussion amongst readers. In conversations in *bares,* and in interviews that I taped, the typical comments I heard were: "how could they let someone out who is a known sex offender?", and, "on top of it all (*encima*) he was there in his own house and no one went to look for him. No-one will get him now. He'll know all the places to hide and people to hide him"

229

or "well he's already in Brazil by now". Some even felt that it was too

suspicious that the murderers had left medical papers at the scene of the burial

site. Nothing was speculated but it added to the sense of the mystery of the

whole thing. As the events were discussed the interlocutors developed them in

such directions to add to the entertainment aspect. At this point there was still

more room for speculation as the details of how the murders had been done and

why had still not been revealed by the police.

The Funeral: a show of community, or morbo?

The main headline on the 31st of January in *Levante* was "**30,000 say**

good-bye". This referred to the number of people attending the funeral of the

girls in the village. I myself went along to speak with some of the journalists

covering the event along with some friends who went out of curiosity. The

headline was the same in *Las Provincias*, except the number was 40,000. Both

texts gave relatively dry descriptions of the procession and the ceremony,

accompanied by photos of the crowds, members of the girls' families crying, etc..

Fig. 3. Photographs typical of those appearing in newspapers at the time.
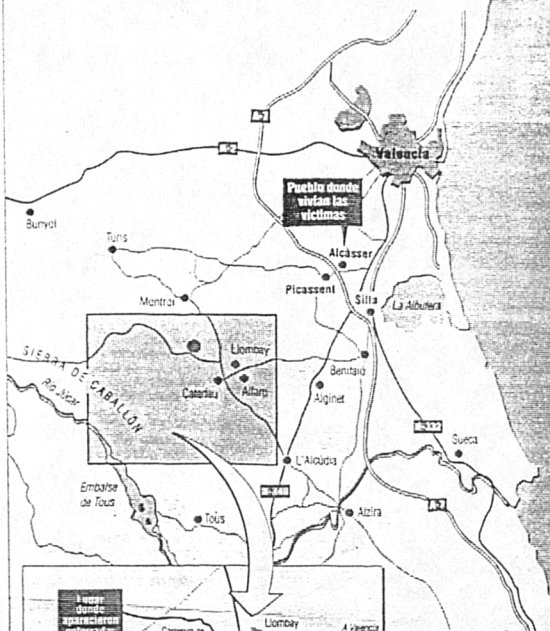
4 / A B C

DOMINGO 31-1-93

All the T.V. stations were there, with cameras and lighting, along with crowds of journalists from all over Spain. The whole thing was completely surreal. During the procession the crowds were silent with occasional outbreaks of chants for justice. In the city many seemed to think that: "most of those people only went to the funeral out of a sense of *morbo*". This was certainly the case with my friends although, once at the funeral, they themselves became angry mourners.

Levante, on this day, included a large map of the area where all the events took place along with a drawing of how the bodies were lying in the hole in which they were found. Both *Levante* and *Las Provincias* ran texts with lists of previous criminal records of the suspects. *Levante's* other main text was **"Alcácer drained of tears"** which was basically a chronology of the days events. Other texts included one where a brother of Antonio Anglés had been moved to a different area of the prison where he had been serving a sentence for some time due to the anger of other prisoners. *Las Provincias* ran some comments released by the Government on prison leave, saying that possibly it should be stopped in the case of sex-crimes. The opinion pages criticised the general *morbo* being shown towards the events, and also those who were asking for firm hand justice or 'an eye for an eye' saying that: "We should not be irrational but reflect and try to reconstruct a society with the moral values that may avoid all this".

Fig 4. Use of graphics to take readers close to details

ALCÁCER, CRIMEN Y CASTIGO

La tragedia de Alcàsser

13 de noviembre. Las niñas desaparecen

Miriam García, 14 años   Antonia Gómez, 15 años   Desirée Hernández, 14 años

25 de diciembre   **6 de enero**   **16 de enero**

27 de enero   **28 de enero**   **29 de enero**

Los presuntos asesinos

Enrique Anglés Martín 23 años. Tiene perturbadas las facultades mentales y posee antecedentes por exhibicionismo en la vía pública

Miguel Ricart 23 años. Nacido en Catarroja, fue detenido en el 89 por tráfico de drogas

Antonio Anglés Martín 26 años. En paradero desconocido desde el pasado 5 de marzo tras un permiso de cinco días mientras cumplía condena de 8 años por tráfico de drogas y diversas agresiones

El lugar del hallazgo

En los alrededores se encontraron diversos objetos de valor identificativo en tal cantidad que llenaron una bolsa grande de plástico. En los mismos podrían haberse encontrado huellas dactilares así como otros indicios importantes para la investigación.

Indicios que llevan a resolver un crimen

CUERPO

- **Pelos y cabellos.** Recogidos en el lugar de los hechos, aportan datos sobre su color, su origen (humano o animal), parte del cuerpo del que proceden o incluso a la persona concreta a la que pertenecen
- **Temperatura.** Proporciona datos sobre cuándo ocurrió la muerte
- **Lividices cadavéricas.** Manchas por acumulación de la sangre debido al efecto de la gravedad que indican la posición del cuerpo en el momento de la muerte

MANCHAS DE SANGRE

Su existencia da lugar a la posibilidad de un acto de violencia contra las personas. Su análisis tiene un gran valor identificativo, revela el ADN de la víctima o del presunto autor

MANCHAS DE SEMEN

Pueden localizarse en el cuerpo o prendas personales y en ellas se encuentran los mismos antígenos y anticuerpos (ADN) que en la sangre, razón por la cual su análisis tiene valor identificativo. La presencia de esperma es reveladora de un delito sexual

el Periódico

The perception of editors that everyone wanted to know about Alcácer seemed well founded. In *bares* I frequently saw newspaper readers totally hooked by the unfolding of events. People were talking of it everywhere. It had to be discussed at least once during any meal or visit to the *bar*. One woman told me that her sister was scared to catch the underground to work whilst Anglés was loose. Another man told me that he had to run his wife everywhere by car for the same reason.

Typical comments relating to the topic were: "If they don't introduce the death penalty they have no heart or soul", "They should hang them from where it hurts most, fucking cowards" or "People like that are worse than animals". Very often the topic emerged that, "in this society they protect the delinquents more than the honest folk", and that, "such people don't deserve to live and we have to keep them". This would usually be related to the notion of a general rise in crime and falling moral standards.

Occasionally I heard comments about the marginality of such people and pointing to the notion that this may explain why the whole Anglés family had been involved with drugs or had records of sex related crimes. However the 'our society is ill (*nuestra sociedad es enferma*)' and the 'we just have to punish more severely' type comments were more usual although as I showed in the last chapter it is no problem for people to be comfortable with both in different contexts.

The readers' comment pages during this time reflected the talk I was hearing in different social contexts, with comments such as: "I am scared to live in this society where there are such criminals", "I want to ask for a referendum to vote in favour of the death penalty for child killers", "We should all go out into the streets and demand justice", "We are guilty as well because we don't do anything, because each time terrorism takes a life we become more used to it and think it enough to send a letter saying how repulsed we are. We are becoming a country of cowards without pride".

Fig. 5. Readers' comments page from Las Provincias.

Canallada

EL CABINISTA
900 500 815
(Llamada gratuita)

Hola, señor Cabinista: Quiero saludarle a usted y a **LAS PROVINCIAS**. También quiero darle el pésame a los padres de las tres niñas de Alcácer. Lo que han hecho con esas tres niñas es una canallada; no se puede admitir. Quiero pedir justicia, que no salgan en toda su vida de la cárcel, por lo menos. Muchas gracias, Cabinista, y adiós. Llamamos desde Aitara del Patriarca, y somos Mónica y Consuelo.

Preocupación

Después de la brutalidad a ver si rectifican. Soy madre de una niña que sale de casa a las 7 de la mañana, tiene que andar un cuarto de hora, luego en la estación del puente de Madera sube al autobús. ¿No están en peligro a esas horas? Llegan al instituto a las 7,45 horas de la mañana y hasta las 8,20 hora no entran en clase. ¿Por qué no rectifican esa hora? Más tarde de lo menos ya se ve a gente por las calles y cualquier emergencia que ocurriese podrían pedir ayuda. ¿Que esos autobuses tienen que hacer un servicio más? pues que lo hagan, y que las empresas no sean tan ambiciosas y tengan en cuenta que la avaricia rompe el saco. Espero que, aunque difícil, recapaciten por el bien de las jóvenes.

Esperanza

Hola, Cabinista. Soy una niña de 12 años, me llamo Paloma. Quisiera ayudar a los padres de las niñas de Alcácer, dándoles ánimo y esperanza para seguir luchando por sus otros hijos, darles su gran cariño, y fe, y reconfortarse con el cariño de ellos.

También quiero aconsejar a todos los niños y niñas de mi edad que no hagan autostop, ni se vayan con personas desconocidas.

Homenaje

Hola, Cabinista: En primer lugar darte las gracias por esta sección que tienes en el periódico **LAS PROVINCIAS**. No se como hablarte, porque la emoción por la congoja tan triste se apodera de mí, por el vil y salvaje asesinato de las tres niñas de Alcácer. Pertenezco a una comisión de fallas, concretamente a la junta directiva de la falla La Parreta. Yo quisiera pedir a todo el mundo fallero, ya que no podemos hacer nada por ellas, al menos hacerles un homenaje a estas tres niñas mártires, vilmente asesinadas, porque ya otra cosa no se puede hacer. Pido a la Virgen de los Desamparados nos cubra con su manto a todos para que estas cosas no se vuelvan a repetir. Y sobre todo, por favor, presidente del Gobierno, autoridades, hacer justicia, pero no con 40 años, no: con 40 tiros.

Indignante

Llamo para quejarme del programa de Nieves Herrero. Lo encuentro indignante, humillante y de muy poca profesionalidad. Gracias.

Solidaridad

Mi llamada es para solidarizarme con el dolor de las familias de Alcácer.

Y por otra parte pedir que no aparezca jamás en pantalla la periodista Nieves Herrero.

La foto

Publicad la foto de Antonio Anglés, el cómplice del asesinato, porque así será mucho más fácil identificarlo. Gracias.

La culpa la tenéis vosotros

Sí, la culpa la tenéis todos vosotros que estáis leyendo mi protesta por permitir que este Gobierno del PSOE, puesto donde está gracias a vosotros, haya creado leyes que a los únicos que favorecen es a los asesinos y corruptos. Dentro de 6 u 8 años estos asesinos estarán disfrutando vacaciones y fines de semana, pagados por todos. Repito, la culpa es vuestra. Muchas gracias.

La culpa no es del Gobierno

Hola, señor Cabinista: Democracia significa gobierno del pueblo. En este crimen tan horrible no podemos echar toda la culpa al Gobierno. El Gobierno tiene culpa de muchas cosas, pero directamente la tenemos todos, porque a la hora de la verdad nos limitamos a lamentarnos tres o cuatro días a raíz de un crimen o asesinato, pero no tenemos ni pizca de solidaridad por nada ni por nadie.

Parece que tenemos ver estas desgracias tan horrendas para hablar, pero sólo hacemos eso, hablar de ello; a la hora de la verdad somos todos muy egoístas y mientras no nos pase a nosotros directamente, no movemos un dedo por nadie; y si no ya me lo dirán, lo que va a pasar con este crimen como con otros anteriores, por horrendos que hayan sido, dentro de cuatro días cada uno irá a lo suyo como siempre y a mirar por sí mismo nada más. Y no me digan que no es así. Si no es así, ¿por qué ya no ha salido todo el pueblo, que se considera normal, que repudia estos actos criminales, a sentarse delante del Congreso, sin comer, los días que sean, perdiendo de ganar dinero y todo lo que haga falta, a exigir un cambio en las leyes? Sin meterme en si pagamos muchos impuestos o no, lo que quiero preguntar es lo siguiente. Si para algo hiciera falta poner cada uno, en razón de nuestros ingresos, un dinero para un bien social, para mejorar lo que no funciona, ¿cuántos estaríamos dispuestos? Bien pocos. Se contarían con los dedos de una mano. Si incluso hay gente que le sienta mal que los ancianos cobren pensión; ahora, eso sí, cuando esos mismos que les fastidia pagar, cuando son ancianos, entonces sí quieren que se les pague a ellos. Si no somos justos, ni solidarios, ni honrados el pueblo, ¿cómo vamos a tener fuerza moral para acusar al Gobierno? Nada cambia porque en el fondo sabemos que hacen lo que haría una mayoría de la gente si estuviera ahí. Y así no se arregla nada, así cada uno a fastidiarse cuando le toca, mientras que si fuéramos de verdad honrados estas cosas no sucederían.

El Gobierno de una nación para poner un símil es como el padre de una familia, o la madre, y los ciudadanos los hijos, pero desgraciadamente ni el Gobierno se comporta como tal padre ni los hijos como hijos. Este Gobierno padre beneficia o protege a unos hijos y a otros no; el Gobierno estafa a los hijos y los hijos estafan igualmente, siempre que pueden, al padre y a los otros hermanos. Pero por ninguna parte hay una presión de verdad para que eso no suceda. Sólo se oyen lamentos del que no se ha podido aprovechar, porque en cuanto puede aprovecharse lo hace también. Por eso, en serio, en serio, no se arregla nada, porque en el fondo nadie lo quiere arreglar, o al menos no está dispuesto a sacrificarse en nada por arreglarlo y espera que lo arreglen otros, que luchen otros, que gasten dinero otros, etc.

Conmigo no cuenten para una simple manifestación por la calle, de una forma mecánica, y al acabar, todo el mundo con la conciencia "tranquila" a su casa, a esperar el nuevo delito, porque eso es lo que "pasará" mientras no nos tomemos en serio cambiar. B. B.

Reformas al Código

Ya es hora de que el pueblo se dé cuenta de que mientras manden los socialistas seguirán ocurriendo casos iguales o parecidos al de las desafortunadas niñas de Alcácer. Desde que mandan no han parado de hacer reformas en el Código Penal, suavizando las penas a los delincuentes; autorizaron la droga, despenalizaron varias cosas que antes eran delito; autorizaron publicaciones y películas de horripilante violencia, de obscenidades y pornografía hasta en horarios de audiencia infantil; han procurado eliminar la religión en las escuelas y en todo lo que han podido, cuando uno puede ser ateo, pero no podrá decir que la iglesia predique nada malo, ni siquiera que favorezca al rico, sino todo lo contrario.

Tristeza

Hola: Me llamo María José. Espero que no vuelva a repetirse nunca lo que ha ocurrido en Alcácer. Y que los padres sepan que todos estamos muy tristes por lo que ha pasado. Gracias y adiós.

El Código

Buenas noches: Soy Francisco Sánchez. ¿No podríamos intentar recoger firmas para que los salvajes éstos no tuviese permiso? Que al Congreso hiciese una modificación del Código Penal?

Nieves Herrero

Les agradecería publiquen esta llamada para adherirme a todas las críticas vertidas contra esa mal llamada periodista, Nieves Herrero, que ha resultado ser una persona impresentable y carente de todo sentido común. Gracias.

Crimen atroz

Querido Cabinista: Te llamo para decirte lo horrorizada que estoy por el crimen atroz que se ha cometido con las niñas de Alcácer. No soy partidaria de la pena de muerte, pero sí que quiero que la justicia sea dura; como debe ser con estos hombres, que no gocen ya de libertad en toda su vida y que se les dé un pico y una pala para que trabajen en carreteras y en muchas obras que hacen falta en la patria, y por supuesto con policías armados a su lado para que no se escapen, para que no puedan hacer más lo que le han hecho a estas pobres niñas. Esto ha sido terrible, horrible, despiadado...

Presuntos

La obsesión que tienen los medios de comunicación españoles de calificar de presuntos a sujetos que son autores probados de unos hechos es realmente incomprensible y que no tiene parecido ni similitud en ningún país del mundo. Hoy, 30-1-93, siguen diciendo de Antonio Anglés es presunto, cuando ha sido probado que es coautor del horrible crimen. Antes de ayer, sobre la cuantía de los tres peligrosos presos que no han regresado de sus vacaciones a la prisión de Picasent, ocultaban su identidad tras iniciales. Pero ¿qué afán en no desenmascarar la identidad de asesinos y criminales? Siguiendo esa regla, Felipe González es el presunto presidente del Gobierno y Lubo Penev presunto jugador del Valencia.

Dormir

Mi pregunta es la siguiente: ¿Pueden dormir tranquilos el juez que dio el permiso al asesino de las niñas de Alcácer y los legisladores que han aprobado esta ley?

Justicia

Yo quiero hablar de lo de las niñas de Alcácer, que el Gobierno va a tomar medidas ahora, antes habían matado a niñas aún más pequeñas y no han hecho absolutamente nada y hasta ahora que han tenido que ir los padres de las niñas a decir que a los asesinos los deben tener presos para siempre, ahora es cuando parecen moverse.

Por favor, ruego que esto jamás vuelva a ocurrir, que es algo insoportable.

Que no ocurra más

Hola, Cabinista: Llamo sobre las niñas de Alcácer y para darles mi más sentido pésame a los padres de las niñas de Alcácer, Miriam, Desi y Toñi.

También llamo para suplicar que esto que ha ocurrido no vuelva a ocurrir jamás. Yo opino que no votemos a los socialistas, porque ya está bien de tanta permisividad, ya basta de películas violentas reflejo de ese espeluznante y horrible hecho.

Por último, decir que pido la pena de muerte para los autores de este brutal asesinato, así como para todos los violadores, estafas y traficantes de droga, porque éstos están destruyendo a la juventud y a la sociedad, a la vez que a muchas familias.

Crueldad

Por favor, ruego a la justicia y a los gobernantes se tomen muy en serio los casos de violaciones tan horrendos y posteriormente asesinatos que han sucedido en este año. Esto es muy alarmante. Siempre a lo largo de la historia ha habido violaciones, pero no tan frecuentes ni tan bárbaras. Las que están ocurriendo en estos últimos años son horribles, de una crueldad y sadismo, de hacer daño por ver sufrir a las víctimas, horrible, horrible. Ruego que se tomen medidas urgentemente para evitar estas salvajes atrocidades no se repitan. También quiero decirles de la necesidad de que urgentemente destruyan todas las películas de violencia, violaciones y malos tratos a las personas, porque no sirven más que para aleccionar a criminales y asesinos, con un instinto de lo más cruel y criminal.

So the discussion goes on and people seem to be getting angrier. The news articles are becoming more explicit due to the perceived opportunity to sell newspapers and the general sense of fear and confusion in the city is growing. The narratives told about the events, as people are going down on record as having particular responses, are themselves moving people to stronger re-tellings and moving them to stronger feelings.

We can also see that the narratives that people are using to account for the events involve locating themselves as regards those events. Here many of the narratives involve people evoking themselves as being part of the community of decent moral people and 'honest folk', as were the victims. The murderers, however are talked about in terms of narratives about animals and cowards who don't deserve to live and who represent the category of people who are responsible for the general decline in moral values and rise in crime. The journalists write narratives which have a sense of representing the views of that moral community. However, as we saw clearly in the previous chapter, people are able to talk about the events differently in different contexts. The friends with whom I went to the funerals, had often spoke to me of the way that the murderers were from a marginal background, where, excluded and ignored by society, they live in a culture where crime is normal. However, at other times they themselves were to be seen chanting for justice.

Public demonstrations of alignment against evil.

The 1st of February, saw the start of a period of demonstrations throughout Valencia. The first was in Catarroja, the home of the suspects (the police had still not released any details or charges). The march was intended to show solidarity with the families of the victims. One villager said to the journalist of

Levante that the "violence does not correspond with the pacific character of our village". The same respondent revealed that: "Yesterday we went to play a football match and they called us murderers (*assasinos*) when they knew where we were from". One shopkeeper, whose premises were near to the house of the suspects, had done no business since they had been pronounced as the suspects. The feeling, the journalist told me, was that the murders had "shamed them also". During the march some started to shout that they should go to the house of the Anglés family. The police persuaded them against this.

In the atmosphere of the continual re-tellings people were compelled to align themselves with and against others. In our Spanish context we find these alignments being made in a public way. The rival football team had publicly shown its allegiance to the honour of the murdered girls and the moral community. They had gone on record as being against the evil. The villagers had to publicly declare alignment against the murderers and assert that they had not been shamed. The publicness of the discussion about the events compelled even more dramatic public shows of allegiance.

We can also see a process of simplification and polarisation. The complex of differences that exist between people are ignored as this one sense of the moral community of Valencia moves people powerfully. The way the events moved people so powerfully to public demonstrations of allegiance and community membership is illustrated beautifully in this case. Lets look at it more carefully.

Fig. 6. 4,000 young people gather in the centre of the city to demand justice.
"Queremos salir a la calle, sin morir"

4.000 jóvenes piden justicia para Toñi, Desi y Miriam

Unos 4.000 jóvenes, según la Policía, se manifestaron ayer en Valencia para mostrar su repulsa por el salvaje asesinato de Toñi, Desirée y Miriam. Un buen número de pancartas pedían el cese de la violencia y ofrecían claras muestras de rabia contenida. Los manifestantes dieron su apoyo a los familiares de las víctimas y al pueblo de Alcàsser. / 17

■ *Corcuera insiste: Los jueces deben tener más cuidado con los permisos penitenciarios.* / 3

■ *Ricart mintió en su primera declaración y dijo que estaba preso cuando se cometió el crimen.* / 16

So the villagers of Catarroja refused to purchase goods from shops in the street where the Anglés family lived. When I and a journalist heard this we were both quite baffled and amazed. Yet such was the general attention being given to the village by Valencia and indeed the whole of Spain it is not so difficult to comprehend their actions. The whole of the population of Spain seemed to be aligning as a moral community against all that was against decency and against that which the moral community values, which was represented by something from their village. Those from outside the village were calling all the villagers murder rs. Villagers who worked in Valencia said that they had been scared to go to work due to the way people behaved contemptuously towards them. One office worker said that people had left him hostile notes on his desk.

For many people not living in Catarroja everyone in the village was a possible candidate for membership of the category of people who fell outside of the moral community. They demonstrated their own alignment by showing

hostility to the villagers. The members of the village themselves had to demonstrate that they were members of the moral community by refusing to buy food from the unfortunate shopkeepers in a particular street and then by marching through the streets of the village. In all of these cases personal differences or similarities are unimportant. One particular trait, that of conectedness to the evil of murders, was at issue.

Through this example we can see the potential for social change as events and the way they are talked about move people towards particular performances and alignments, and where different communities become crystallised. In this case one of the temporary categories of person which are candidates for community, that showed in use in the previous chapter, becomes somewhat less transient.

Further alignments and a crystallisation of one sense of community

The main news on the 1st of February in *Levante* was that they had found the house — an abandoned station — where the suspects had lived during and after the time of the crime. The text included an interview with a terrified neighbour who had seen Antonio Anglés the day before. Most of the days papers included two stories which the journalists of the respective papers had picked out independently as being newsworthy. One was: **"He strangled his two dogs"** where a neighbour had seen Antonio Anglés shoot his dogs having had no success with strangulation. The other text was: **"They ate beneath the poster of the girls"**. A *bar* owner in the area said that the suspects had eaten every day in his *bar* sitting beneath the 'missing' poster of the girls faces. One of the journalists told me that these texts were important as they helped create a profile of the suspects: "to emphasise their inhumanity. What a nerve (¡*qué*

caras!) they have to kill those girls and then just sit there eating". This text seemed to stick in the minds of readers. I heard it referred to many times when the topic was raised. I did hear one person, a teacher, speculate that such behaviour may indicate that such horror was such an ordinary part of the lives of such people that perhaps it doesn't effect them like us. She even speculated that: "its strange how people can do such barbaric things and then forget about them". So she provides a narrative about humans who act in a particular way which may be more naturally human.

That day there were a number of other demonstrations. 3000 people marched in the city against rape and there were several other demonstrations in schools in villages surrounding Valencia. Each day the papers had photographs of town centres or parks crammed with thousands of demonstrators. This was the beginning of a wave of marches — many by secondary school children chanting for castration. I mixed with college students on two demonstrations. They were very excited and quite righteous. One girl said to me smiling "we want the bollocks of Anglés". Another girl said: "you have to be able to walk the streets. You have a right. They have no right to make us feel afraid". The feeling against Anglés was growing intense. But as we can see from the latter comment, this was not just about showing anger at one person, but at making a show of a moral community refusing to stand for a certain category of people. Many of the chants that I heard during marches referred generally to an increase in violence in society and called for those responsible to be dealt with and be shown that their behaviour would not be tolerated. So people who demonstrated in the streets were not just showing anger towards Antonio Anglés, but were going on record as being members of a polarised moral community, comprised of 'decent folk,' in contrast to the generic evil-doers who opposed that community.

Here we can clearly see people being moved by the use of certain cultural narrative themes. Here society is talked about in terms of a simplified

polarisation between evil-doers and decent folk. This moved people to a particular kind of performance. That the behaviour of the murders could be explained by sociological or psychological factors, or that their behaviour was more closely tied to other more acceptable aspects of culture, were not often raised as these are not part of the general repertoire of narrative themes available for talking about such events.

Going on record

Discussion continued on the subject of prison leave. The Minister for Justice was interviewed in Madrid saying that they intended to become harder with such criminals and introduce a new penal code but that it was important not to become carried away with the emotion of the moment. Also the president of The Supreme Tribunal commented that the penal system needed to be revised as he felt that many rapists were not reinsertable into society. The P.S.O.E. deputy also spoke on the intention to increase sentences. Opinion pages in the newspapers varied from asking what was to be done with the murderers for the sake of the families of the girls to asking for caution: "despite the actions of the savages, a democratic state, in which we have to live free and rationally, should not and cannot allow itself to be taken by the terror and hysteria that the murderers want to inject". Here we see the use of a further theme: that such people do not act out of any spontaneous response to a context or through sociological or psychological reasons. They do it rather as they consciously want to 'inject' terror into society.

Interest was maintained as to the whereabouts of Antonio Anglés. There seemed to be several hypotheses going around: that "he's left the country. He's long gone", and that, "He's still under the noses of the police but they are too dozy (*torpes*) to see him". One person said to me that: "they should have

someone like him working for the police, he knows everything... he's running rings round them". I heard two middle-aged women on a bus blaming the Government and "the permissiveness they've brought to the country" for the murders. This, they suggested, has helped make families: "not what they were. All they think about is paying themselves more money. The laws they make favour only the corrupt and murderers and we pay for the lot". This conversation then moved onto the subject of supporting the lazy unemployed which the government had created — "they are shameless (*sinvergüenzas*)".

Over the next few days the discussion over prison leave continued. The Minister of the Interior blamed the judges saying that there is nothing in the law saying that such people as Antonio Anglés should have leave. He said that judges have to be responsible. The right-wing P.P. blamed the administrative machinery saying that it should be only the judges who make the decisions. *ABC*, the right-wing monarchist paper, ran all the comments produced by the judges' associations which blamed the government for inventing the system viewing that the government was just looking for more power.

The pages of *La Cabinista,* a freephone comments page in *Las Provincias,* was, since the discovery of the bodies, totally devoted to comments on Alcácer. The majority of the calls were asking for justice, the death penalty and law reforms, for example, "I wanted them to kill the murderers, and although they have found them I don't care, I still want them killed [...] this comes from the heart". Many calls echoed the general fear of Antonio Anglés' continued freedom, for example: "I, a 17yr-old girl, am terrified to go out on the street". Other letters commended the media coverage as, "it helps hit home to young people the danger that exists". One call revealed the clear difference between us and them: "their killers cannot be normal: they must be sick, this is self evident. We cannot kill them nor give them the death penalty as this would drag us down to their own level... I believe that in us there are better sentiments than these. We should apply justice". Here we can see the *ad hoc* use of various narrative

themes which don't really fit together but which allow the producer to assemble a piece of discourse which fits their feelings and the need to go down on record. The killers are described as being sick and not normal yet are still held responsible for their actions and their level of morality.

In all the comments which were produced in the re-tellings there was a sense of people competing to provide a more wise and fitting platitude about the events — to provide the best account; to go on record as having produced the wiser comment. Again this would depend on the context. I heard people expressing that 'we shouldn't be dragged down to their level' on some occasions , whilst on others saying that they should be handed over to the people of Alcácer in order that they pay 'an eye for an eye'. In each case they go on record as having said the right thing. In other contexts they may be heard talking about the way that the government should do something about the plight of the many people who live on the margins of Spanish society, unemployed and without education, or risk the same thing happening again.

The opinion pages where editors, writer, politicians give the comments started to change in their feel as February commenced and started to question media coverage: "day after day they amplify the details [...] Its like a film that they repeat and each new version doesn't help us to comprehend it better, only to sharpen the horror" (*Levante* Feb 2). But the right-wing papers used the events as an opportunity to attack the socialists: "All the democratic governments are fanatics of freedom. In the schools they don't teach the children ethics nor aesthetics, in adolescence they brutalise themselves with rock music, with its constant chants to sex without love (there are high schools where they distribute condoms!). This rock music promotes 'our lower instincts' " (*Las Provincias* Feb 2). Others argued that "its not the penal system which is failing but the human race" (*Levante*, Feb 2). And more thoughtfully: 'its bad about the prison leave being given, but prison doesn't improve anyone, quite the opposite. The thing is to be more careful" (*Levante*, Feb 2).

So the discussion about the events had moved people to publicly demonstrate their alignment against a particular category of people. At first this was done as they went on record by providing particular re-tellings of the events. As these emotional content of these re-tellings generated even greater anger people needed to go out on the streets. People had to work to show these senses of alignment. Residents of the village which had been the home of the suspects were themselves in danger of becoming located with those responsible for the fall in moral values and the challenge to the community of decent people. They had to go on record as being part of that decent community of those who value that which had been defiled by the events. In this case we can see the way that one of the temporary senses of community, which I showed people using in previous chapters for the navigation of self in contexts, has become somewhat less transient. Events had moved people towards particular alignments and performances. Different senses of communities were becoming more crystallised.

The Search For Public Enemy No.1

On the 2nd of February *Levante* ran its main story on why Antonio Anglés had escaped when the police had entered his home. The police had claimed that at the time he was not in fact the objective. That day the paper also covered various demonstrations and the fact that students in the villages were refusing to use free buses passing through Alcácer. The paper also changed the style of some of its pages. The journalists had decided to use some page headings more in the style of the British sensationalist press. At the top of each page which contained material on the Alcácer affair they used a thematising heading "THE KILLER OF THE GIRLS OF ALCÁCER IS STILL FREE" along with a photograph of the face of Antonio Anglés. The head of the *sucesos* section said they had agreed to use the headings as they help to give a feel to the events and related texts which were grouped under them. She told me that: "at the moment people open the paper looking for Alcácer. We want to give them the sense that they can enter a small world of it when they open the paper. That should keep them buying the paper".

I feel that at this time I was witnessing a change to a more sensationalist form in the press of Valencia, although how much of permanent change that was I don't know. Editors had mentioned to me that Spanish papers had started to become more sensationalist over the preceding few years, but I saw nothing in previous editions to quite match was happening in this case. Alcácer had given people something they wanted to read all the details about. Everyone was fascinated. People who usually only read newspapers in *bares*, went out to buy their own, desperate to find out the day's details. The papers, realising the commercial potential, produced a world of Alcácer.

Yet at this time the people I spoke with started to mention that the media coverage was rather shameful with its gory details and its probing into personal lives. This became a popular theme in talk. People would sit and chat about the

details of what had happened and then afterwards go on to discuss the shameful behaviour of the media. This would be scorned upon along with the *morboso* people that it was written for. They themselves, of course, never discussed the events out of a sense of *morbo*. Everyone seemed to know and remember even the finest detail which had been revealed by the media.

So the newspapers changed to meet what they saw as a demand for more coverage of a certain kind, which increased circulations. It was in fact *Levante*, which took a more sensationalistic approach which attracted most readers. And everyone seemed to be completely captured by the details. Yet everyone seemed to be criticising the newspapers, particularly *Levante*, for the coverage that was being given. Here we can see the way that people are aware of the undesirable nature of appearing to have *morbo*, as they complain about the media and the way it was producing material for *morbosa* people. That they are seen to be making the criticism further emphasises the honour and moral position that they develop as they angrily comment on the events of Alcácer themselves.

On the 3rd of February the sequence of events surrounding the murders started to appear in the papers as sources started to release information from the account given to the police by Miguel Ricart, the suspect who was being held. *Las Provincias* told that the girls had been picked up by Ricart and Antonio Anglés whilst they were hitch-hiking to a disco. They had driven off in a different direction under the instruction of Anglés and had threatened the girls at gun point. One of the girls had started to scream so Anglés hit her in the mouth with his gun. When they reached a deserted area, Anglés indicated for Ricart to drive off the road and pull over. Anglés then took the girls one by one, raped them, and shot them. They then buried the bodies. Ricart admitted to raping one of the girls whilst waiting in the car. The text suggested that this was just one of several versions of the events that Ricart had offered. Later and more gruesome versions were to come.

Fig. 7. Page showing use of thematising titles. The texts on the page do not inform directly about the murders or the murderer but are contxtualised using the title.

EL ASESINO DE LAS NIÑAS DE ALCÁCER CONTINÚA EN LIBERTAD

Los magistrados afirman que justicia crea una polémica sobre los permisos carcelarios

Los jueces creen que el crimen de Alcácer se usa como arma contra el poder judicial

PP: «Un cambio en las leyes podría haber evitado el triple asesinato»

FAXPRESS
MADRID

Para la asociación Jueces para la Democracia es «una impresentable manipulación» que se utilicen los hechos de Alcácer «como un arma contra el poder judicial y los jueces de vigilancia en una lamentable pugna de competencias con el Ministerio de Justicia».

El triple asesinato de las niñas de Alcácer presuntamente cometido por un preso, Antonio Anglés, que aprovechó un permiso penitenciario para no volver a la prisión, ha hecho resurgir la polémica sobre la aplicación de los beneficios a los reclusos, la actitud de los jueces de vigilancia penitenciaria y los intentos del Ministerio de Justicia por hacerse con el control directo de las decisiones sobre la autorización de los permisos.

«No es admisible que se aproveche un momento de tensión para proponer reformas que tratan de culpabilizar ante la opinión pública a los jueces de vigilancia penitenciaria, que en la mayoría de los casos, como ha sucedido en éste, se limitan a autorizar los permisos que Instituciones Penitenciarias concede», afirma la asociación progresista de jueces.

Jueces para la Democracia considera que «lo procedente es analizar en un clima de serenidad los resultados que está produciendo el sistema actual para reforzar los mecanismos de control interno, y concretamente los equipos técnicos que proponen la concesión de permisos, que sirven de soporte de decisiones de los jueces. En consecuencia es necesario que existan psiquiatras en dichos equipos para poder detectar psicópa-

Tomás de la Quadra Salcedo, ministro de Justicia.   F. M.

tas peligrosos denegando en este caso los permisos».

Instituciones Penitenciarias

Es decir, que los jueces le devuelven la pelota a Instituciones Penitenciarias, ya que en la mayoría de los casos los jueces dan luz verde a los acuerdos sobre permisos y beneficios penitenciarios que son concedidos por las juntas de régimen de las prisiones, que son las que acuerdan el cambio de grado de los reclusos.

Por otra parte, el fiscal de Vigilancia Penitenciaria de Cataluña, José Joaquín Pérez de Gregorio, ha asegurado que no es necesaria una modificación de la

ley penitenciaria para restringir los permisos carcelarios. «Basta con una aplicación correcta de la ley actual», dijo.

También el fiscal jefe del TSJ de Castilla-La Mancha, José Luis García Arcos, arremetió contra el Ministerio de Justicia por estimar que en los casos de asesinato y violación sufridos por cuatro niñas en esta comunidad, cometidos, presuntamente, por presidiarios, el Gobierno no tuvo la misma sensibilidad que con los crímenes de Alcácer.

Cambios en el Código Penal

El portavoz del grupo socialista en la comisión de Justicia que trabaja sobre el nuevo Có-

digo penal, Álvaro Cuesta, ha afirmado que se va a incluir el cumplimiento íntegro de las penas para los condenados por delito de violación o asesinato de menores «porque la concesión de la libertad condicional no se realizará de forma automática, sino que se establece una serie de requisitos como que el recluso se encuentre en tercer grado de cumplimiento penitenciario, que haya cumplido las tres cuartas partes de la condena y, sobre todo, que merezca dicho beneficio por haber observado buena conducta y haya razones para suponer que no va a volver a delinquir fundadas en informes de expertos que el juez de vigilancia penitenciaria estime conveniente. En estos supuestos, los expertos ven que nunca se da una reinserción y, por lo tanto, la previsión es que deban cumplirse íntegramente las penas por estos delitos».

Aligerar las cárceles

A juicio de Jueces para la Democracia, la intención anunciada por el ministro de Justicia, Tomás de la Quadra, de que sea Instituciones Penitenciarias quien se haga cargo de vigilar la concesión de los permisos a reclusos responde a que «en este momento hay una pugna entre Instituciones Penitenciarias que quiere eliminar a los jueces de vigilancia penitenciaria. Eso significa que cualquier pena que imponga un juez puede ser revocada por el Ministerio de Justicia que puede decidir quién cumple una pena de forma íntegra y quién no. De hecho, la inmensa mayoría de los permisos se dan para liberar las prisiones de la sobrecarga que tienen».

FAXPRESS

El grupo popular en el Congreso solicitó ayer con carácter urgente la comparecencia de los ministros de Justicia e Interior, Tomás de la Quadra y José Luis Corcuera, respectivamente, para que informen sobre las medidas anunciadas por el Gobierno para garantizar el rigor en la concesión de beneficios penitenciarios a condenados por delitos de violación, así como sobre el grado de eficacia de la ley de seguridad ciudadana en relación con los delitos contra la libertad sexual.

«No hubiera ocurrido»

El diputado del Partido Popular Luis Ramallo, tras recordar que su grupo ha presentado en el Parlamento una proposición de ley de modificación de la ley penitenciaria, del Código Penal y de la ley de enjuiciamiento criminal, además de una proposición no de ley por la que sea el juez de vigilancia penitenciaria y no la Administración quien limite los beneficios penitenciarios a condenados por delitos de violación, dijo que «si el Gobierno no hubiera rechazado nuestras iniciativas quizás podrían haberse impedido hechos como los ocurridos en la localidad valenciana de Alcácer, donde tres menores fueron brutalmente asesinadas».

Para los casos de violadores, el PP estima que sólo podrán obtener beneficios penitenciarios si así lo acredita un informe psiquiátrico, ya que para el principal partido de la oposición «se trata de psicópatas de difícil reinserción». En este sentido, Ramallo manifestó que «nuestra pretensión es evitar que reclusos que no merecen beneficios penitenciarios salgan a la calle como está ocurriendo ahora».

Concentraciones en Valencia y protestas de los jóvenes

Tres mil estudiantes se manifiestan en Castellón en solidaridad con las niñas

VICENT FARNÓS

Cerca de tres mil estudiantes castellonenses se concentraron en la mañana de ayer en la plaza Mayor de Castellón para protestar por el asesinato de las tres jóvenes de Alcácer. Esta concentración fue convocada por los delegados de curso de los institutos y centros privados de enseñanzas medias de la capital de La Plana, y contó con una masiva participación de los alumnos de BUP y formación profesional de Castellón.

La concentración se inició pasadas las doce del mediodía frente al Ayuntamiento de Castellón. En pocos minutos, la plaza Mayor se encontraba completamente abarrotada de jóvenes que expresaban su dolor por la muerte de Miriam, Toñi y Desirée, y pedían justicia para con los presuntos inculpados. Los estudiantes, en una concentración que no estuvo exenta de tensión, llegaron a pedir la pena de muerte para los presuntos autores del horrendo crimen que ha conmocionado a toda la opinión pública.

En principio esta concentración estaba convocada en silencio como muestra del dolor de los estudiantes castellonenses, pero a los pocos minutos de iniciarse la manifestación, grupos de estudiantes comenzaron a corear consignas en las que se reclamaba la pena de muerte y se calificaba como «hijos de puta» a los asesinos de las jóvenes de Alcácer.

El momento de mayor tensión llegó cuando grupos incontrolados de estudiantes comenzaron a lanzar naranjas contra la fachada principal del ayuntamiento. En ese momento, efectivos de la policía local se concentraron en la puerta principal del palacio municipal para impedir la entrada de estudiantes.

Sólo una comisión de alumnos, formada por los delegados de curso, pudo acceder al interior de la casa consistorial, donde se entrevistaron con el teniente de alcalde, Víctor Falomir, para presentarle sus reivindicación de mayor rigor en las penas por delito de tipo sexual. Los delegados de curso manifestaron, posteriormente, su posición en

contra de la pena de muerte pese a las consignas que en ese momento coreaban sus compañeros en la plaza Mayor. Los alumnos solicitaron a Víctor Falomir que el ayuntamiento eleve a las autoridades competentes su petición de que los autores de asesinatos como el de Alcácer se les someta a cadena perpetua.

Una vez que los delegados salieron al exterior de la plaza, se celebró un minuto de silencio que fue seguido por la totalidad de estudiantes concentrados en este céntrico lugar de la ciudad de Castellón.

En Valencia se celebraron también diversas manifestaciones espontáneas de grupos de estudiantes de FP y BUP en muestra de solidaridad con las niñas asesinadas en Alcácer. Una de las manifestaciones llegó hasta la plaza del Ayuntamiento, donde los jóvenes hicieron una sentada que provocó el colapso del tráfico en el centro. Los manifestantes exhibían diversas pancartas entre las que se podía leer: «Queremos salir a la calle sin morir.»

Varios institutos de enseñanzas medias de toda la provincia han anunciado su intención de convocar manifestaciones a lo largo de esta semana.
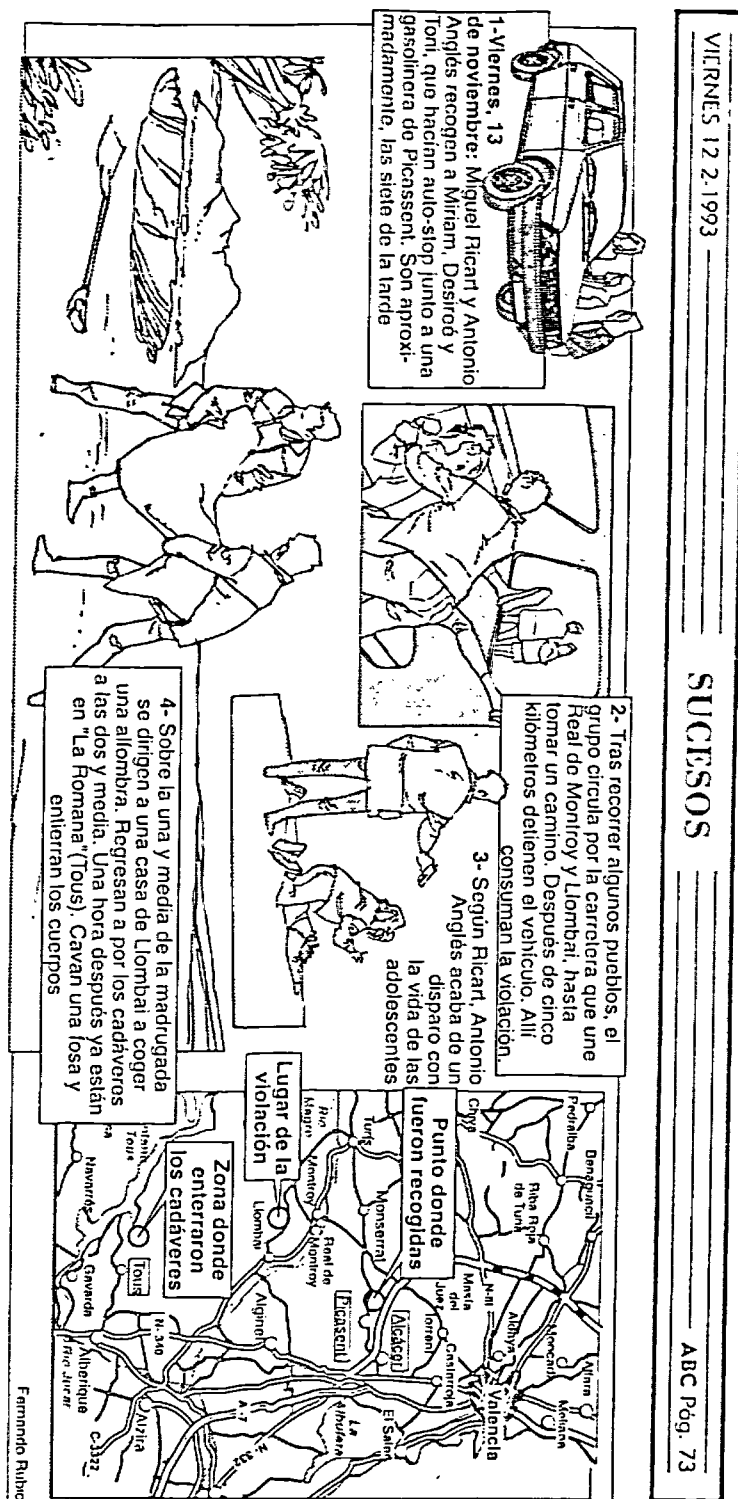
Diversas federaciones de estudiantes valencianas hicieron público un comunicado en el que manifestaban su condolencia a

los familiares de las víctimas y el rechazo a «este acto de violencia irracional e injustificable». El escrito, que estaba suscrito por el BEA, CEP-UDE, ADE, Faavem y Faeva-UDE, convoca a realizar la próxima semana actos en los que se guardará un minuto de silencio.

Los estudiantes se concentraron en Castellón.   M. ROIG

On the 4th of February *Levante* ran a text saying that "Ricart lied in his first declaration and said he was in prison at the time of the murders". The text introduces him as "cynical and a liar". Conversations I heard on the subject were typically: "well what would you expect from such people. How could they ever think of trusting someone like that", and, "we'll never know what happened with this business, and they'll never catch that Anglés".

Las Provincias ran a text revealing that if Anglés was caught and served 8 years in prison it would cost between 12 and 16 million pesetas. The text included a photograph of a prison with an outdoor swimming pool. The journalist told me that: "well this is what people think about. Well at least this is the kind of thing they want to hear anyway". She was quite pleased with the text, as to her it was good journalism, as it had involved pushing a few sources and making connections.

Fig. 8. Use of graphics to help readers to visualise the murders. The map shows the points where the girls were picked up, raped and then murdered.

Many other knock on stories started to appear at this time — other minors that went missing, a convicted child murderer whose sentence was being challenged. In all of these cases the journalist is both conscious of the kind of themes that are involved in the ongoing discussion and those themes that can be used to produce news. As with the text on Antonio Anglés in chapter six, the texts must be understood not in isolation but in the context of the ongoing discussion. Outside of this, as with the Anglés story, they would appear quite strange.

In Valencia I continued hearing stories of wives and children scared to go to work or school. One woman who had remained at home told me she had passed the last few days with the urge to cry. She said: it is a nightmare". She became quite angry and emotional saying, "murderers, they are horrible murderers, so barbaric and cruel to be capable of doing what they did to those three angels. Miserable cowards! They are repugnant criminals. There is no species of wild animals so fearful as those". This feeling did not seem unusual. Many in the medical profession, appearing in the newspapers as 'experts', were describing it as an 'Alcácer psychosis'.

The 'expert' psychologists suggested that the terribleness of the events had affected people badly. They also hinted that the media coverage had not helped those who lived in the village. But they did not speculate as to why these events in particular had touched people so much. They did not consider the way people had been brought close to these events by the media and by the different discussions that had drawn people close to them. People had got to know the girls and their families beforehand in the search. They were taken to the grave where they were found destroyed and decomposed. They went to identify the bodies and saw the grief of the families at the funeral. They had seen the whole of the moral community outraged with demonstrations shouting for brutal revenge holding up the city. Everyone had been discussing the events over and over. The cultural narrative themes used compelled certain kind of alignments to

be made, and people had to publicly demonstrate these honourable alignments They were aware that the main suspect — public enemy number one —who seems to be wandering around at will could not be caught by the police due to his seeming supernatural ability to slip away from them at the last moment — a suspect who has been described at every chance as the personification of evil. They felt that they knew him also. If you take people through this, this is what will happen. Stories move people. Again I ask the question one journalist asked me: "what would the reaction have been had the girls just disappeared one night and then been found mutilated the following day?" The answer of course is that a few might have tutted whilst browsing through the paper but that is all.

Editors demand more material on Alcácer

On February the 5th, and afterwards, *Levante* started grouping Alcácer related material under the page heading "**PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1 CONTINUES FREE**" which had at its centre a sinister looking booth photo of Antonio Anglés. The journalist responsible told me that he thought it sounded good and after all that it was what people were thinking. He seemed particularly pleased with it as a journalistic technique. He told me that they had been told to get hold of anything they could on the subject to keep people's interest going and to maintain high newspaper sales as long as possible. Using this heading, he said, allowed them to put things in context which might otherwise have not seemed related.

Texts that day told of the way the police felt that it may be difficult to catch Antonio Anglés as "they are not dealing with a typical criminal". This, it was said, was due to his ability to live in the wild. Another text commented on there being three hundred prison workers in Spain just to take care of giving prison leave. There were also two thousand psychologists, doctors and other

technicians. I heard one person in a *bar* commenting directly on this text to a friend as he was reading, saying: "all this money for people who can't act like normal human beings". I heard the statistics referred to in other conversations.

Concern for the upkeep of prisoners was reflected the following day in the *Las Provincias'* phone-in-comment page: "Don't pensioners living in homes have to pay even though they are state owned? Well these retired people have created wealth and with work have helped the country to progress, they have contributed to make society better during their active life, etc.. Why do those in prisons get everything free — those that have done nothing but damage society? No Sir, it should not continue like this".

That day *Levante* and *Las Provincias* both told of an attempt to get signatures to have the law changed to bring in the death penalty for certain offences by the father of one of the three girls. I heard many people say that they agreed with this change in the law, although many said that the father was still in fact feeling guilty for the fact that on the night they had disappeared he had refused the girls a lift to a disco. This had lead them to hitch-hike. Some university graduates I spoke with did stress their concern that in Spain a law could be changed with half a million signatures and that it would be bad to have the death penalty. These people suggested that the killers were simply crazy and from a social environment conducive to that kind of behaviour. They spoke with amusement of the marginality of the Anglés family and the fact that the whole family possessed guns and had a criminal record for sex related offences. They had no idea of what should happen to the killers but were against the death penalty. They didn't touch on answers. For them society is out there and crazy and you get on with your own thing.

Levante and *Las Provincias* both ran texts about a team of psychologists who had been sent to Alcácer. They reported that many young people were suffering from nightmares and seeing mutilated bodies upon closing their eyes. Many teenage girls were obsessed with the fear of rape. There were also texts on

252

hunger strikes in prisons where inmates were showing their repugnance towards the murders.

On February the 11th the papers reported that: "Neighbours pressurise council to have Anglés family thrown out of village". The police spokesperson had indicated that this request was unconstitutional. A villager told me that they didn't want such shame in their village. "How they show their faces I just don't know".

On the 14th of February the papers revealed that Antonio Anglés had forced someone at gun point to take him by car in the direction of Madrid. The police had searched for him in the area where he had been dropped off but again it seemed that he had disappeared. People even start to use the word 'incredible' (*increible*) to speak of him. The general opinion was that: "the police will never find him once he has mixed in with the low-life of Madrid". One journalist expressed concern as to how people would react were Anglés caught: "they might go crazy judging by the general feeling at the present moment. I think its best if they kill him and say they had no other choice as he was armed".

At this time, as editors continued to demand more and more material on the subject, many texts, such as the text we examined in chapter six appeared. These generally took the form of being profiles on Anglés or his family.

On the 24th of February more details of the murders were released by sources. *Levante* revealed that Ricart had said that: "There was so much blood on the bodies". In fact the text did not reveal anything new but was comprised of direct quotes from Ricart's account. The text noted that the police still viewed the account as total lies and that Ricart was trying to distance himself from the events.

On the 27th of February the main story of the day for *Levante* and *Las Provincias* was that a teacher had eloped with one of his 12 year-old students. One journalist told me that obviously this was the kind of story in focus. On the

4th of March both the teacher and the student returned. It was portrayed as a romantic story with a happy ending. The journalist at *Levante* told me that

> I felt like writing it as a happy story. I felt that people needed something nice after the Alcácer business. I suppose that at another time I might have written it differently. I might have gone on about the responsibilities of teachers and found some statistics to show the amount of sexual assaults that happen in schools.

He also told me that: "Without the Alcácer connection I suppose this wouldn't have been very newsworthy". On the 5th of March the judge freed the teacher as the father of the girl dropped charges relieved that it was not another Alcácer.

Throughout March and April *Levante* and *Las Provincias* ran texts on child abuse or disappearance whenever possible. There were further debates over the prison leave and penal code with headings such as **"The judges don't know our daughters"** and **"Rapists cannot be re-integrated"** giving the views of women's and feminist groups.

On the 23rd of April the police released another version of the events of the three girls, assembled more or less from the account given by Miguel Ricart and evidence — blood and semen — taken from the various scenes of the crime. In this version the two men picked the girls up on the road telling them they were also going to the disco where the girls intended to go. They then, after some struggling and tears, took them at gun point to a small deserted house and kept them tied to a post while raping them occasionally. They had eaten their evening meal and slept before taking them out into the countryside and killing them the next day. Ricart still claimed that he was in the car while Anglés took the girls away and shot them. He claimed that after shooting them Anglés called him and they buried the bodies, after removing their teeth to make identification

more difficult. The police were still not sure if this in fact was the true sequence of events. Later texts only added that Anglés had beaten the girls and gave further details of the nature of the sexual assaults.

So we can see that the discussion was fuelled by the need for journalists to continue producing material on Alcácer. As journalists sought out new angles different things were introduced, such as the financial cost of keeping people in prisons. There were also many texts like that I looked at in chapter six on the character of Antonio Anglés. These texts gave no new information but allowed the theme to be continued. As the journalists provided different ways to say just how evil Anglés was, the fear and intrigue about him seemed to grow, allowing them to produce ever more extreme accounts. Clearly journalists have to consider the nature of the discussion and the narrative themes that will work for readers, yet they themselves are able to push the nature of those narrative themes. But, even though people may be compelled to use even more extreme narratives and to produce even more extreme behaviour, they will still be able, in certain contexts, to question the nature of the narratives those journalists produce, saying that they are cashing in and that they have a lot of *morbo*. They will also be able to produce very different narratives in different contexts, which may provide very different accounts of the events. As the discussion about the events developed there was the initial anger shown and the need to locate oneself as regards this anger, but as it progressed people also, despite the growing atmosphere of fear, started to introduce narratives regarding sociological causes and the *morbo* shown by the media.

Drowned!?

In April the crew of a ship going to Ireland believed that they had seen Antonio Anglés on board. They said that they locked him in the cabin where he was hiding but that he jumped overboard before they reached the shore. The Spanish police were later collaborating with the Irish police. The story then disappeared from the media.

The headlines on the 9th of September in *Levante* and *Las Provincias* were that Antonio Anglés had drowned in the sea off Dublin according to the Irish police although no body had been found. No one in Valencia believed the news. I was eating breakfast in a *bar* with some friends when we first saw the news. They immediately commented that the whole thing was an excuse so that they could give up searching or avoid the fact of their failure. They suggested that he was still in Madrid or in some secluded part of Valencia. Everyone I heard speak of the news refused to accept it. It was seen as part of the way that those in power don't do what they should.

Throughout the period when Alcácer filled the pages of the newspapers many people I spoke with or heard talking in fact claimed not to believe much of the news on the subject. They refused to accept that two men alone could have done all the acts which had been reported. They suggested that it seemed convenient that Antonio Anglés had never been caught so that the case could be closed without anyone knowing what had really happened. Two people suggested that it had in fact been a sect that had done the killing — a religious sect involving rich people. The government and the police were involved in a conspiracy to conceal the truth. A part of many conversations about Alcácer was the scepticism of the police account of the events. They expressed suspicion at the fact that the murderers had left a medical certificate at the hole where they had buried the girls, and at the claim that two men had been able to

do all of the sexual assaults of which they were accused. It was this openness that gave more room for discussion and more intrigue.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen people involved in a discussion about a set of events using a repertoire of cultural narrative themes. This discussion took place both at a face-to-face level and in an 'exploded' form through the mass media. The kinds of narrative themes used created a polarity which contrasted the moral community of Valencia with evil-doers. The evil-doers were described *ad hoc* using narratives about them being sick, or worse than animals, yet they were still held morally responsible for their actions. They were also described as deliberately wanting to spoil what otherwise would be a harmonious society. Here it was such people that are responsible for the general moral decline. The causes of their behaviour were talked about generally in terms of them being sick or due to the effect of television on youth in general, although people would at times talk about the way that the murderers were from a marginalised culture, where such behaviour is not so abnormal.

The evil-doers were contrasted with the moral community comprised of honest folk. These people were described as valuing all that was defiled by the murderers. It is this community, in the narrative, that should not tolerate more.

The kinds of solutions to the problem were compelled by the nature of the narratives used to talk about the nature of the problem. The murderers should hang or be given to the families of the victims for 'an eye-for-an-eye'. The moral community should not have the burden of keeping those in prison who cannot act like human beings. Other narratives suggested that we should not be dragged down to the level of the murderers and should apply justice. But in all cases

potential evil-doers should be shown what to expect should they be out there coolly contemplating a rape or mass murder.

These narratives are more or less what one would expect to find in a discussion of similar events in a U.K. setting. In this case, however there is an additional narrative which talks about the way the moral community should have the honour to protect its girls. In a U.K. setting this would not be encountered.

This repertoire of narratives was used by people *ad hoc* as they went on record as having a particular position as regards the events. The strength of the narratives changed with the anger and tempo of the discussion. In the discussion people seemed to compete to provide the best platitude or account of the events in particular settings. Each account evoked them as a particular kind of person. As the discussion became more intense people made powerful shows of alignment. The sense of the moral community of Valencia became, for a time at least, somewhat less transient than the other senses of community that we examined in previous chapters. Demonstrating membership of that community lead people to quite dramatic behaviour. It is in this process of simplification and polarisation, which came about through the way that the events were discussed, that we can see the potential for social change. Using the shared repertoire of narrative themes, people in Valencia had confabulated an account of what had happened, which compelled people to align themselves as regard the events in quite a dramatic ways, and compelled just what the future should be, even if this was a vague but powerful sense of 'something should be done'.

Throughout we can see the power of stories. Firstly to take people closer to what were after all not an unusual set of events, and secondly to move people powerfully as they themselves share accounts of the events.

In this ongoing discussion we can observe the nature of the voice of the newspaper. At first they demonstrated their power to make certain events public, and to take people close to those events. Then they took part in and

fuelled the re-tellings of accounts of events, pushing those re-tellings for commercial purposes. In this sense it is possible to say that the media was responsible for the later anger, panic and hysteria. Yet it is not possible to say that the media created the feelings that the people came to have about the events or to other people. Nor did they strictly determine the narratives that were used to discuss the events. People do feel strongly about such events when they have access to them, and will account for them using their repertoire of cultural narrative themes. What the media did do was to make public a set of events and give a greater play on certain narratives than others. Journalists who produced the news narratives themselves were part of the developing discussion and were themselves taken up into the way the account of the events was confabulated and the way that this compelled people to make their personal alignment clear. The media influence then may be visualised as a particularly powerful voice in the discussion, although it is limited, as is any other voice, to using a particular repertoire of narrative themes, and as with any other voice people are able to disagree with it, although what we saw, was people taking on its narratives and rejecting them as suited them in different contexts.

Conclusion

I began this thesis by arguing that a different approach to the concept of community could provide us with the key to a different perspective on the relationship between media and audiences. My problem was to explain why it was that people talked about news differently at different times in a way that they seemed to frequently contradict themselves. Research into media audience responses had suggested that people would be influenced in the kinds of responses they gave by the discourse community of which they were a member. More recent scholars had suggested that such research tended to locate people in artificially isolated communities. There was a need, they argued, to explain the way that people were influenced by many aspects of their lives which cut across each other in complex ways. I found that the key to this problem lay in a reconsideration of the way that people align themselves with communities of others.

In the first chapter I argued that communities could not be understood as concrete, stable, or identifiable, entities. I suggested that senses of alignment alongside and against others are used by individuals as they produce talk using cultural narrative themes. These alignments allow them to navigate a sense of self in contexts as they are involved in the business of interpersonal interaction. I argued that new members of society emerge into meaning as they get involved in the ongoing exchange narratives about what the world is like and the kinds of people that exist in that world. Thus any researcher who seeks to examine the community to which a person belongs will only reify one of the senses of alignment that person evokes through the use of a narrative in a setting.

I then took these points to look at research into media and audiences. I suggested that considering people to be involved in an exchange of narratives in this way, and considering community to be something that people used for practical purposes of self navigation, allowed us to reconsider the media/audience relationship. This view could help us to look at some of the issues that had proved problematic in media studies in a different way.

After setting the scene by looking at the nature of the Spanish press and some some particularly Spanish aspects of my ethnographic material, I went on to demonstrate the way that people participate in the discussion and the way that they navigate self. I showed the way that journalists create news texts with a consideration of the kinds of narratives that will work for readers and which involves a sense of the nature of the ongoing discussion about any set of events. I showed how the way one individual was written about must be understood in terms of the nature of the discussion about the events in which he was involved at the time the text was written.

The following chapters looked at the way people present self and senses of personal location by using cultural narratives *ad hoc* to account for their action. I demonstrated that these narratives need not have any consistency with actual behaviour, nor need the user have any sound knowledge of their facticity. They are usable for practical purposes, but may be constrained by the practical situation. I showed how journalists and readers alike have a repertoire of narrative themes which they use to provide accounts.

I began to demonstrate that people do not produce concrete responses or have concrete opinions, but that they relate to culture in a virtual way. They produce talk using narrative themes depending upon the work they want to do with those in the context. I showed that people do not produce concrete responses to news but rather, talk about it using cultural narratives which evoke them as a certain kind of person. They may use these narratives in a way that

they will contradict themselves and align themselves with contradictory communities in different slices of talk.

I argued that the media/audience relationship can be visualised as one of voices involved in an ongoing discussion. But the media voice may be viewed as a somewhat powerful one. It was this voice that made public the events of Alcácer, and the other news events that I showed people talking about. It was this sense of media influence that was of interest to researchers in media studies who considered agenda setting, although, as we have seen it is not possible to assume that people will produce concrete or static responses to the media message. And the notion of agenda setting must be considered in the context of the media continually tapping into the ongoing discussion.

However the long sought after answer as to how the media message will affect one individual is a difficult one to give. It is not dissimilar to asking the question of how much something one person says will affect one other person. What we can say is that the media does have a powerful voice in our ongoing discussion. Although, as we saw, people did have the ability to produce very different narratives to those the media were suggesting.

What is evident in the effects of the mass media is the way that they allow people to imagine different kinds of community through the exploded interactions that happen in and on the basis of them. But then this sense of community, is like others, something to be used for practical purposes and in the navigation of self.

I can only conclude then, that to attempt to describe exactly how the media or the discourse produced by any individual affects someone in any concrete way will be not do justice to the virtual and ever moving way that humans relate to culture. What may be useful would be to consider the cultural repertoire of representations that people use to talk about different media and consider how individuals use this repertoire and how this relates to their actual practice. One thing that fascinated me during my research was that people had the ability to

present a particular 'face' and then immediately go ahead to behave completely in contradiction to the kinds of behaviour one might expect of such a face. I think that the reactions to the events of Alcácer hint at the way that research might get closer to the way that people relate to their repertoire. But refining our understanding of this relationship would be a fascinating research project.

Bibliography

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities:Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso, London, New York.

Ang, I. (1985) *Watching 'Dallas',* London, Methuen.

Ang, I. (1990) Culture and Communication: Towards an Ethnographic Critique of Media Consumption in the Transnational Media System. *European Journal of Communication.* Vol.5, 239-260.

Ang, I. (1991) *Desperately Seeking the Audience.* Routledge, London.

Anuari El País. (1993) Progresa, Madrid.

Arensberg, C. M and Kimball, S. T (1940) *Family and community in Ireland.* Harvard University Press.

Aufderheide, P. (1993) Latin American Grassroots Video: Beyond Television. *Public Culture,* 5:579-592. University of Chicago Press.

Bandura, B. (1961) Identification as a process of social learning, in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* Vol.63, No.2.

Barrat, D. (19986) *Media Sociology.* Tavistock.

Barth, F.(ed) (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference.* George Allen and Unwin. London.

Bell, A. (1991) *The Language of News Media.* Blackwell.

Belmonte, T. (1979) *The Broken Fountain.* Columbia University Press, New York.

Berkowitz, L. (1962) Violence and the mass media, in *Paris Stanford Studies in Communication.* Institute for Communication Research.

Berland, J.(1988) Placing Television, *New Formations* 4.

Bird, S. E. (1992) *For Enquiring Minds: A Cultural Study of Supermarket Tabloids*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Boissevain, J. (1966) Patronage in Sicily, *Man* NS, I, 1833.

Boissevain, J. (1974) *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Bouquet, M. (1986) 'You cannot be a Brahmin in the English countryside'. The partitioning of status, and its representation within the farm family in Devon, in. Cohen, A.P.(ed) *Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures*. Manchester University Press.

Bourdieu, P (1977) *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Brody, H. (1973) *Inishkillare: Change and Decay in the West of Ireland*. Allen Lane. The Penguin Press, London.

Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983) *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Bruner, J (1986) *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Harvard.

Bruner, J.(1990) *Acts of Meaning*, Harvard.

Bruner, J. and Weisser, S. (1991) The invention of self: autobiography and its forms, in Olson, D.R. and Torrance, N. *Literacy and Orality*. Cambridge University Press.

Brunsdon, C. and Morley, D (1978) *Everyday Television: 'Nationwide'*. London: BFI TV Mono. 10.

Campbell, J. K. (1964) *Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Commmunity*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Campbell, J. K. (1968) Two Case Studies of Marketing and Patronage in Greece, in Peristiany, J. G. *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology: Mediterranean Rural Communities and Social Change*. Mouton & Co, The Hague.

Carrithers, M. (1991) Mindreading and Making Societies, in Whiten, A. *Natural Theories of Mind*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Carrithers, M. (1992) *Why Humans Have Cultures: Explaining Anthropology and Social Diversity*, Oxford University Press.

Carrithers, M (In Press) Stories in the Social and Mental Life of People.

Chaney, D. (1986) The symbolic form of ritual in mass communication, in Golding, P. *et al* (eds) *Communicating Politics*. Leicester University Press.

Chaney, D. (In Press) *The Cultural Turn: Scene-setting essays on contemporary cultural history.*

Chibnall, S. (1977) *Law-and-order: an analysis of crime reporting in the British Isles*, Tavistock Publications Ltd., London.

◄Chilton, P. (ed) *Language and the nuclear arms debate: Nukespeak today.* Pinter Publications.

*Cohen, A. P. (ed) *Belonging*. Manchester University Press.

Cohen, A. P.(ed) (1986) *Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures*. Manchester University Press.

Cohen, A. P. (1987) *Whalsay: Symbol, segment and boundary in a Shetland island community*. Manchester University Press

Cohen, S. (1973) *Folk devils and moral panics*. St Albans, Paladin.

Cohen, S. and Young, J. (1973) *The Manufacture of News: social problems, deviance and the mass media*. Demand books.

Connel, I. (1992) Personalities in the Popular Media, in Dalgren, P. and Sparks, C.(eds) *Journalism and Popular Culture*. Sage, London.

Corner, J. (1991) Meaning, Genre and Context: the problematics of 'public knowledge' in the new audience studies, in Curran, J. and Gurevitch, M. (eds) *Mass Media and Society*. Edward Arnold, London.

Curran, J. and Seaton, J. (1980) *Power Without Responsibility*. Fontana, London.

*Chilton, P. (1985)   *Cohen, A. P. (1982)

Curran, J., Gurevitch, M and Woolacott, J (1982) The Study of the Media: Theoretical Approaches, in Gurevitch, M et al Culture, Society and the Media. Routledge.

Dahlgren, P. (1992) Viewers' plural sense-making of TV news, in Scannell, P. et al Culture and Power: a Media Culture and Society Reader. Sage, London.

Dahlgren, P. and Sparks, C. (eds) (1992) Journalism and Popular Culture. Sage, London.

Davis, J. (1977) People of the mediterranean. Routledge,London.

Dennett, D. C.(1987)Elbow room, Oxford University Press.

Dennett, D. C (1989) The Intentional Stance, MIT Press.

Díaz Nosty, B., Lallana, F. and Timoteo Álvarez, J. (1988) La nueva identidad de la prensa. Fundesco, Madrid.

Dramer, S. (1974) Wine Alley: the Sociology of a Dreadful Enclosure. Sociological Review, Vol.22 (2):221-248.

Du Boulay, J.(1974) Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Eakin, P. J. (1985) Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Emmet, T. (1964) A North Wales Village: A Social anthropological study. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Elias, N. and Scotson, J. L. (1965) The Established and the Outsiders: a sociological enquiry into community problems. Frank Cass & Co Ltd.. London.

Ennew, J. (!980) The Western Isles Today. Cambridge University Press.

Ekman, A. (1991) Community, Carnival and Campaign: Expressions of Belonging in a Swedish Region. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology.

Ericson, R.V.(1989) Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources. University of Toronto Press.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1940) *The Nuer: A description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Ferguson, M. (1989) Electronic media and the redefining of time and space, in Ferguson, M.(ed) *Public Communication*. Sage, London.

Fernandez, J. W. (1986) *Persuasions and Performances: the play of tropes in culture*. Indiana University Press.

Fishman, M. (1988) *Manufacturing the News*. University of Texas Press.

Fiske, J. (1984) Television quiz shows and the purchase of cultural capital. *Australian Journal of Screen Theory* 13-14.

Forsythe, R. (1980) Urban Incomers and Rural Change. *Sociologia Ruralis*. Vol. 20:287-307.

Frankenberg, R.(1990) *Village on the Border: A social study of religion, politics and foOotball in a North Wales community*. Waveland Press, Nnc Illnois.

Frazer, E. (1992) Teenage girls reading 'Jackie', in Scannell, P. *Culture and Power: a Media, Culture and Society Reader*. Sage, London.

Gans, H. (1980) *Deciding What's News. A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC nightly news, Newsweek and Time*. Constable, London.

Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ - Prentice Hall

Geertz, C. (1963) The Integrative Revolution, in Geertz, C. (ed) *Old Societies and New States*. Glencoe, Illinois.

Gibson, P. (1973) Arensberg and Kimball Revisited. *Economy and Society*. Vol.2:479-498.

Ginsburg, F. (1993) Aboriginal Media and the Australian Imaginary. *Public Culture*, 5:557-578. University of Chicago Press.

Glasgow University Media Group (1976) *Bad News*. Routledge, London.

Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis*. Harpers, New York.

Golding, P. and Middleton, S. (1982) *Images of Welfare*. Martin Robertson, Oxford.

Gómez Mompart, J. L. (1989) ¿Existío en España prensa de masas? La prensa en torno a 1900, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España*. Ariel, Barcelona.

Gurevitch, M. and Blumler, J. (1977) Linkages between the mass media and politics, in Curran, J. Gurevitch, M.and Woollacott, J. *Mass Communication and Society*. Edward Arnold, London.

Gusfield, J. R (1975) *Community: A Critical Response*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Hall, S. (1974) Deviance, Politics and the Media, in McIntosh, M. and Rock, P. (eds) *Deviance and Social Control*. Tavistock, London

Hall, S. et al (1978) *Policing the Crisis*. Macmillan, London.

Harris, P. L. (1991) The Work of the Imagination, in Whiten, A. *Natural Theories of Mind* , Blackwell, Oxford.

Hartley, J. (1992) *Tele-ology: Studies in Television*. Routledge, London.

Heritage, J. (1984) *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Hobson, D. (1980) Housewives and the Mass Media, In Hall, S. et al, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, !972-79. Hutchinson, London.

Hobson, D. (1982) *'Crossroads' Drama of a Soap Opera*. Methuen, London.

Hoggart, R. (1957) *The Uses of Literacy* (pub. 1991) by Transaction Publications.

*Humphrey, N. K. (1982) Consciousness: a just-so story, *New Scientist*.95, 474-8.

Iglesias, F. (1989a) reorganización de la prensa y nuevas empresas periodísticas, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España*. Ariel, Barcelona.

*Hooper, J. (1987) *The Spaniards: A Portrait of the New Spain*. Penguin. Viking Penguin.

Iglesias, F. (1989b) Las transfromaciones de la prensa diaria, in Timoteo

    Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en*

    España. Ariel, Barcelona.

Iser , W. (1980) Interaction between text and Reader, in Suleiman, S. R and

    Crossman, I. (eds) *The Reader in the Text.* Princeton University

    Press., Princeton , New Jersey.

Katz, E. and Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1956) *Personal Influence: The part played by*

    people in the flow of mass communication. The Free Press of Glencoe,

    New York.

Kemper, S. (1993) The Nation Consumed: Buying and Believing in Sri

    Lanka. *Public Culture,* 5:377-393. University of Chicago Press.

Kennamer, J. D. (1988) News Values and the Vividness of Information.

    Written Comunication, Vol/part 5(1) pages 108-23.

Kenny, M. (1968) Parallel Power Structures in Castile: The Patron-Client

    Balance, in Peristiany, J. G. *Contributions to Mediterranean*

    Sociology: Mediterrranean Rural Communities and Social Change.

    Mouton & Co, The Hague.

Kitzanger, J. (1993) Understanding AIDS: Researching audience

    perceptions of AIDS, in Glasgow University Media Group, *Getting*

    the Message: News, Truth and Power. Routledge, London.

Kohn, T. (1988) *Seasonality and Identity in a changing Hebridean*

    Community. Phd Thesis, University of Oxford.

Laguna, À. and Lopez, A. (eds.) (1992) *Dos-cents Anys de Premsa*

    Valenciana. Publicaciones de la Generalitat Valenciana, España.

Lazarsfeld, P., Berelson, B and Gaudet, H. (1944) *The People's Choice.*

    Columbia University Press, New York.

Leenhardt, J. (1980) Toward a sociology of reading, in Suleiman, S. R

    and Crossman, I. (eds) *The Reader in the Text.* Princeton University

    Press., Princeton , New Jersey.

Lewin, R.(1988) *In the Age of Mankind,* Smithsonian Books, Washington.

Lison-Tolosana, C. (1966) *Belmonte De Los Caballeros: a sociological study of a Spanish town.* Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Little, K. L (1948) *Negroes in Britain: A study of Racial Relations in English Society.* Kegan Paul, Trench, Truber & Co Ltd, London

Littlejohn, J. (1963) *Westrigg: The Sociology of a Cheviot Parish.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York.

Marcuse, H. (1972) *One Dimensional Man.* Abacus, London.

Mandler, J. M. (1984) *Stories, Scripts, and Scenes: Aspects of Schema Theory.* Lawrence Erlbaum, London.

Marín I Otto, E. (1989) Estabilización y novedades en la prensa diaria, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España.* Ariel, Barcelona.

Merton, R. (1946) *Mass Persuasion.* Free Press, New York.

Mewett, P. G. (1986) Boundaries and discourse in a Lewis crofting community, in Cohen, A.P.(ed) *Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures.* Manchester University Press.

Middleton, D. and Edwards, D.(eds) (1990) *Collective Remembering.* Sage, London.

Modleski, T. (1984) *Loving with a Vengence: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women.* Methuen, London.

Montabes Pereira, J. (1989) *La prensa del estado durante la transitión politica Española.* Centro de Investigaciones Sociologicas, Madrid.

Moores, S. (1992) Texts, Readers and Contexts of Reading, in Scannell, P. et al, *Culture and Power: a Media, Culture and Society Reader.* Sage, London.

Morley, D. (1980) *The 'Nationwide' Audience: structure and decoding.* British Film Institute, London.

Morley, D. (1986) *Family Television: Culture, Power and Domestic Leisure* Comedia, London.

Morley, D. (1992) Electronic communities and domestic rituals, in Skovmand, M. and Schroder, K. C., *Media Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media*. Routledge, London.

Morley, D. (1992) *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London.

Morris, M. (1988) Banality in Cultural Studies. *Block* (14) : 15-25.

Murdock, D. (1973) Political deviance: the press presentation of a militant mass demonstration, in Cohen, S. and Young, J. (eds) *The manufacture of news*. Constable, London.

Myers, K. (1988) *Understains: The Sense and Seduction of Advertising.* Comedia, Routledge Chapman & Hall, London.

Paz, M. A. (1989) Las agencias: España en el flujo internacional, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España*. Ariel, Barcelona.

Peristiany, J.G. (1965) *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediteranean Society*. Weiderfeld and Nicolson, London.

Peristiany, J. G. (ed) (1968) *Contributions to Medtiterranean Sociology: Mediterranean Rural Communities and Social Change*. Mouton & Co, The Hague.

Phillips, S. K. (1986) Natives and incomers: the symbolism of belonging in Muker parish, North Yorkshire, in Cohen, A. P.(ed) *Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures*. Manchester University Press.

Philo, G. (1993) Getting the Message, in Glasgow Media Group: *Getting the Message: News, Truth and Power*. Routledge, London.

Pitt-Rivers, J. (1954) *The People of the Sierra*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London.

Pitt-Rivers, J. (1963) *Mediterranean Countymen: Essays in the Social Anthropology of the Mediterranean*. Mouton & Co, The Hague.

Pitt-Rivers, J.(1965) Honour and Social Status in Peristany, J. G. *Honour and Shame*. Weiderfeld and Nicolson, London.

Pizarroso Quintera, A. (1989) Política informativa: información y propaganda (1939-1966) in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España*. Ariel, Barcelona.

Radway, J. A. (1984) *Reading the Romance*. Verso.

Radway, J. A. (1988) Reception Study: Ethnography and the problems of dispersed and nomadic subjects. *Cultural Studies*, Vol/part 2(4) p359-76.

Rapport, N. J. (1986) Cedar High Farm: ambiguos symbolic boundary. An essay in anthropological intuition, in Cohen, A.P.(ed) *Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures*. Manchester University Press.

Rees, A. (1950) *Life in a Welsh Countryside Village: A Socal Study of Llanfihagel y ng Ngwynfa*. University of Wales Press, Cardiff.

Richardson, K. and Corner, J. (1992) Reading Reception: mediation and transparency in viewers' reception of a T.V. programme, in Scannell, P.
et al, Culture and Power: a Media, Culture and Society Reader Sage, London.

Riley, J. and Riley, M. (1959) Mass communications and the social system, in Merton, R. (ed) *Sociology Today*. Free Press, New York.

Sanford, A. J. and Garrod, S. C. (1981) *Understanding Written Language*. Wiley, Chichester.

Scannell, P. Schlesinger, P. and Sparks, C. (1992) *Culture and Power: a Media, Culture and Society Reader*. Sage, London.

Schank, R, C and Abelson, R. (1977) *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding.* Hillsdale, N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum.

Schieffelin, E. L (1976) *The Sorrow of the Lonely and the Burning of The Dancers.* St Martin's Press. New York

Schlesinger, P. (1987) On national Identity. *Social Science Information* 26(2).

Schneider, J (1971) of vigilence and virgins. *Ethnology,* 9, i, 1-24.

Shulte, H.T. (1968) *The Spanish Press 1470-1966: Print Power and Politics.* University of Illinios press Urbana, Chicago, London.

Silverman, S. (1975) *Three Bells of Civilization: The Life of an Italian Hill Town.* Columbia University Press, New York and London.

Sinova, J. (1989) La difícil evolution de la prensa no estatal, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España.* Ariel, Barcelona.

Stacey, M. (1966) *Tradition and Change: A study of Banbury.* Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Strathern, M. (1981) *Kinship at the Core.* Cambridge Uviversity Press.

Sullivan, N. (1993) Film and Television Production in Papua New Guinea: How Media Become the Message. *Public Culture,* 5:533-555. University of Chicago Press.

Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros (1989) *Historia de los medios de communicación en España. Ariel,* Barcelona.

Timoteo Álverez, J (1989a) Decadencia del systema y movimientos regeneracionistas, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España.* Ariel, Barcelona.

Timoteo Álverez, J (1989b) Los frustrados intentos de regeneración informativa, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España.* Ariel, Barcelona.

Timoteo Álverez, J (1989c) La información en la ere de Franco: hipótesis

    interpretiva, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de*

    communicación en España. Ariel, Barcelona.

Trenaman, J. and Mcquail, D. (1961) *Television and the Political Image*.

    Methuen, London.

Trevarthen, C. and Logotheti, K. (1989) Child in Society, and Society in

    children: The Nature of Basic Trust, in Howell, S. and Willis, R. (eds)

    societies at Peace: Anthropological Perspectives, London, Routledge.

Tuchman, G. (1978) *Making News: A study on the Construction of Reality*.

    Free Press, New York.

van Dijk, T. A. (1985) *Discourse and Communication*. de Gruyter, Berlin.

Young, E. D. K. (1986) Where the daffodils blow: elements of communal

    magery in a northern suburb, in Cohen, A.P.(ed) *Symbolising*

    Boundaries:Identity and Diversity in British Cultures. Manchester

    University Press.

Watson, G.(1991) Rewriting Culture, in Fox, R.G. *Recapturing*

    Anthropology: Working in the Present. School of American Research

    Press, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Whiten, A. (ed) (1991) *Natural Theories of Mind: Evolution, Development*

    and Simulation of Everyday Mindreading. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Williams, R (1958) *Culture and Society* (pub, 1983) Columbia University

    Press.

Williams, W. M. (1956) *The Sociology of an English village: Gosforth*.

    Routledge, London.

Williamson, J. (1978) *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in*

    Advertising. Open Forum.

Willis, P. (1990) *Common Culture*. Open University Press.

Wright, C. R. (1960) Functional analysis and mass communication. *Public*

    Opinion Quarterly, 24.

Zalibidea Bengoa, B. (1989) Prensa del movimiento: los pasos contados hacia el aperturismo, in Timoteo Álverez, J. y otros, *Historia de los medios de communicación en España*. Ariel, Barcelona.