News as history

Your daily gossip

P. R. R. White
University of Birmingham, UK

Introduction

Mass media news reports provide readings of the immanent, immediate past. They offer accounts of recent events which frequently assume a historical, or at least proto-historical status – hence the claim by at least some sections of the mass media to provide the 'first drafts of history'.[1] Of course, many of the events and issues taken up on the news pages may seem to have minimal long-term historical significance. Nevertheless, they operate 'historically' in the sense that they develop and disseminate accounts of the unfolding life of a community which may act to influence notions about the nature of that community, the values and conventions under which it operates, its origins, how it has changed, and where it is headed in the future. The media, of course, make strong epistemological claims of their accounts, asserting that they offer direct, value-free, objective transcriptions of some absolute external reality. As Schiller observes, the media frequently operate with the assumption that so-called 'news stories' offer a "map, a veridical representation, a report on reality, and hence not really a story at all, but merely the facts" (1981:2). But as the media studies and critical linguistics literature has repeatedly and compellingly demonstrated, news reporting is, in fact, necessarily subjective. (See, for example, Trew 1979; Fowler 1991 or Fairclough 1995.) The way the media represent this immediate past of newsworthy events and issues is conditioned by a complex set of ideologically-determined assumptions, beliefs and expectations about the nature of the social world. Accordingly, news reportage is like other modes of historical discourse in this respect – it constructs selective, interested and ideologically-conditioned versions of the past.

This chapter is, in part, concerned with exploring this issue of the subjectivity of news reporting texts, at least to the extent that it is interested in the way in which news texts provide value-laden representations and evaluations of the events and issues they purport to cover. It is not primarily concerned, however, with instances of interpretation and evaluation in particular news items – analyses of such are widely available in the literature. Rather, it is more generally concerned with news reports as text or genre types and with the particular modes of evaluative and interpretative positioning associated with these particular genres. That is to say, the chapter is interested in the text organisational features which are shared by news texts and, more particularly, in the rhetorical effects (or at least potentials) which arise from these generalised patterns or principles of text organisation.[2] The chapter, then, is concerned with the rhetorical potential of the genre types which can be identified in modern hard-news reporting, where the term 'genre' is used in the sense developed within the so-called Sydney school of genre analysis. (See, for example, Martin 1992; Martin & Plum 1997; Plum 1999 or Rothery 1990.[3]) From the perspective of 'reading the past', the chapter provides an account of how news reports, as examples of particular genre types, are set up to construct particular value-laden versions of the past.

The focus of the discussion is on the genre type constituted by the pattern of textual organisation most frequently encountered in contemporary hard-news, print media news reporting – a text type which, following the original work of Iedema, Feez and White (1994), is described as 'headline/lead dominated and as 'orbitally organised'. This is the text type which has been most widely explored in the literature, which is typically treated as the standard or default in the in the journalism training literature[4] (see, for example Mac-Dougall 1982) and which was analysed in detail in Van Dijk's influential account in *News as Discourse* (1988). By reference to the framework first set out in Iedema, Feez and White, and developed in (Iedema 1997) and (White 1998), I seek to describe in detail and explain the rhetorical functionality of this type of news reporting text. I propose that many of these standard, orbitally-organised news reports can be grouped together as constituting a genre type which has at least as much in common with a sub-type of casual-conversational 'gossip' identified by Eggins and Slade (1997) as it does with more traditional modes of story telling. I argue that while traditional story-telling texts foreground the experiential or material-world issues of cause-and-effect and the unfolding of activity sequences through time, many of these modern orbitally-arranged news items are more overtly oriented towards the interpersonal. They are centrally concerned with evaluations of human behaviour and/or natural events as aber-

rant, disruptive or transgressive and it is in this focus upon evaluation that they are substantially similar to the modes of gossip identified by Eggins and Slade. The degree of this similarity in terms of generic structure and ultimate communicative effects constitutes one of the primary concerns of the paper.

The issues reports, genre structure and patterns of evaluation

I begin by considering a sub-type of contemporary news item which displays the most obvious and the most consistent similarity with the modes of 'gossip' identified by Eggins and Slade. The text I use to exemplify this sub-type is concerned with the findings of an inquiry into one of the worst British rail accidents in recent times – the crash in 1999 at Paddington which resulted in 31 deaths. The report focuses largely on the role of Railtrack, the company which assumed responsibility for rail infrastructure maintenance after the privatisation of the British rail system carried out by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. In Eggins and Slade's analysis of gossip, to which I shall return below, gossip texts are seen as being typically constituted of some selection from the following generic stages:

– Third Person Focus (the opening stage) – where the human target of the 'gossip' is identified and the general terms of their 'deviance' or 'misdemeanour' are identified;
– Substantiating Behaviour – where the 'factual' evidence or information is provided upon which the initial charge of 'deviance' is based and upon which subsequent negative evaluations rely. This 'substantiation' often suggests negative evaluation by implication;
– Pejorative Evaluation – explicit negative evaluation, typically based upon proceeding 'substantiation' where the negative view of the 'third person' is most strongly asserted;
– Defence – where some defence of the pejoratively evaluated 'third party' is offered;
– Response to Defence;
– Wrap-up – where a thematic summation of the events or issues previously described is provided;
– Probe – where one speaker, through questioning, invites another to offer further substantiation or evaluation.

While I am not suggesting that this type of news report is identical generically and communicatively with the type of 'gossip' texts Eggins and Slade identify, I

am suggesting that they are significant similarities. To illustrate this I set out a genre analysis of the following text which makes reference, where appropriate, to Eggins and Slade's genre model for gossip. Since explicit evaluation is of central importance for this analysis, I use underlining and bold font formatting to identify evaluative elements in this and subsequent textual analyses.

Opening: Identifies Third Party Focus – indicates the general terms of the third party's 'deviance', though in greater detail than Eggins & Slade's data indicates is typical of the opening stage of gossip texts.	**Incompetent and complacent – what a way to run a railway** * **Railtrack accused of' 'lamentable failure' over Paddington crash** * **Thames Trains accused of 'significant failure'** * **Signalling 'slack and complacent'** Corporate manslaughter charges are being considered against Railtrack and Thames Trains following the Paddington rail crash, in the light of a scathing report yesterday by Lord Cullen which condemned the entire industry for "institutional paralysis". The crown prosecution service confirmed that it was re-examining the issue of manslaughter charges, after receiving further reports from the transport police. Such charges would be unprecedented. The anger of relatives and survivors from the accident, …
Substantiation – elaboration of the factual details of the misdemeanour	which killed 31 people and injured more than 400,
Pejorative Evaluation	was graphically illustrated when one of the survivors, Tony Knox, from Reading, called for the prosecution of Gerald Corbett, Railtrack's chief executive at the time of the crash in October 1999. Mr. Knox produced a Wanted poster of Mr. Corbett and said that he had "blood on his hands".
Defence – accused third party demonstrates their ethical credentials by a display of sympathy and concern	Mr. Corbett said later: "My thoughts today are with the bereaved, the survivors and their families. The Paddington crash was an immense tragedy. I pray that the industry moves forward on the recommendations made by Lord Cullen."
Pejorative Evaluation	Lord Cullen was particularly critical of Railtrack. He accused it of having "lamentably failed" to act after previous cases of signals passed at red in the Paddington area before the accident. There was also "a serious and lamentable failure" by Railtrack to organise meetings to look at how well signals could be seen.

Substantiation – further 'factual' information providing a basis for negative evaluations	Signal 109 through which driver Michael Hodder passed at red in his Thames Turbo train before colliding with a Great Western express is still out of commission.
Pejorative Evaluation	Lord Cullen was also <u>extremely critical</u> of Thames Trains, who employed the inexperienced Mr. Hodder. Its safety culture was "<u>slack and less than adequate</u>" and there were "<u>significant failures of communication</u> within the organisation". The company was <u>attacked</u> for <u>shortcomings</u> in Mr. Hodder's training.
Substantiation	For example, he had not been given information that signal 109 had been passed at danger eight times before.
Pejorative Evaluation	Lord Cullen went on to <u>question</u> the reaction of the duty signallers at the Slough control box at the time of the accident. He was <u>not impressed</u> with the <u>inconsistencies</u> in their evidence
Substantiation	and said that they might have been able to react earlier by sending messages to the two drivers.
Pejorative Evaluation	The report talked about a "<u>slack and complacent regime</u>" at Slough. Lord Cullen was concerned about <u>the lack of training</u> at the centre and the <u>lack of independent evidence</u> to corroborate the signallers' story.
Non-gossip stage – recommendations	The report set out 88 recommendations, which Lord Cullen has called on the health and safety executive to implement in several stages over the next two years. Among the action list are improvements in safety information for passengers, emergency lighting, the training of on-board staff and better escape facilities through windows. Lord Cullen also called for a revision of the siting of signals at Paddington, a national system of radio communication between trains and signallers, and improvements in crashworthiness to high speed and turbo trains. If fully implemented the industry will have to pay a heavy price.
Defence	Steve Bence, director of the Association of Train Operating Companies, said the industry would consider the recommendations in detail and how they could be taken forward. He said the industry had already started work on a number of fronts following the crash. Action included beginning to fit improved safety systems on trains at a cost of £500m. Fitting would be completed by the end of 2002.

	Chris Leah, Railtrack's safety director, said that Lord Cullen's report marked a further step towards <u>delivering a safer railway network</u>. "<u>It has led all of us to take a hard look at rail safety</u>."
Unsuccessful Probe – Government invited to evaluate but declines	The government's reaction was muted. Stephen Byers, the transport secretary, said that safety was paramount and "at the heart of our policies towards revitalising our railways". He said that he would await Lord Cullen's final report on the future of railway safety, which will be delivered before the end of the year. This will also cover the Hatfield crash and will give the government the opportunity to carry out its first significant review of the industry since privatisation.
Pejorative Evaluation	Lord Cullen hinted that he may have something to say about the industry's current <u>fragmented structure</u>, and the impact it has had on <u>putting profits before safety</u>. He refused to say whether he thought the industry should be renationalised because that was not part of his brief.
Pejorative Evaluation – also Rejection of earlier Defence from rail industry representatives	John Monks, the TUC general secretary, said: "The travelling public <u>can't trust Railtrack to run the railway safely</u>." The unions <u>needed a greater say over safety</u>, he added, and the <u>workforce needed greater training</u>. The health and safety executive needed more money from the government <u>to ensure that it could oversee Railtrack more effectively</u>.
Pejorative Evaluation – Wrap-up	Robin Kellow, an industrial chemist whose daughter died in the crash, said he was <u>astonished</u> that Railtrack was <u>not subjected to more criticism</u> by Lord Cullen. He added that the layout of signalling at Paddington was "<u>tantamount to lunacy</u>".

[Keith Harper and Sarah Hall – *The Guardian*, Wednesday June 20, 2001]

We see, therefore, that such texts are organised around a repeated, cyclic alternation between Pejorative Evaluation and Factual Substantiation, though in this case the factual details of the incident under consideration are by now so well known to the newspaper reading public that these are kept to the bare minimum. This alternation is occasionally complicated by the insertion of a Defence of the third party. This is precisely the pattern of textual development which Eggins and Slade identified in the types of gossip texts they examined. I provide one of their gossip analyses below for comparison (Eggins & Slade 1997: 287–289 – once again explicit evaluations have been underlined).

Opening: Identifies Third Party Focus – indicates the general terms of the third party's 'deviance'	Jo: We had … there was an <u>affair</u>. A <u>classic</u>. A <u>classic</u> was here. There was <u>an affair</u> going on between the cook and this other girl, you know.
Substantiating Behaviour	I mean she'd come over, any excuse, she'd be over Sue: Oh yeah
Pejorative Evaluation	Jo: I mean, it was <u>the laughing stock</u> of the <u>whole</u> hospital
Substantiating Behaviour	and we got to the stage where we'd really play on it because if we needed anything from the other side we'd sort of ring up and say "Oh Anna, if you're not doing anything." and she'd run, you know – Whatever you wanted
Probe [eliciting more Evaluation]	Sue: Did she know that you knew? Donna: I don't think so. Jo: No, I don't think she as that <u>cluey</u>. Donna: No, I don't think she was aware of the fact that so many people knew. Jo: Yeah.
Substantiating Behaviour	Donna: She'd come in and … [laughs] I reckon she got pissed around left right and centre just to keep her out of the kitchen because every time she time you turned around … and she'd wear, she'd … Sue: yeah. Jo: I know. Then all of a sudden she started wearing makeup
Wrap-up [provides a thematic summation of the event or behaviour described – further Pejorative Evaluation]	It was a <u>real classic</u> [laughs] Donna: A girl who never really wore make-up
Probe	Sue: And what happened in the end? Are they still together?
Substantiating Behaviour	Donna: Oh, she left her husband and she's um … Sue: They're still together. Donna: Yeah Sue: She left her husband? Donna: Yeah Sue: Gosh
Pejorative Evaluation	Donna: Oh it's <u>pretty sad</u>
Substantiating Behaviour	but it happened while I've been away. Jo: She'd be ringing up on the weekend as if, you know, and we could hear her voice on the phone all through the week

	and then on the weekend she'd pretend (she didn't, you know) she was someone different. Sue: Oh really?
Probe	What'd she do? Jo: She'd sort of make … she works in the assembly room. Sue: Right Jo: They used to work over here. That's how they met [laughs] Sue: And he is still here? Donna: Yeah Jo: He's on holidays at the moment Sue: mmm Donna: Is she on holidays? I haven't seen her since I've been back Jo: No, no she's no
Pejorative Evaluation	Donna: Actually, <u>it's really ridiculous</u>, I mean, I think <u>she's made an absolute fool of herself</u>
Substantiating Behaviour	because there is a girl who rings every afternoon from Canberra. He originally comes from Canberra this guy and I quite often used to pick up the phone now it's not her
Probe	Sue: So you don't know what's going on?
Pejorative Evaluation	Donna: I think she's <u>atrocious</u>
Probe (continues previous probe)	Jo: Oh they haven't had those phone calls for ages, though. Donna: Been careful, have they?
Substantiating Behaviour	Jo: Yeah. But she left her husband … She left her husband for him Donna: Yeah
Wrap-up (thematic summation)	Six years to get a leg in, this girl had nothing to lose

There are inevitably, of course, significant differences between the two texts, given that one is a spontaneously and jointly constructed, spoken exchange between work colleagues and the other is a written, carefully-edited text intended for a mass audience. There is, as well, at least one difference which does not follow necessarily from the different social contexts and different modes of production of the two texts – the heaping up of evaluation in the opening of the news report which I indicated in the analysis. Yet despite these differences, the two texts are strikingly similar in the way that they are organised around nodes of evaluation which recur repeatedly and regularly as the text alternates between this explicit passing of judgement and the detailing of the

events upon which this judgement is based. We notice as well that, in both, this 'substantiating' factual information is such that it is directed towards providing implicit support for the evaluations which are explicitly expressed in the Pejorative Evaluation stages.

It is possible that the way the news report concentrates upon and foregrounds this relatively small set of evaluations may seem entirely natural and even unavoidable. I would suggest, however, that any such sense of naturalness and inevitability derives from the fact that we are constantly exposed to news reports which adopt this particular text-formational schema. We have only to compare this news item with the enquiry report upon which it is based to be convinced that there is any number of different ways in which these matters might have been presented to the public. In the enquiry report (available via the *Guardian* website at www.guardian.co.uk/traincrash), such criticisms of the rail industry are not in any sense highlighted or foregrounded, occurring at length only in Chapters 7 and 8 and only very briefly in Sections 1.12 through 1.15 of the Executive Summary. While the news report focuses almost entirely on this repeated attributing of blame, the enquiry report is very largely concerned with the sequence of events leading up to the crash, its causes, what happened in its immediate aftermath and what should be done to prevent similar accidents in the future.

We note another feature of the newspaper text which is interesting in the current context. Eggins and Slade identify what they term a 'Wrap-up' stage which they suggest acts to indicate the completion of a cycle of Substantiation and Pejorative Evaluation by providing some kind of thematic summation. While the final Pejorative Evaluation of the newspaper text is not strictly speaking a thematic summation, it does nevertheless have certain special features which set it apart from the other evaluative nodes and which enable it to provide some sense of closure or completion. We note tellingly that in this node the source of evaluation is not the 'official' voice of a spokesperson for some public institution but, rather, the 'ordinary' voice of a relative of one of the victims. There is, thus, a rhetorically significant shift from the public to the private sphere as well as a shift from 'official' criticisms to personalised emotional response as the father of one of the dead expresses his 'astonishment'. It is also significant that this source ups the evaluative ante, so to speak, by his claim that the criticisms so far reported are, from his point of view, not nearly harsh enough. And he does provide some sort of textual completion by means of his over-arching characterisation of the traffic-signalling arrangements which lead to the accident as 'tantamount to lunacy'. Textual closure – a Wrap-up – is

achieved, therefore, by recontextualising the issues under consideration in the everyday world of families and their personal grief.

I have shown, therefore, some significant text organisational and rhetorical similarities between this news report and the type of gossip texts analysed by Eggins and Slade. This text, of course, is an example of just one the many sub-types of news reports. It is a typical example of what I have elsewhere (White 1997) termed an 'Issues Report', a report type which focuses primarily on verbal happenings, on contentious claims, arguments and findings. It contrasts with what I have termed the 'Event Story', where the primary focus is upon material action, upon some newsworthy sequence of events.[5] It may well be, therefore, that this similarity between news and gossip holds only for Issues Reports, or perhaps only for Issues Reports of this particular type. I hope to show, however, that the similarity can be observed in media texts rather more widely than this. Or at least I hope to show that it is possible to demonstrate this similarity more widely when we formulate the underlying text forming principles in more general terms. I propose that the feature which can be seen to connect gossip and many news reports is one by which the text is organised so that some type of evaluation is strongly foregrounded and by which the text is organised around a patterned alternation between this evaluation and supposedly 'factual' information which elaborates or supports that evaluation. Such a generalised formulation will mean that the similarity between gossip and news may be more or less strongly felt, with the degree of similarity dependent, for example, on whether the evaluation is positive or negative, whether it is of the normative or ethical type typically found in gossip, whether an evaluative purpose dominates the text as is the case with gossip or whether the text simultaneously performs some other communicative function, and so on.

Event stories and patterns of evaluation

In order to explore these proposals, in the following sections I offer an analysis of a range of different news report types. I look first at two texts which are similar to the text analysed above to the degree that they are concerned with transport accidents but which are very different in that they are essentially, or at least substantially, concerned with reporting either the actual details of some accident or the immediate reactions to such. I look first at a report which still reveals some obvious similarities with gossip and then turn to a text where the connection is perhaps not so immediately obvious.

The first text reports on the reactions to an incident in which a low-flying US military plane severed the cable supporting a ski lift in the Italian Alps, sending the passengers of a ski car to their death. In the following I supply an analysis intended to identify areas of similarity with the types of gossip texts currently under consideration. I use the label 'Substantiation' for subsections which essentially provide 'factual' information about the activity sequence under consideration and the label 'Evaluation' with those sections where positive or negative assessments are made about the human participants. I will use the sub-label 'Blame' to indicate where the evaluation is negative, that is to say, of the 'pejorative' type identified in the Eggins and Slade gossip analyses. I use the label 'Emotional-Aftermath' to indicate any sections which are substantially concerned with the emotional consequences of the event. I continue to underline and bold individual evaluative elements.

Third Party identification – initial Evelution-Blame	Italian PM: plane was **far too low**
Substantiation	The U.S. Marine jet that severed a ski lift cable, plunging 20 people to their deaths,
Evaluation-Blame + Emotional-Aftermath ('angry')	**violated** Italian air safety regulations with its "earth-shaving flight" across a snowy hillside, the prime minister of this **angry** nation said Wednesday. The defense minister said the American pilot **should be prosecuted**, several influential lawmakers said U.S. bases in Italy should be closed, and Italian and American investigators started looking into the accident near Trento, about 90 miles east of Milan. "This is not about a low-level flight, but **a terrible act**, a nearly earth-shaving flight, **beyond any limit allowed by the rules and laws**," Premier Romano Prodi told reporters.
Substantiation	Witnesses said the Marine EA-6B Prowler swooped through the valley just above the treetops on Tuesday. Its tail severed two, fist-sized, steel cables, sending a gondola full of European skiers and the operator to their deaths.
Substantiation	Startled by an unusually loud boom, 66-year-old Carla Naia looked up and saw the jet "coming at me at an incredible speed."
Evaluation-Blame + Emotional-Aftermath ('fed up')	"I've seen lots of planes and I've **often cursed** them," the Cavalese resident said. "But this one seemed **completely out of control, far lower and faster than the others**."

	Residents of this valley have long **complained** about low- flying jets out of Aviano Air Base at the foot of the Italian Alps. "We are **fed up**," said Mauro Gilmozi, the mayor of this picturesque town of 3,600. "**This 'Top Gun' stuff has got to stop**."
[Background – non-gossip, but perhaps also interpretable as a partial Defence]	An EA-6B pilot who flew missions in the area last year said it is standard procedure for pilots based at Aviano to fly low-level training routes in the Dolomite Mountains, but for safety reasons they are not supposed to be at altitudes below 1,000 feet.
Emotional-Aftermath (implied Evaluation-Blame)	**Anger** continued to build in Italy, an important U.S. ally and home to seven major U.S. military installations.
Evaluation-Blame (partially unsuccessful Probe – Government declines to be maximally critical)	Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini **deplored** the accident but said that it would not "distort our alliances and our collective security structures."
Evaluation-Blame	Defense Minister Beniamino Andreatta took **a harsher line**, demanding that **the pilot be prosecuted**. "We are not asking for revenge, but that **the law on criminal responsibility be applied** to the commander of the airplane," he was quoted as saying by the ANSA news agency.
Substantiation	The cable car was on its way down Cermis mountain when it plunged to the valley floor, crushing everyone inside. It was just minutes away from reaching the base lodge when it fell.
Emotional-Aftermath (image of horror)	All that remains is a mangled heap of yellow metal on the **bloodstained** snow.
Emotional-Aftermath (Wrap-up)	President Clinton issued a statement Tuesday saying he was "**deeply saddened**" by the accident. Pope John Paul II also extended his **condolences** to the families of the victims, expressing his "**pain and preoccupation**," the Vatican said.

[Associated Press news wire – by Vania Grandi 4/2/98, Cavalese, Italy]

To the extent that the text begins with the identification of some third-party transgression and is organised around an alternation between Substantiation and explicit Evaluation, this news report once again displays some quite strong similarities with Eggins and Slade's gossip texts. We notice also, tellingly, that the text includes a Wrap-up, at least to the extent that the final offerings from President Clinton and the Pope are of a rather different order from the preceding evaluations – emotion rather than ethical judgement – and do round off the report by placing the events at issue within the broader context of internation-

ally recognised leaders and their expressions of sympathy for the victims. Of course, this way of signalling textual closure – shifting from pejorative assessment to emotional response – would set any texts which employed it apart from Eggins and Slade's gossip texts. As we saw, the Wrap-up stage of gossip texts signals textual closure, or at least the completion of a Substantiation/Evaluation cycle, but it does this without any shift in evaluative orientation – in the gossip Wrap-up the focus remains very much upon the line of pejorative assessment which motivated the preceding Evaluation/ Substantiation cycle.

Up to this point I have confined myself to news reports which could be classed as 'blame stories' – texts for which the primary focus is upon negative assessments of human behaviour by reference to some system of social norms or ethics. Even the briefest investigation of the mass-media's news story selection processes will reveal that such attribution of blame is one of contemporary journalism's primary concerns – 'blame stories' occur with great rapidity in both the print and broadcast media. An informal analysis of some 30 such 'blame stories' which I have collected for further study reveals that most conform to the pattern of cyclic alternation between Substantiation and Evaluation outlined above – that is to say, the majority are rather gossip-like. We can conclude, therefore, that a gossip-like pattern of textual organisation will be found in a significant number of news texts. However, there are of course numerous news texts which are not so oriented to this type of negative evaluation and, as is perhaps predictable, they are not so obviously similar in textual organisation to Eggins and Slade's gossip texts. Nevertheless, I believe that it is possible in many of these texts to discover a significant connection with gossip once we operate with a more generalised notion of the text forming principles which are in operation. Below I offer an analysis of typical misadventure or catastrophe report, in this instance the breaking-news coverage of the Paddington rail disaster which was the subject of the Issue Report analysed above. The following analysis is directed towards identifying patterns of evaluation by which some degree of similarity with Eggins and Slade's gossip texts might be established. The analysis attends to the following issues:

– (**Impact**) Where in the text is the primary substance of the catastrophic event addressed – where does the text describe the point of impact in which the usual sequence of events is violently interrupted? In this instance, this 'point of impact' involves the collision of the two trains at high speed. I use the label 'Impact' to identify sections which are primarily concerned with this material. I add the label 'Intensified' where intensifying language is used in the description of the point of impact.

- (**Emotional-Aftermath**) Where in the text is the catastrophic event evaluated through reference to its emotional effects of aftermath? Here we are concerned either with descriptions of the emotional responses of those involved (for example, the victims themselves, their families, rescue workers etc) or with descriptions which are designed to trigger emotional responses in us, the reader.
- (**Praise**) Where in the text are there positive evaluations of those involved? This may take the form of explicit evaluations of some behaviour as, for example, 'heroic' or the form of descriptions which more indirectly imply, for example, courage, doggedness or self-sacrifice on the part of some participant. I use the label 'Praise' in connection with sections where such positive evaluation comes into play.
- (**Blame**) Where in the text are there negative evaluation of those involved? (Here, of course, we are in the territory of 'Pejorative Evaluation'.) Here I use the label 'Blame' (Once again underlining is used to identify explicitly evaluative elements and I include wordings which intensify within this general category of evaluation.)

Impact	Rush-Hour Rail Crash in West London Kills at Least 26
Impact-Intensified: the violent misadventure (Emotional-Aftermath – hints at possible Blame)	Two commuter trains **slammed** into each other and **burst** into flames during the morning rush hour today, killing at least 26 people and **severely** injuring scores more on the same section of track in West London where an **alarmingly** similar crash occurred two years ago.
Emotional-Aftermath (horror)	The **grisly** floodlit search for victims was suspended tonight to await the arrival, in the morning, of heavy equipment to lift a blackened and **mangled** front car that it was **feared** would reveal a number of others **crushed to death**.
background	Superintendent Tony Thompson of the British Transport Police said, "The seating capacity of a carriage like that would probably be around 60 people, but it's difficult to say how many people may have been in the carriage."
Praise (heroism): the rescue attempt	Overcoats, attaché cases, overnight bags and plastic coffee cups littered the tracks where rescue workers **struggled** through the day in the **twisted** and smoking metal to free trapped riders.
Emotional-Aftermath (horror) here indicated implicitly through the image of the unanswered phone.	The ringing of mobile phones could be heard inside the smoldering wreckage.

Impact-Intensified	The impact **catapulted** the locomotive of the high-speed Great Western train 50 yards up the track's embankment, **buckled** the front cars and left others upended and **leaning precariously** against one another.
Impact	The accident happened at 8:11 A.M., when the 6:03 A.M. Great Western intercity express from Chelterham to Paddington station collided with the Thames Trains' 8:06 A.M. local leaving Paddington for Bedwyn, Wiltshire, at Ladbroke Grove, the West London neighborhood famous for its Portobello Road shopping area.
background	Paddington station is London's gateway to Western England and Wales, and the terminus for the high-speed rail to Heathrow airport.
Emotional-Aftermath	An amateur cameraman captured the scene in the immediate aftermath as a plume of gray smoke billowed into the sky. **Dazed** survivors were seen **crawling** out of broken windows and making their way along the sides of the overturned railway cars.
Praise (heroism)	A group of men who had escaped **braved** flames to help others still inside.
Emotional Aftermath (horror)	**Terrified** **cries** and **shouts** of "**help**" and "**help me**" could be heard on the soundtrack.
Praise (heroism)	Staff members from a nearby Sainsbury's supermarket put ladders down to the open tracks and **rushed to wrest** people from the burning wreckage.
The aftermath	In all, 154 people were treated at hospitals, with 14 still in intensive-care units tonight and another 54 in general wards.
Emotional-Aftermath	Dr. Robin Touquet at St. Mary's Hospital said that a number of victims had "**horrific** burns, **the kind you associate more with World War II** than a train crash." Others were suffering from burned lungs from inhaling smoke.
background – a prior, similar incident	The earlier crash, several miles west on the same section of track, killed 7 people, injured 150 and led to Great Western being fined $2.5 million for safety breaches. It was the subject of a much delayed public inquiry that last week took testimony from the driver of the train that caused the accident by passing two amber and one red signal lights.

Blame	Louise Christian, a lawyer representing five of the bereaved families from that accident, said it was "**very, very sad and worrying**" that another crash should have happened that was **so terribly reminiscent** of the one in September 1997.
Wrap-Up: the Lucky Escape ('life goes on')	David Taylor, 34, a business consultant, said he had given up riding in the front first-class cars after the first accident, deciding it was safer to sit in the middle of the train. He said he was convinced that the decision saved his life today.

[*The New York Times*, 6 October 1999 – by Warren Hodge]

The features which set the report apart in evaluative terms from both the 'blame stories' analysed previously and Eggins and Slade's gossip texts are relatively obvious. While this text does contain one Pejorative Evaluation (Blame) this is clearly not as central to the text as it is in the blame stories and gossip texts. Interestingly, however, the pejorative evaluation is hinted at in the very beginning and then taken up in the closing stages.[6] So even here there is at least something of a parallel with gossip text structure in the sense that the opening can been seen as indicating some third-party misdemeanour, the body as providing the material which gives rise to that criticism or blame (the Substantiation) and the conclusion makes this pejorative evaluation explicit. It must, however, be admitted that the parallel does not immediately present itself, backgrounded or obscured as is by the more obvious evaluative concerns of the text.[7] These concerns are threefold: (1) to dramatise and emphasise the violence of the catastrophic event through intensification, (2) to evoke feelings of horror and distress in the reader in the aftermath of the event, and (3) to provide a positive counterpoint to the horror and distress by construing the actions of the rescuers as heroic. I provide an abbreviated version of the analysis below, the better to reveal the patterning of these three aspects.

Impact	Rush-Hour Rail Crash in West London Kills at Least 26
Impact-Intensified	Two commuter trains **slammed** into each other and **burst** into flames …
Emotional-Aftermath (horror) …	The **grisly** floodlit search for victims … **crushed to death**.
Praise (heroism)	rescue workers **struggled** through the day in the **twisted** and smoking metal …
Emotional-Aftermath	The ringing of mobile phones could be heard inside the smoldering wreckage.

Impact-Intensified	The impact <u>catapulted</u> the locomotive …
Impact	The accident happened at 8:11 A.M …
…	
Emotional-Aftermath	<u>**Dazed**</u> survivors were seen <u>**crawling**</u>
<u>Praise</u>	A group of men who had escaped <u>**braved**</u> flames to help others still inside
Emotional-Aftermath	<u>**Terrified**</u> <u>**cries**</u> and <u>**shouts**</u> of "<u>**help**</u>" and "<u>**help me**</u>" …
<u>Praise</u>	Staff members from a nearby Sainsbury's supermarket put ladders down to the open tracks and <u>**rushed to wrest**</u> people from the burning wreckage.
…	
Emotional-Aftermath	a number of victims had "<u>**horrific**</u> burns, <u>**the kind you associate more with World War II**</u> than a train crash."
…	
Blame	it was "<u>**very, very sad and worrying**</u>" that another crash should have happened that was <u>**so terribly reminiscent**</u> of the one in September 1997.
…	

We note, therefore, the following sequence:

> Impact ^ **Impact-Intensified** ^ *Emotional Aftermath* ^ <u>Praise</u> ^ *Emotional Aftermath* ^ **Impact-Intensified** ^ Impact ^ *Emotional Aftermath* ^ <u>Praise</u> ^ *Emotional Aftermath* ^ <u>Praise</u> ^ *Emotional Aftermath*

In this, therefore, it is possible to discover some parallelism with the structural organisation observed in the gossip texts. Here we observe once again a repeated cycle of evaluation in which an informational element (here represented by the Impact stages, in the gossip texts by the Substantiation stages) alternates with an evaluative stage consisting of alternating Emotional Aftermath and Praise elements. This pattern of repeated cycles of evaluation is such that that evaluation remains in the foreground. The report is structured so that a particular evaluative framework is pressed upon the reader – one in which they are alternatively invited to be struck by the severity of the impact, appalled at the death and destruction and uplifted by examples of human goodness.

As a final observation on this news item, I note with interest what might be considered the strangely inconsequential material of the report's final section – the anecdote about the passenger whose 'superstitious' insistence upon

sitting in the middle carriage seems to have saved his life. Once again we see how some new element or angle is introduced at the end to provide a sense of at least some sort of closure. Here, of course, the shift is from a focus on the dead and injured to a focus on those who survived and a stroke of good luck. In purely informational terms such would not seem to be of sufficient consequence to warrant inclusion in such a report, and especially not in this very prominent final position. But here once again we see the importance of evaluation and the weight given to interpersonal positioning in such reports. This element functions to provide an emotional lift, a more positive outlook by way of conclusion to a report otherwise devoted to injury, death and destruction.

The rhetorical functionality of the standard news report

To this point, I have analysed the textual organisation of the modern print news item primarily so as to explore points of similarity with gossip. In the next section I focus more narrowly on the news item in its own right and seek to identify the key mechanisms of its rhetorical functionality. I will, however, still observe points of similarity with gossip where appropriate.

One of the most distinctive and often noted properties of the conventionally constructed modern print news report is the manner in which the text begins. This opening (typically comprised of headline plus first sentence or 'lead'[8]) is frequently seen as singling out what is most 'important' in the event or issue under consideration and as simultaneously providing a summary or abstract of this event or issue.[9] It is important, however, always to bear in mind that processes of summation and of deciding what is most 'important' will always be subjective and value-laden. Accordingly it is necessary to understand the news story opening as a fundamentally interpretative device by which particular evaluative frameworks and particular terms of representation are established for the event or issue under consideration.[10] I illustrate this point by reference to the *Sun* newspaper's coverage of actions taken to prevent another British newspaper (*The Mail on Sunday*) publishing extracts of the memoirs of a Miss Ros Mark, the former nanny to the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his wife Cherie.

> CHERIE IN TEARS AT BETRAYAL BY NANNY
> PM vows to shield family
> PREGNANT Cherie Blair was last night braced for a costly legal battle over

a former nanny's memoirs which reduced her to tears.

<div align="right">(The Sun, March 6, 2000, p. 2)</div>

This is a typical news report opening in that it begins with no preamble or background orientation to the events and issues at hand, going directly to points of high evaluative impact – the extreme emotional reaction of the Prime Minister's pregnant wife, the stalwart determination of the Prime Minister and a strong claim of moral transgression against the former nanny. It does this without providing any account of the events which gave rise to these reactions or which might provide a basis for the accusation. In singling out this particular set of issues, the opening invokes certain well-established cultural motifs and thereby establishes particular representational and evaluative terms for the story as a whole. Thus by its reference to the tearful Cherie Blair and the Prime Minister's 'vow' of protection, this opening invokes a schema drawn from popular discourses of traditional gender roles and family life. The opening establishes the events at issue as being a matter of a disloyal and cruel attack upon a vulnerable and emotional mother-to-be and the robust and determined action of the husband and father to defend the security of the family against such a threat. Such text compositional choices have clear evaluative consequences. The reader is thereby positioned to view the Blair's sympathetically both as individuals who have been wronged and as model parents, as laudable custodians and defenders of certain 'family values'. The story is thus set up to be as much about 'the family' and conventional models of domestic roles and relationships as it is about politics or mass-media publishing. An analysis of how other newspapers covered the incident reveals that this was but one of any number of frameworks of evaluative interpretation which might have been applied.

Although such an opening is unlike the introductory Third-Person-Focus stage of Eggins and Slade's gossip texts in both the amount of detail and the range of evaluations provided, it does nevertheless serve a similar function in establishing a particular evaluative orientation by which certain human individuals are to be judged. There is, surely, not a world of difference between an opening along the lines of 'mother-to-be in tears over betrayal by nanny' and 'cook and girl in classic affair'. In the news report, of course, in additional to a target for criticism (the treacherous nanny), we have a target for sympathy and support (the injured mother), and a target for moral approbation (the stalwart father defending his family).

The opening of this report supplies a set of evaluative concerns which, interestingly, suggests at least a partial parallel with the New York Times' Paddington rail disaster report. We have an Emotional-Aftermath element (Cherie

Blair's distress), a Praise element (the Prime Minister's determination) and a Blame element (the nanny's treachery). I provide an analysis below which focuses on these, as well as some additional elements. I use bold underlining to indicate words and phrase which provide explicit evaluation (e.g. **betrayal** by nanny) and plain underlining to indicate those which more indirectly evoke it via connotative association (e.g. vowed to protect).

	[headline/lead]
Emotional-Aftermath *(mother's distress)*	(i.) CHERIE **IN TEARS**
Blame (**nanny's guilt**)	(ii.) AT **BETRAYAL** BY NANNY
Praise (father's resolve)	(iii.) PM vows to shield family
(details of legal action)	(iv.) PREGNANT Cherie Blair was last night braced for a costly legal battle over a former nanny's memoirs
Emotional-Aftermath	(v.) which **reduced her to tears**.
Praise (father's resolve)	1. Mrs. Blair, 45, was backed by the Prime Minister who said he would "whatever it takes" to protect the privacy of his family.
(details of legal action)	2. The PM's Warning follows a judge's 2am ruling which stopped the Mail on Sunday newspaper carrying extracts of Ros Mark's story yesterday.
Blame (**nanny's guilt**)	3. The blonde ex nanny, 30, allegedly **broke a legally binding confidentiality clause** in her contract not to talk about her four years looking after the PM's three children, Kathrun 12, Nicky 14 and Euan 16.
Blame (**the newspaper**)	4. Mrs. Blair, a QC and Crown Court judge, claims **the paper broke the same clause** by running the story.
Emotional-Aftermath	5. A spokesman said yesterday: "She was **deeply hurt** and is **very upset**."
(details of the legal action)	6. Last night, the newspaper warned it would fight the ban – and any claim for damages.
Praise (father's resolve)	7. In an **emotional** statement, Mr. Blair said, "As Prime Minister I obviously accept there's a great deal of media interest in me and my family. But I'm not just the Prime Minister, but also a father and husband and Cherie and I am absolutely determined, no matter how unusual our own lives because of the nature of my, job, that our children have as normal an upbringing as possible". "In this, we are asking for no more than any family is entitled to."

	"We cannot allow a situation where the children are **fearful** that any and every aspect of their lives, past, present or future is liable to become public. We do not seek injunctions lightly and we will do whatever it takes to protect the legitimate privacy of our family life and to protect our children from unwarranted intrusion."
Defence of nanny (see below for further discussion)	8. Mr. Blair said that Miss Mark "remains **a good friend** of the family who is **deeply upset** herself".
	He added, "I know she's **a good person** who will not have intended any harm I'm only **sorry** that **her good nature** has
Blame (newspaper)	been **exploited** by others."
Defence of nanny	A **distraught** Miss Mark claimed she had not given her book to the newspaper – or asked for money.
Blame (**nanny's guilt**)	9. But the *Mail on Sunday* insisted "Miss Mark has **misrepresented** her position. She has written a 451 page book about life with the Blairs, which was offered to a number of publishers."
	"She talked to us openly and insisted confidentiality would not he a problem. She was fully aware we were writing a story, posed for pictures and gave us two photographs of her with the Blairs".

[*The Sun*, March 6, 2000, p. 2]

We notice how, once again, the text is organised around cycles of evaluation as the text returns periodically to the three evaluative angles established by the opening. We note the following sequence:

> i. *Emotional-Aftermath* ^ ii. **Blame** ^ iii. Praise ^ v. *Emotional-Aftermath* ^ 1. Praise ^ 3. **Blame** ^ 5. *Emotional-Aftermath* ^ 7. Praise ^ 9. **Blame**.

There are, as indicated in the analysis above, some additional matters addressed in the body, namely the details of the court case, the accusations against the newspaper which sought to publish the memoirs and the interesting Defence of the nanny (which will be discussed below). But we note that, tellingly, relatively little space and prominence is given to these additional aspects of the issue. Perhaps most remarkable is the relatively little attention given to the role of the newspaper which could easily have been represented as the primary instigator, rather than the nanny, of the crisis for the Blair family, an interpretative option which was, in fact, taken up by other newspapers. (See, for example, the coverage in the *Daily Telegraph.*) The point, of course, is that the body text is organised so that the three evaluative issues singled out as maximally significant in the headline/lead remain foregrounded or central as the text unfolds.

It remains to account for the material in Section 8 which, as indicated, provides for a defence of the nanny against the earlier pejorative evaluation. This is of interest because it is unanticipated in light of the earlier unchallenged characterisation of the nanny as a betrayer who has reduced Mrs. Blair to tears. We are told that Mr. Blair feels no animosity towards the young woman. He insists, in fact, that she remains 'a good friend of the family' and that 'she is a good person'. We are also told mysteriously (and with the most minimal amount of explanation for this apparently clear contradiction of early depictions) that 'her good nature has been exploited by others' and that the nanny has not, in fact, provided her memoirs to the newspaper for publication nor asked for money.

Such material is clearly anomalous with respect to the overall perspective and evaluative framework adopted by the report. It certainly does not fit neatly into the domestic-drama schema of betrayal from within, maternal distress and paternal resilience. To take this aspect more seriously would be, of course, to rob the tale of its most compelling villain. It would rob the account of its neat balance between the good (the ideal parents) and the bad (the once trusted, now treacherous and greed-motivated servant.) Accordingly, and unsurprisingly, this 'anomaly' is barely integrated into the account. It is excluded from textually prominent opening, is introduced very late in non-prominent second-to-last position, and is afforded only a minimal, 14 word treatment.

It is possible, therefore, once we analyse the text from this evaluation-oriented perspective, to observe some clear text formational similarity with Eggins and Slade's gossip texts, at least to the extent that the primary motivating principle of textual development is, once again, one of cyclic return to repeated nodes of Evaluation. Of course, just as was the case with the last Paddington rail disaster report, there are substantial points of difference. Thus, evaluation is not so narrowly focussed on the pejorative assessment of one participant. As well, explicitly expressed evaluation is typically attributed to outside sources so that there is some uncertainty as to whether the texts itself endorses these judgements or is simply recounting them.[11] Perhaps one of the clearest differences arises from the reliance by the journalistic text at various points upon evaluation by implication or by connotative association. Thus nowhere in the text is the Prime Minister explicitly characterised as a good father or overtly praised for his actions in keeping his family affairs private. Rather, the text relies on the positive associations which, depending on the reader's interpretative position, may attach to terms such as 'vow to shield' and 'do whatever it takes to protect'. But my point, as already indicated, is not that news texts and gossip are identical or similar enough to be classed as members of the same genre. My point, instead, is that the similarities are sufficient, at a relatively abstract level

of analysis, to justify us discovering some degree of family resemblance, so to speak, in the way the two text types are both driven by evaluative concerns and structured by a pattern of cyclic return to nodes of evaluative positioning.

The analysis above has also revealed a more general principle of news-report textual organisation which was first outlined in Iedema, Feez and White (1994). We note in the analysis above that the body of the report can be broken down into unconnected chunks each of which acts to specify some aspect of the headline/lead by, for example, repeating it, elaborating it, contextualising it or offering a challenge to it. Thus, all the chunks which make up the body reach back or reference the headline/lead in some way, elaborating on Mrs. Blair's distress, on Mr. Blair's determination to protect his family and on the nanny's alleged treachery, or providing further information about the legal action initiated by the Blairs or the role of the newspaper. Tellingly, these various elaborations and specifications are provided in a discontinuous or interrupted fashion with Mrs. Blair's distress being introduced in the opening but not being taken up again until Section 5, Mr. Blair's determination being introduced in the opening and then being taken up immediately in Section 1 but then not again until Section 7, and the alleged guilt of the nanny being introduced in the opening and then variously developed in Sections 3, 8 and 9. This type of arrangement is found very widely in news reports and, as a consequence, it is generally possible to quite freely rearrange the order of the elements making up the body of the text since there is no necessary linear sequence – chunks typically don't rely on what comes immediately before nor do they prepare the way for what is to follow. Rather, the important text forming relationship is not one which holds between adjacent chunks but the one which operates, often at a distance, between each chunk and the headline/lead upon which it depends and which it elaborates.[12] Accordingly, following Iedema, Feez and White, I see these chunks or sub-components as acting as 'satellites' to the central nucleus of the headline/lead and hold that the typical hard-new report is organised according to an 'orbital principle' of textual organisation by which the headline/lead nucleus provides a dominating textual centre of gravity about which the sub-components of the body circulate. Thus we say such texts are 'headline/lead-dominated' and 'orbitally-organised'.

One quite widely observed consequence of this orbital pattern of unconnected satellites and discontinuous elaboration is that news reports of this type do not provide chronologically ordered, linear accounts of the sequence of events which constitute the incident they purport to describe. (See, for example, Van Dijk 1988; Bell 1991; Iedema et al. 1994; Iedema 1997 and Delin 2000.) We can say that this type of news report does not display text to time-

line iconicity. This lack of chronological sequence is often prominent among the reasons why this type of text is held to be non-narrative.[13] I demonstrate this point below by reference to the nanny-betrayal report.

The sequence of events upon which the report is based might be summarised by means of the following chronologically organised sequence:

1. Nanny enters Blair's employ, Nanny leaves Blair's employ.
2. Nanny writes memoirs and approaches paper (or some other agent) with a view to publication (action will be construed as 'betrayal).
3. Paper publishes extracts in early edition.
4. PM's staff read newspaper, contact Mrs. Blair.
5. Mrs. Blair upset, moved to tears.
6. Mrs. Blair and staff initiate legal action.
7. Publication halted.
8. Mr. Blair explains the legal action by reference to determination to protect his family. / Newspaper defends its actions. / Nanny defends her actions.

This 'narrative' sequence is clearly not mapped onto the textual organisation of the *Sun* report, a point which is demonstrated in the following diagram (Figure 1, below). Here chronological sequence in actual time is represented by left-to-right position (horizontal) across the page, while textual sequence is represented by top-to-bottom (vertical) position. (The numbers refer to the ordering of events in the original chronological sequence.)

Here we see how the text zigzags back and forwards with respect to chronological sequence and, once again, that the text is organised around the three primary evaluative angles – it is organised to return, periodically and almost rhythmically, to the nanny's betrayal, Mrs.' Blair distress and Mr. Blair's determination to protect his family. (For an extended discussion of the historical emergence of this pattern of non-chronological informational organisation in news reporting, see Iedema 1997.)

Conclusion: News as narrative or gossip

If news is, as they say, the 'first draft of history', then just what sort of drafting does it provide? Well, the discussion has demonstrated, perhaps surprisingly, that journalistic discourse does not directly rely upon the traditional story or narrative to supply its framework for recording and interpreting the immediate past. The chronological orientation, the fundamental text to time-line iconicity of all traditional narrative sub-types is indicative of a concern with, or focus
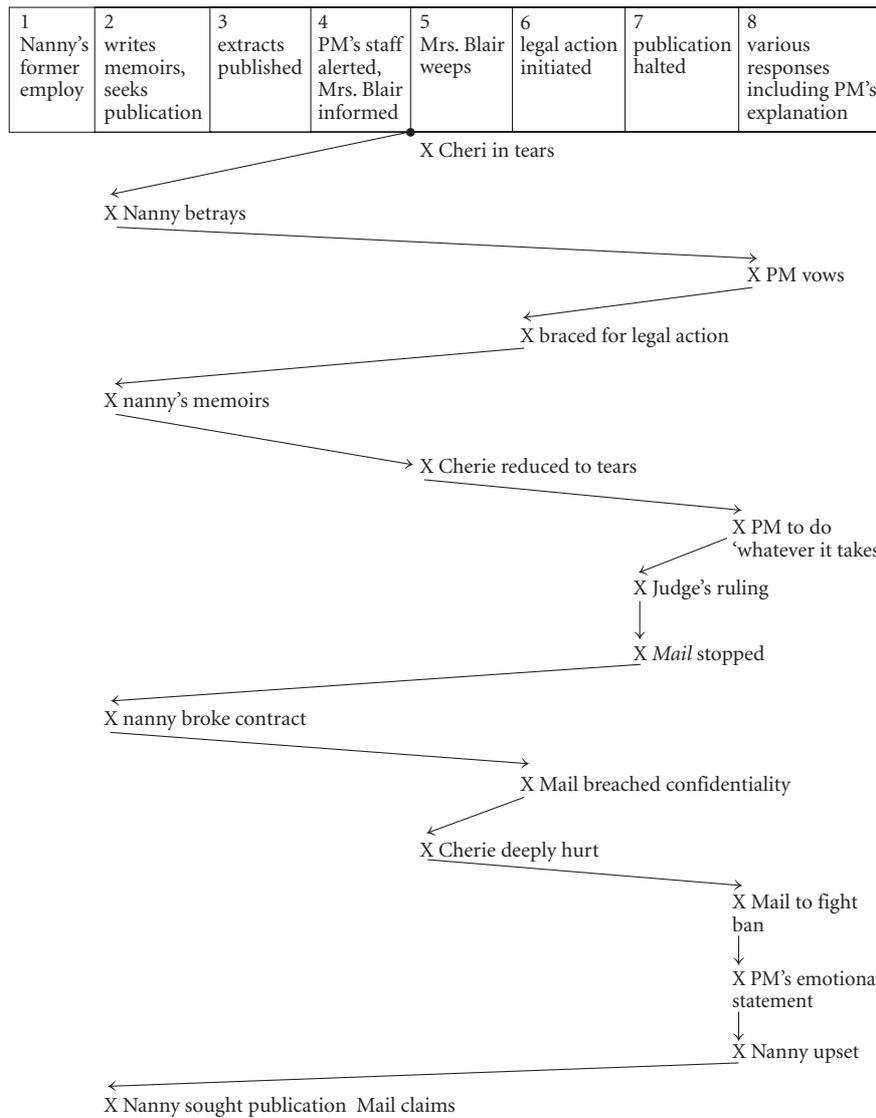
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Nanny's former employ	writes memoirs, seeks publication	extracts published	PM's staff alerted, Mrs. Blair informed	Mrs. Blair weeps	legal action initiated	publication halted	various responses including PM's explanation

X Cheri in tears

X Nanny betrays

X PM vows

X braced for legal action

X nanny's memoirs

X Cherie reduced to tears

X PM to do 'whatever it takes'

X Judge's ruling

X *Mail* stopped

X nanny broke contract

X Mail breached confidentiality

X Cherie deeply hurt

X Mail to fight ban

X PM's emotional statement

X Nanny upset

X Nanny sought publication Mail claims

Figure 1. Disrupted time-line typically associated with orbital structure

upon, how processes unfold in real or fictional worlds and hence with the relationship of cause and effect. There is a clear focus, then, within narrative upon what Halliday terms the 'ideational', upon the representation of external-world entities and events and the logical relationships which hold between them.[14] (See for example, Halliday 1994.) We might, perhaps, have expected that news as history might be similarly ideationally oriented since history is seen, at least conventionally, as concerned with cause-and-effect and sequences of events in the 'real world'. Intriguingly, we find that news texts of the type analysed above, whether Issue Report, Event Story or some combination of the two, are much more interpersonally oriented, organised as they are, to foreground emotional responses and subjective assessments. As a consequence, when viewed from an ideational perspective, these types of news report can appear chaotic, jumbled, unmotivated or at least very loosely organised, and it is only when they are viewed from the interpersonal perspective that a clear structure and text developmental logic emerges.

So what then, in conclusion, is the communicative functionality or rhetorical potential of such an interpersonally oriented mode of first drafting the past? The connection I have demonstrated with gossip provides some suggestions. As Eggins and Slade indicate, gossiping is primarily concerned with sharing opinions and judgements and in so doing asserting appropriate behaviour and social norms (1997: 276). To the extent that many news items are similarly dominated by evaluative concerns, journalistic discourse can be seen as similarly normative, it can be seen as more concerned with how we ought to behave than with what happened and why. Thus the ski-lift disaster report provides only the vaguest account of the tragic sequence of events while providing a very precise and extended account of the community's anger and condemnation of the US military pilots. Thus the *New York Times* Paddington rail disaster report attempts no account of causes and effects, concentrating instead on dramatising the violent impact, provoking a reaction horror and applauding the rescue efforts. Thus the Blair-nanny report is constructed so that an incident in the political domain is made to provide material for reinforcing a particular set of moral values relating to the conduct of family life. And if this is too extreme a position, since it is probably going too far to suggest these news reports have nothing of the narrative about them, then journalistic discourses of this type can be seen as at least as concerned with how we should behave as with what happened. News as history is thus revealed to be as much moral instruction as it is a recording of events.

Notes

1. For example, a mediasearch Web site column criticising *Time* magazine for alleged bias is titled, 'Time's slanted first draft of history' (www.mediaresearch.org/columns/news/col19971230.html). When interviewed by students of the UC Berkeley graduate school of journalism about the current state of journalism, noted British journalist (and former editor of the *Sunday Times*) Harold Evans declared, "When you report you are providing not only the first draft of history but the raw material" (www. journalism.berkeley.edu/events/evans.html). A collection of the work of the noted US journalist, Ted Poston, is entitled, 'A First Draft of History'.

2. I use the term 'rhetorical' in the broadest sense to include the *potential* of texts such as news items to influence, challenge or confirm readers' assumptions, beliefs, values, and views about the order of things.

3. Martin, for example, defines a genre as 'a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture' (Martin 1984:25).

4. It is typically described as having an 'inverted pyramid' structure – MacDougal (1982:98).

5. 'Issues Report' and 'Event Story' are formulated as fuzzy categories – while some reports may focus entirely on an event sequence and others may focus entirely on claims, arguments or findings, it is, of course, possible for an individual report to have features of both categories, to greater or lesser degrees. It is, in fact, quite rare for news reports to cover newsworthy activity sequence without including some commentary, explanation or evaluation of that event.

6. The large amount of media criticism of the safety record of the rail industry in the period leading up to the accident meant that inferences of further wrongdoing on the industry's part were highly likely to be drawn from the suggestion that the accident was 'alarmingly similar' to prior incidents.

7. Here we perhaps see subsequent blame stories in embryo. The concern with identifying any guilty parties finds some expression even at this early stage the process of reporting the accident.

8. In print journalism at least, it is typical for the headline to be added at a later stage of composition by a sub-editor working with copy submitted by a different journalist (or journalists). Thus reports are typically first written without headlines. In the vast majority of cases, the headline contains essentially the same content as the first one or two sentences of the report. For a more detailed account of the relationship between headline and lead see Iedema et al. (1994) or White (1997).

9. For this view from the perspective of the journalistic training literature, see MacDougall (1982:98) and from the perspective of the academic literature see Van Dijk (1988:43) or Bell (1991:Ch. 8).

10. For one of the first detailed accounts of how different linguistic choice in different headline/leads can reflect different world-views and value positions, see Trew (1979).

11. Journalists' claims of objectivity rely in this respect upon what might be termed the 'presumption of evaluative innocence'. The journalistic claim is that the journalistic voice is itself in no way responsible or implicated in the evaluations it introduces into the text by way of quoted or otherwise attributed material.

12. For a more extended discussion of the principle of 'radical editability' see White (1997) and White (1998).

13. Thus Lloyd states, 'As we have seen, chronology is fundamental to narrative writing. It is not fundamental to news writing and particularly not to the hard news intro and news lead' (Lloyd 1994:57).

14. This is not to suggest that narratives do not have clear interpersonal and evaluative concerns. (See, for example, Rothery & Stenglin 2000.) It is just that they give a special, foregrounded place to the ideational matter of activity sequence.

References

Bell, A. (1991). *The Language of News Media.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Delin, J. (2000). *The Language of Everyday Life: An Introduction.* London: Sage.

Eggins, S. & Slade, D. (1997). *Analysing Casual Conversation.* London: Cassell.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse.* London: Edward Arnold.

Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News – Discourse and Ideology in the Press.* London: Routledge.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar.* London: Edward Arnold.

Iedema, R. (1997). The History of the Accident News Story. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, 20*(2), 95–119.

Iedema, R., Feez, S., & White, P. R. R. (1994). *Media Literacy.* Sydney: Disadvantaged Schools Program, NSW Department of School Education.

Lloyd, C. (1994). *News and Feature Writing* [Course Materials, Graduate School of Journalism]. Wollongong, Australia: University of Wollongong.

MacDougall, C. D. (1982). *Interpretative Reporting* (8th ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Martin, J. A. & Plum, G. A. (1997). Construing Experience: Some Story Genres. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, Vol. ?, No.?, pp. ???–???..*

Martin, J. R. (1984). Language, Register, Genre. In F. Christie (Ed.), *Children Writing: Reader* (pp. 21–19). Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press.

Martin, J. R. (1992). *English Text, System and Structure.* Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Plum, G. (1999). *Text and Contextual Conditioning in Spoken English – a Genre-Based Approach.* Nottingham: University of Nottingham.

Rothery, J. (1990). Story Writing in Primary School: Assessing Narrative Type Genres. Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney.

Rothery, J. & Stenglin, M. (2000). Interpreting Literature: The Role of APPRAISAL. In L. Unsworth (Ed.), *Researching Language in Schools and Functional Linguistic Perspectives.* London: Cassell.

Schiller, D. (1981). *Objectivity and the News – The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Trew, T. (1979). What the Papers Say: Linguistic Variation and Ideological Difference. In R. Fowler (Ed.), *Language and Control.* London: Routledge & Keegan Paul.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News As Discourse.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

White, P. R. R. (1997). Death, Disruption and the Moral Order: the Narrative Impulse in Mass-Media Hard News Reporting. In F. Christie & J. R. Martin (Eds.), *Genres and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School.* London: Cassell.

White, P. R. R. (1998). Telling Media Tales: the News Story As Rhetoric. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sydney.