Subjectivity, Evaluation and Point of View in Media Discourse.

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Introduction

It is a commonly held view that mass media news reporting should be 'objective', that it should provide an impartial record of events free of the influence of the author's or the media organisation's opinions and points of view. This paper provides a framework for investigating what it might mean for a media text to be entirely 'neutral' and 'value free' in this way and how we might systematically distinguish between supposedly 'objective' and 'subjective' texts. In particular, it focuses on the issue of evaluation, on how it is that a text such as a news report might influence or position readers/listeners/viewers to take a negative or positive view of the people, events and states of affairs being depicted in the text.

I will be considering such evaluations under two broad headings. The first concerns a mode of evaluation which is unproblematically incompatible with any notions of journalistic neutrality - positive or negative assessments which the journalistic author explicitly and directly presents on his/her own behalf. For example, 'The President's speech was elegant and well-woven, sounding a panoply of themes without seeming scattered.' The second heading involves evaluative language which is rather more problematic in terms of such notions of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'. Here we are concerned with attitudinal assessment which is not so clearly linked to the author and which operates indirectly through association, metaphor, implication or inference and which, as a consequence, is also rather more difficult to deal with analytically.

The discussion will be conducted by reference to three short extracts taken from the news page coverage of the same event by three different British newspapers. They are all the headlines and first few sentences of news reports concerned with a state visit to the United Kingdom by the Chinese head of state, Jiang Zemin, in October 1999.

> **extract 1.**
>
> (from *The Sun*)
>
> **RIFLES RAISED BY GUARDSMEN TO STOP RIOT OVER HATED PRESIDENT**
>
> Queen's China crisis as coach is charged
>
> Bayonet fixed and rifle raised, a solider comes to the rescue of his Queen yesterday. The trooper went into action when human rights protesters charged at her carriage as she travelled towards Buckingham Palace with the Chinese president

extract 2.

(from *The Daily Telegraph*)

Anti-China protests brushed aside

The first Chinese state visit in British history began yesterday with a lone, Tianmen Square-style attempt to disrupt the royal procession in the Mall and muted protests elsewhere.

As the Queen and President Jiang Zemin travelled to Buckingham Palace, a 34 year-old-man jumped over the barriers and attempted to unfurl the Tibetan flag in front of their coach

extract 3.

(from *The Independent*)

Leader of the unfree world is feted by the Queen as protesters arrested

Ceremonially speaking, President Jiang Zemin, the first Chinese head of state to visit Britain, was yesterday given the full monty.

A public greeting from the Queen was followed by an inspection of the guard and a carriage trip down the Mall, with Union Jacks and red flags fluttering harmoniously in the breeze.

I believe that is reasonable to see such language, even when extracted in this way from larger texts, as having the potential to influence whether the reader views the depicted events and those involved in them in positive or negative terms. Certainly in the informal surveys of reader reactions to these extracts which I have conducted over the past several years, there has been almost unanimous agreement that extract 1 is highly subjective and positively disposed towards the 'guardsman', and extract 3 is also regarded as evaluative and subjective by the large majority of those surveyed[1].

In order to explore such evaluative functionality I will be setting out an analytical framework which (a) distinguishes between different types of attitudinal assessments and which (b) takes note of the different means by which those assessments are activated in the text.[2] In terms of types of attitude, I will be operating with a taxonomy under which positive and negative assessments are divided into two broad classes – opinions (for example, "the president's speech was elegant") versus emotions ("the president terrifies me") - and in which these opinions are further subdivided into the following sub categories,

- assessments of the human behaviour by reference to its social acceptability/unacceptability – for example by reference to systems of ethics, legality, etiquette and other social norms,

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[1] The survey group is made up of students who participated in my media language courses. The survey is conducted in the first seminar session of the course and therefore before there is any possibility that the student participants might be influenced by any of the course materials. The students are given the three extracts and asked rank them in terms of 'factuality' and 'objectivity/subjectivity'.

[2] In this approach to evaluative, language I rely on work within what is known as the Appraisal framework. This approach has been developed by a group of researchers working within the systemic functional linguistic paradigm of Michael Halliday and his colleagues (see for example, Halliday 1994, Martin 1992 or Matthiessen 1995). This grouping has been seeking to extend the systemic functional account of interpersonal meanings (see for example, Iedema, Feez &White 1994, Christie &Martin 1997, Martin 2000, White 2002, White 2003b, White 2003a and Macken-Horarik &Martin. J.R. 2003).

- assessments of texts and artefacts (the products of human behaviour) and processes by reference to aesthetic values,
- assessments of naturally occurring objects and states of affairs by reference to aesthetics and other systems of social value such as those of significance and benefit/harm.

This framework also recognises that is necessary to distinguish between attitudinal assessments for which the author takes direct responsibility and those which are attributed to external sources.

The overall purpose of the paper, then, is to set out a framework for comparing and contrasting different media texts in terms of their use of evaluative language and for developing systematic, well-founded arguments about the rhetorical ends which may be served by these evaluations as they occur.

Media evaluations

I will begin with a preliminary, relatively informal consideration of the first of the extracts, that from the *Sun*. There are several words/phrases which carry an obviously negative or positive sense - words or phrases which we might imagine would always convey commendation or condemnation regardless of the context in which they operate. They are,

1. The President is described as 'hated' - negative.

2. The trooper's actions are described as 'com[ing] to the rescue' - positive.

3. The events which led up to the guardsman's actions are characterised as a 'riot', - a negative assessment of the actions of the protestors.

4. The whole chain of events, the situation is which the Queen found herself, is characterised as a 'crisis'. This is, perhaps, the least obviously attitudinal term. But this is only because 'crisis' doesn't clearly single out a human target for approval or criticism. While 'hated' targets the President, 'comes to the rescue' the guardsman and 'riot' those who were protesting, 'crisis' provides a negative characterisation of the situation generally, rather than condemning or criticising any specific human actor..

For ease of reference I will label such items, 'attitudinal terms' – specific words or fixed phrases which explicitly carry a negative or positive sense in that the positivity or negativity would still be conveyed even if the wordings were removed from their current context.

If we turn now to extract 3 (from the *Independent*) it is possible to identify two words/phrases which function in this way. Firstly there is 'harmoniously' in 'red flags flutteringly harmoniously in the breeze – a positive assessment of the scene by reference to aesthetic qualities. The second candidate is the phrase 'leader of the unfree world', a depiction which obviously offers a strongly negative assessment of the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin and also possibly of China itself.

There are a couple of other items which are of interest evaluatively – for example 'feted' and ' full monty'. However, neither of these are explicitly and necessarily positive or negative. To 'fete' means 'to enthusiastically and admiringly welcome' and 'to honour'. To say that the Queen enthusiastically entertained Jiang Zemin isn't

necessarily to indicate either a positive or negative assessment of her behaviour. A similar analysis would apply to 'full monty'. This is not to suggest that such wordings don't do any attitudinal work. It's just that they don't do this as explicitly 'attitudinal terms' in the sense I have defined above. We will return to examine the evaluative functionality of these items in a later section.

Emotion and Opinion

This preliminary discussion, then, points us to the existence within the texts of words and phrases which explicitly and directly assert a positive or negative assessment on the part of the writer/speaker. It is useful to be able to identify different sub-types within these explicit evaluations. We notice, for example, that the assessments which are being indicated of the Chinese president and the guardsman in extract 1 are of rather different types (and here I'm not referring to the fact that one is negative and the other positive). The evaluation of the president as 'hated' is by reference to an emotional reaction, here presumably the negative emotions of a large, but unspecified grouping of people. In contrast, terms such as 'comes to the rescue' constitute a claim that the guardsman's actions of themselves possessed a positive or negative quality (in this case positive). They are not to be so viewed because they triggered a particular emotional reaction but because they are said to inherently possess these characteristics.

The point may be easier to make by reference to the following example.

> [President Bush's] speech was elegant and well-woven, sounding a panoply of themes without seeming scattered. A man not known for his silver tongue, he delivered it with an uncharacteristic grace. (*New York Post* , Jan 21 2001 - Comment)

Here the writer might have used emotion to evaluate the president's speech. He might, for example, have indicated a positive view of the speech by reporting his own feelings – for example, 'I loved the President's speech', or 'The President's speech impressed me greatly'. Or he might have reported the emotions of some third-party (or parties) – for example, 'Those people present at the rally reported being deeply moved by the President's speech'. Instead, he chose to assert that the speech inherently possessed certain positive attributes – that it was 'elegant' and 'well-woven'.

The distinction is between what, for the sake of brevity and clarity, I will term 'emotion' and 'opinion'. I will use the term 'emotion' in essentially its everyday sense to label attitudinal assessments which are indicated through descriptions of the emotional reactions or states of human subjects. I will use the term 'opinion' in a rather narrower sense than is customary in everyday usage to label positive or negative assessments of the type just discussed – assessments under which a positive or negative quality is said to be an inherent property of the phenomenon being evaluated.

It is also necessary to note that, for the purposes of text analysis, emotion-based evaluations can themselves be divided into two broad types. Firstly there are evaluations in which the writer/speaker describes their own emotional reactions – what I will term '1st person' emotion. For example

> *I AM saddened*, but not surprised by the fact that Tony Martin has been refused parole. His only crime was protecting his home. (Letters pages, *Daily Express*, 20/01/03)

Such formulations obviously ground the attitudinal assessment in the individual, personal responses of the writer/speaker and hence they make highly salient the author's subjective role in constructing the text. But they are more complex than this rhetorically. By describing their own feeling in this way, the writer/speaker invites their audience to share the emotion, or at least to sympathise with it and see it as warranted or appropriate. Secondly there are evaluations where the writer/speaker reports on the emotions of others – what I will term '3rd party' emotions. For example,

> Many people are upset and outraged by the fact that Tony Martin has not be given parole.

The author is not passing a judgement on their own behalf but is presented as simply reporting the 'facts' of other people's reactions. Whether or not the author is seen as sharing this viewpoint will depend on the co-text.

This distinction between 'fact' and 'opinion' is an important one for assessments of modes of 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' since 'emotions' and 'opinions' are clearly of a different order in terms of subjectivity and in terms of rhetorical effects. Consider the example of the extract we have been considering. The Chinese president was characterised via 3rd-party emotion - a report of what are purportedly the negative feelings of some significant grouping, those who 'hate' him. Imagine what a different rhetorical effect might have resulted had an equivalent 'opinion' been used – for example, 'Rifles Raised By Guardsmen To Stop Riot Over Chinese Tyrant'. By the use of such an 'opinion', the writer would have been setting him/herself up as having the authority to pass extremely damning moral judgements on an extremely powerful world leader, a leader who was at the time on good terms with the government of the country (the UK) in which the report was written. In contrast, by the use of the term 'hated', the reporter purports to be simply reporting on the 'facts' of how people felt about the leader and thereby not to be offering their own value judgements at all.

The two types of assessment (opinion versus emotion) amount to different types of evaluative claims, to different modes of subjectivity. Under 'emotion', the assessment is linked to a human individual or grouping and hence is represented as a personal response which may vary from person to person and from situation to situation. In contrast, while 'opinions' are ultimately based in human emotions (to praise or criticise is to imply positive or negative emotions), they nevertheless provide a mode of expression by which this emotional basis can be backgrounded, obscured or even denied. They shift the focus from the human subject responding emotionally to the entity being evaluated. Such evaluations are, accordingly, less explicitly personalising than 'emotions'. They also have the potential to indicate that the journalistic author is bidding for, or assuming, a greater communicative authority – the authority to make generalised, universal claims about positivity or negativity rather than to simply report their own or other people's feelings.

Targets of attitudinal assessment

In considering the difference between terms such as 'crisis' and terms such as 'hated', and 'come to the rescue' I noted that it may be important to take account of the target

of the attitudinal assessment – most notably whether that target is or is not a human actor. I suggested that 'crisis' had a rather different evaluative quality because, as an assessment, it was directed at some generalised situation, rather than at a human actor. This distinction has some obvious consequences for evaluative positioning and rhetorical effect. We can expect assessments of humans to typically put more at stake than assessments of natural objects or generalised situations. Thus in our analysis of extract 3, the assessment of the flags waving 'harmoniously' in the breeze puts less at stake evaluatively than the depiction of the Chinese President as 'leader of the unfree world'.

Asserted versus assumed evaluation

There is one final aspect of these 'emotions' and 'opinions' which needs to be considered. It relates to whether the evaluation is asserted as a proposition which is at issue, or alternatively, whether it is treated as 'given' – a proposition which is assumed to be necessarily the case. To illustrate this distinction, consider the following.

> example 1. (asserted)
> The behaviour of the government and the police during the visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin was nothing short of *disgraceful* . The Government's foreign policy is now shown to be *a sham* .

> example 2. (assumed)
> After nine years of the government's *betrayal* of the promised progressive agenda, Canadians have a gut feeling that their country is slipping away from them.

Both examples contain strongly negative assessments of the 'the government' but take a different view of the contestability or arguability of that proposition. In example 1, the negative assessment of the government is very much at issue. The text asserts it as the viewpoint it is seeking to get across – its central argument. In contrast, in example 2, the proposition that the government has behaved badly it treated as a 'given', a point which can be taken for granted as background to the argument which is being developed. In the first instance the evaluative proposition is asserted and in the second it is assumed.

You will notice that in example 2, the negative 'opinion' is carried by the noun 'betrayal' rather than, for example, by an adverb such as 'treacherously' or a verb such as 'to betray'. It is common feature of attitudinal nouns such as this that they enable the negative assessment to be assumed rather than asserted.

Attitudinal triggers – relying on the reader/listener

One last major issues needs to be addressed. The discussion so far has been concerned with formulations by which the writer/speaker overtly and explicitly conveys their negative or positive viewpoint. This mode of evaluation contrasts with formulations which do not operate so directly or overtly and which rely on implication and on inferences drawn by the reader/listener. Consider once again the extract from the *Sun*. It contained the assertions that the protesters had 'charged' the Queen's carriage. This assertion is essentially a 'fact', rather than an opinion (though we might see some

subjectivity at work in the word 'charged') – it contains no explicitly attitudinal terminology. Yet it has the potential to activate negative attitudes towards the protesters, at least in any readers who hold the Queen in high regard and would take a negative view of any possible threat to her safety. This results as a consequence of evaluative inferences or conclusions drawn by such readers. They see such actions as evidence of the wrongfulness of the protestors' behaviour. Crucially, this evaluation of 'wrongfulness' has not been explicitly stated by the text itself. It has been left up to the reader to do this evaluative work. And as such, it would be possible for a reader (perhaps an anti-monarchist or a supporter of the protestors) not to make the inference, not to evaluate the actions of the protestors in this way. Of course, there are plenty of indicators elsewhere in the text that this negative evaluation of the protestors is precisely what is anticipated by the journalistic author – such an assessment is in keeping with the text's earlier explicitly evaluative characterisation of the protest as a 'riot' and with the text's general purpose of setting up the guardsman as a hero.

Here, then, is a formulation which uses inference to activate positive and negative attitudinal assessments, formulations which can be termed 'triggers' or 'tokens' of attitudinal assessment.

Some instances of these attitudinal triggers will include elements which, though not explicitly positive or negative, do involve some subjective intervention on the part of the speaker/writer. Consider the following by way of example,

Even though Fred's father is very old, Fred only visits him once a year.

I read this as activating a negative view of Fred in that, according to the system of social norms which operate in my world, such a son is likely to be seen as uncaring, selfish or undutiful. But there are no words or phrases here which are of themselves positive or negative. On the face of it this is a factual description since whether or not Fred does visit his father once a year can, in principle, be objectively verified. But of course this is not just 'factual observation'. By the use of the terms 'even though' and 'only', the writer characterises Fred's behaviour as in some way contrary to what is expected or usual. While unexpected behaviour is often, even typically, viewed negatively, this is not necessarily the case. For example,

Even though Fred had little time to study, he did extremely well in the exam.

This formulation, then, includes subjective elements which, though not of themselves positive or negative, push the reader towards passing judgement on Fred. In such cases the evaluative work is shared between the text and the reader. The text's subjective elements signal that some attitudinal value is at stake but it is still left up to the reader to apply some conventionalised system of norms in order to pass a specific attitudinal judgement

There is a diverse array of linguistic elements which can have this effect of pushing or provoking the reader to pass some judgement, and research is continuing to analyse these further. Above we saw how counter-expectation operated in this way. The use of metaphorical language may have a similar effect and likewise words and phrases which carry with them attitudinal associations but which don't of themselves assert negative or positive assessments. Consider, by way of an example, a term such as 'budge' in 'Fred won't budge on this matter'. Fred is not being directly assessed, and yet there is an entailment at work here by which Fred is likely to be seen as either 'obstinate' or as 'determined' – and hence either negatively or positively evaluated.

The term 'budge' is not neutral, and yet it isn't of itself explicitly positive or negative. (For more on such attitudinal associations see the literature on 'semantic' or 'discourse prosodies' - for example, Sinclair 1991, Louw 1993 or Stubbs 2001.)

Broadly, then, we can classify attitudinal evaluations according to the amount of work being done by the text and the reader/listener respectively (I am indebted to Gruber 1993 for some key elements of this approach).

Most evaluative work by the text
Text does most of the evaluative work: (least dependent on reading position) <u>via attitudinal terms</u> – *He's an <u>uncaring</u> and <u>ungrateful</u> son, he <u>selfishly</u> only visits his aged father once a year.*
Text provokes, but the reader does much of the evaluative work: <u>via subjective attitudinal triggers</u> – *<u>Even</u> though his father is <u>very</u> old, he <u>only</u> visits him once a year .*
Reader does all the evaluative work: (most dependent on reading position) <u>'factual' attitudinal triggers</u> – *He visits his 90 -year-old father once a year.*
Most evaluative work by the reader

Table 1: evaluative mechanisms

It should be noted, in conclusion to this section, that analysing how attitude is communicated through media texts can be extremely challenging. Evaluative language can be elusive, indirect and difficult to pin down. This follows from the fact that it often serves writers' own rhetorical purposes to be elusive, indirect and difficult to pin down when they are being evaluative. The difficulty in the analysis follows from the complexity of the linguistic resources being used.

Attitude and Attribution

One final issues remains to be addressed. It is commonplace in media texts, especially in news reporting texts, for attitudinal assessments to be located in material which is attributed to outside sources. This enables the journalist author to assert that they should not be seen to be supporting or advancing those evaluations. They claim that they simply report other people's views, and leave it up to the reader to make up their own minds. In support of this, they point out that reports often include the attitudinal assessments of various, often opposed, sources.

The question of the separation of the textual voice of the author from the voices of quoted and referenced sources is a complex one. There are various mechanisms by which the journalist author can indicate that they are more or less closely aligned with the cited source and that they hold the attributed material to be more or less reliable or plausible, and so on. The journalist can manipulate the relationship between his/her own words and those of the attributed source for particular rhetorical ends. There is not space here, however, for a full examination of this issue. For now, we can only acknowledge that this distinction is an important one for analyses of attitudinal positioning. It is necessary to clearly distinguish between attitudinal assessments which are activated by the author's own words and those which are activated by the quoted the words of outside sources who have been brought in to comment as experts,

eye witnesses, interested parties, victims, community leaders, and so on. In analysing evaluative positioning of texts, it is necessary to at least initially allow the journalistic voice some presumption of innocence – to allow that the journalistic voice may not be implicated in the attitudinal assessments conveyed by the attributed material.

Text analytical applications

Equipped with the framework, we are now in a position to return to our three text extracts and to consider them more systematically in terms of subjectivity/objectivity and their use of evaluative language. In comparing and contrasting the extracts, we will consider the following questions:

1. Is it possible to identify any instances of explicit attitudinal evaluations? If so what types of attitudes do these convey – for example emotions versus opinions? Do these terms have human or non-human evaluative targets?

2. Are the explicit evaluations asserted as matters which are currently at issue or are the treated as 'givens' which can simply be assumed?

3. Does the text employ attitudinal triggers rather than explicitly attitudinal terms, or does it combine triggers with explicitly evaluative formulations? To what degree do these triggers include subjective elements (for example, assessments of counter expectation) or can they be seen as entirely 'factual'?

Extract 1.

(repeated here for ease of reference)

> **RIFLES RAISED BY GUARDSMEN TO STOP RIOT OVER HATED PRESIDENT**
>
> Queen's China crisis as coach is charged
>
> Bayonet fixed and rifle raised, a solider comes to the rescue of his Queen yesterday. The trooper went into action when human rights protesters charged at her carriage as she travelled towards Buckingham Palace with the Chinese president

The position advanced by this extract is one by which political protests which might interrupt a royal procession are viewed as illegitimate and by which a solider who 'fixes his bayonet' and 'raises his rifle' in a crowed public place is not foolhardy or irresponsible but rather a loyal subject who is heroic in his devotion to the British hereditary monarch.

This particular evaluative interpretation of the events of the day is conveyed by means of both explicit evaluations and less direct attitudinal triggers. The explicitly attitudinal elements include the characterisation of the Chinese President as 'hated', the characterisation of the protest as a 'riot' and the interpretation of the guardsman's actions as 'com[ing] to the rescue of his Queen'. These assessment are mostly directed towards human targets, although there is the one evaluation of a state-of-affairs – the characterisation of the Queen's circumstances as a 'crisis'. The evaluations are also mostly cast as 'opinion' rather than 'emotion'. The one exception is the use of 'hated' to characterise the Chinese leader. However, as discussed previously, this involves an element of journalistic sleight-of-hand. By using what appears to be 3rd-party emotion, the writer is able to distance him/herself from the assessment and hence to claim to be simply reporting 'factually' what others feel

about the Chinese leader. And yet, revealingly, the author does not actually identify those who feel in this way.

Perhaps most tellingly, all but one of these explicit evaluations are assumed rather than asserted. For the example, the text doesn't assert that the Queen is troubled or threatened by the current state of affairs. Rather, that this is the case is treated as a given by means of the phrase, 'Queen's China crisis'. That the behaviour of the protestors was illegal and a grave threat to public safety is similarly assumed rather than asserted through the use of the nominal form 'riot'. By this formulation the text passes off a highly contentious assessment by intimating that, rather than authorial opinion, this is a finding grounded in the communal, formalised rationality of the legal system. The already discussed 'hated President' operates in a similar way, with the proposition that many people 'hate' the Chinese leader taken as a given which does not require evidence or justification. There is just the one exception to this pattern. The positive assessment of the guardsman's behaviour as 'com[ing] to the rescue of his Queen' is explicitly asserted.

These explicit evaluations are then reinforced by attitudinal triggers. For example, the assertion that the protestors 'charged at [the Queen's] coach' provides evidence that the British head at stake was actually at risk and accordingly that the actions of the guardsman were, in fact, laudable.

This extract's evaluative profile, then, is one in which there is a predominance of assumed (rather than asserted) explicit attitudinal evaluations, directed primarily at human targets. There is also the one instance of an asserted evaluation. By these explicit, human-targeted evaluations, the author's subjective involvement in the text (as the source of these assessments) is clearly revealed. By any definition of the term, such a text must be seen as subjective rather than objective. I note in this regard that the respondents to the reader response survey which I mentioned above have been unanimous in seeing this extract as obviously reflecting and communicating a particular point of view.

The predominance of assumed evaluation is of some further interest. By this, the author is constructed as not so much presenting an argument or a viewpoint on their own behalf as simply reflecting generally accepted opinion. Their subjective presence may, as a consequence, be somewhat less salient. This, of course, is a rhetorical strategy which may operate to pass off a particular, ideologically-interested world view as commonsensical and universally held, and hence as incontestable.

Extract 3.

Leader of the unfree world is feted by the Queen as protesters arrested
Ceremonially speaking, President Jiang Zemin, the first Chinese head of
state to visit Britain, was yesterday given the full monty.
A public greeting from the Queen was followed by an inspection of the guard
and a carriage trip down the Mall, with Union Jacks and red flags fluttering
harmoniously in the breeze.

This extract interprets the events of the day in terms very different from those of the prior extract. It conveys an extremely negative view of the British political establishment for the welcome it has afforded the Chinese leader. However, the text is similar to the previous extract in its use of explicit evaluations – the Chinese leader is

negatively characterised as 'leader of the unfree world' and the flags are positively characterised as waving 'harmoniously' in the breeze. As was the case in extract 1, such explicitness of evaluation acts to point to the subjective presence of the author. There is once again clear grounds for classifying the extract as 'subjective'.

It is also like extract 1 in the way in which it deals with negative assessments of the Chinese leader. Once again, an extremely damning assessment is presented as a 'given' – that Jiang Zemin is the 'leader of the unfree world' is assumed, not asserted. It would seem that there is something of a trend here which operates at least across the *Sun* and the *Independent* newspapers. Both writers assume a very widespread consensus that the Chinese government is illegitimate and its leader is a despot.

The other explicit evaluation – that the flags were waving harmoniously – may, on the face of it seem rather insignificant. This is an assessment directed at a natural state of affairs rather than human behaviour – an assessment which doesn't seem to be putting a great deal at stake interpersonally. Presumably no-one has too much invested in whether or not the movement of the flags actually was 'harmonious'. But of course such an apparently benign observation on such an incidental detail is intentionally incongruous in this journalistic context. It is offered with ironic intent in order to set up a telling contrast between such pleasant appearances and the supposed moral failings of the Chinese leader and those who have welcomed him. Such irony is a clear departure from standard news reporting practice and acts to strongly foreground the subjective presence of the author – irony obviously requires an ironist.

The characterisation of the Queen's action as 'feting' Jiang Zemin is also evaluatively significant. This is an interesting case of an attitudinal trigger involving a number of evaluative mechanisms. Firstly there is the 'factual' proposition that the Queen has met with and extended the usual diplomatic courtesies to a figure who is characterised as a tyrant. This will trigger a negative assessment of the Queen and the political establishment she represents, at least to the degree that the reader holds the view that it is necessarily wrong for the nation's head of state to have any dealings with 'tyrants'. But of course the term used is not 'met with' or 'hosted' but 'feted' and accordingly there is an additional evaluative layer. To 'fete' is to welcome enthusiastically, to entertain admiringly and to honour. Accordingly, by this lexical choice, certain emotions are attributed to the Queen – namely those of being enthusiastic and admiring in the greeting she afforded the Chinese leader, of being positively disposed towards him. As briefly mentioned previously, the attribution by the author of emotions to others can serve a range of evaluative objectives. Such depictions can operate to engender empathy and support for the person whose emotion's are being reported. For example,

> Widow Tells of Dr Kelly's *Anguish* Before His Death
> 'He Had *A Broken Heart* '
> THE widow of arms expert David Kelly yesterday told of his last *anguished* days - and how he killed himself believing he had been betrayed by the MoD. Janice Kelly, 58, said her husband *sank into deep despair* after being named as the source of the BBC's claims that the government 'sexed up' its dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (*The Sun* , 02/09/03).

But equally they can be used to trigger a negative view when the emotion is seen as excessive, dysfunctional, a sign of weakness or in some other way socially inappropriate or disfavoured. For example,

> Question: My husband is *angry* all the time and every time he yells at me and our children, I feel the wedge driving in further. I love him, but sometimes I feel like I don't care about my marriage anymore. What should I do? (From Ivillage web site – Redbook Experts – Relationship Doctor: By Jane Greer, Ph.D.
> http://magazines.ivillage.com/redbook/experts/relat/qas/0,,166964_288254,00.html)

What this means is that one type of attitude (an emotion attributed by the author to some third party) acts to trigger another type of attitudinal assessment (an ethical judgement by the reader of that third party on the basis of the social unacceptability of that emotion.) Here 'feted' acts in this way – an attributed value of emotion (the Queen being positively disposed towards the 'leader of the unfree world) acting to trigger an ethical assessment. The phrase 'given the full monty' operates in a somewhat similar way, with the text once again implying an inappropriate enthusiasm for the Chinese leader's visit on the part of the authorities. '[F]ull monty' is also significant by dint of its colloquial, slang quality. By such a lexical choice, the writer very obviously shifts out of the register usual for broadsheet hard news journalism in order to draw attention to the incongruity between the nature of the welcome afforded Ziang Zemin and his assumed moral unworthiness.

Interestingly, then, the extract does stop short of offering fully-fledged, overt criticisms of the Queen or the government. Rather than declaring outright that the government's behaviour is disgraceful or immoral, it relies on this somewhat more indirect technique of attributing to the Queen socially inappropriate emotions.

The evaluative profile of this extract, then, is revealed as extremely subjective in the sense that in just a few sentences there are a number of clear pointers to the author's subjective presence. In fact, the use of irony is much more typical of journalistic commentary than of news reporting.

Extract 2.

> **Anti-China protests brushed aside**
> The first Chinese state visit in British history began yesterday with a lone, Tiananmen Square-style attempt to disrupt the royal procession in the Mall and muted protests elsewhere.
> As the Queen and President Jiang Zemin travelled to Buckingham Palace, a 34 year-old-man jumped over the barriers and attempted to unfurl the Tibetan flag in front of their coach

This extract stands apart from the other two texts in that it has no explicit evaluations, only attitudinal triggers. I will consider how these operate in some detail.

'Anti-China protests brushed aside'

Extract 2 begins by characterising the protest as having been 'brushed aside'. The term 'to brush aside' is not of itself indicative either of authorial approval or disapproval, while the proposition as a whole (that an Anti-Chinese protest has been 'brushed aside' by the British authorities) clearly does have some potential to invoke

an attitudinal assessment on the part of the reader. The Bank of English corpus reveals that 'brush aside' is quite frequently used in contexts where some action is being negatively construed and where there is the implication that the action is overly dismissive, negligent or authoritarian. For example,

> However, in the long run, the child whose needs are met makes fewer demands than the child whose needs are suppressed or punished. Parents, even well-meaning, loving parents, often ignore or *brush aside* their child's needs because the parents are busy. (Bank of English – brbooks/UK corpus)

This is certainly the sense I draw from 'brushed aside' in this headline. I infer from this that the authorities responsible for the 'brushing aside' have been heavy-handed and have shown scant regard for the protestor's right to free speech.

Of course, I must acknowledge the influence of my own particular reading position – one which is generally supportive of anti-government protests and one which is specifically supportive of protests against the Chinese government's actions in Tibet. In fact, an opposite reading of this formulation may be available to those working from a different reading position. The Bank of English provides numerous instances where 'brushing aside' operates with positive associations, with the 'brusher aside' presented as potent or resilient and the 'brushed aside' as weak or ineffective and/or in some other way unworthy. For example,

> The only reason she hadn't connected them before was that Richard and Jeremy were poles apart as people. Compared to his son, Jeremy was nothing, just a small-time ex-pat, easy to *brush aside* and forget about completely.

> Earlier, Todd must have been alarmed at the way his defence parted, allowing Fabian defreitas to *brush aside* a half-hearted challenge from Robbie Elliott and put West Brom ahead.

Accordingly, it may be possible, given a particular reading position, to read this opening headline as indicating a negative view of the protestors as weak, ineffective or poorly organised and perhaps even of the authorities as powerful and in control. Interestingly, this is in fact the view taken by a minority of respondents to the reader response survey mentioned previously. The fact that the evaluative meaning which readers take from this formulation can so drastically vary in this ways is further evidence that this formulation indirectly activates rather than explicitly states an attitudinal position.

'a lone, Tiananmen Square-style attempt'

The extract characterises the protestor's actions as 'a lone Tiananmen Square-style attempt'. There are two aspects of this formulation which require our attention – the use of the term 'lone' and the claimed similarity between this protest and the anti-government protests which took place in China in 1989.

The Tiananmen Square protests were one of the major news events of 1989. The event was widely covered in the Western media, typically being construed in extremely positive terms as a bid for freedom by pro-democracy dissidents courageously challenging the oppressive power of a dictatorial regime. One image in particular from that coverage was published very widely and achieved an almost iconic status – that of a single, isolated male protestor standing in front of a line of

tanks. As a consequence of these associations, the term 'Tiananmen Square-style' has the potential to position the reader to view the protestor positively and also, though perhaps less directly, to view negatively those forces the protestor is confronting. Thus the evaluative ambiguity or under specification of 'Anti-Chinese protest brushed aside' will be resolved, at least for those readers for whom 'Tiananmen Square-style' carries these evaluative associations. The text's stance is revealed as one which is supportive of the protestor and, perhaps, critical of the procession and its organisers.

This is not to suggest, of course, that 'Tiananmen Square-style' acts to explicitly state a specific attitudinal value. The associations just mentioned are not sufficiently particularised nor sufficiently fixed for us to say that they have become a necessary component of the term's meaning. To describe a protest as 'Tiananmen Square style' is not the same rhetorically as explicitly declaring it to be 'heroic' or 'indomitable' or 'freedom loving'. It is still available to the reader to interpret the term in essentially experiential terms as simply indicating that here, as before in Tiananmen Square, there is a single protestor, opposed to the Chinese government, setting himself in the way of a procession of the powerful. It is still up to the reader to draw or not to draw evaluative inferences from the term.

There is also the additional evaluative work being done by the term 'lone'. This is a term which, on the face of it, simply conveys some factual information – the protestor acted alone, not as part of a group. However, once again, there is a clear potential for the term to invoke attitudinal meanings. A search of The Bank of English provides 114 instances in which 'lone' collocates with 'voice' ('lone voice'), with the human individual thereby designated typically being praised for taking a courageous stand against some powerful, often corrupt adversary or institution. For example, (from the Bank of English)

> He works for Coni and for much of the last 18 years his has been a l**one voice** of opposition against blood-doping.…

> The claim came as one Russian newspaper published photographs on its front page showing shrouded bodies. Novaya Gazeta, a **lone voice** against the war since the outset, said such photos could only be taken covertly because the Russian military would suppress them.

> The fact that Prince Charles is seen increasingly as a **lone voice** of opposition and independent thought reflects the absence of any political opposition that commands respect.

From this perspective, 'lone' can be seen as strengthening the potential of 'Tiananmen Square-style' to invoke positive assessments of the protestor.

We do, however, also need to acknowledge that positivity is not a necessary aspect of the semantics of 'lone'. The Bank of English provides numerous instances in which it is used with negative associations. For example,

> A lone gunman held up post master Malcolm Desoer with a pistol at Burton in Lonsdale, near Skipton, North Yorks, three months ago. (SunNow sub-corpus)

> But two days ago Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Condon contradicted his own detectives when he said he believed a stalker DID kill

Jill. He said he thought the culprit was probably a lone obsessive, (SunNow sub-corpus)

Accordingly, 'lone' is revealed to be operating to trigger a positive view of the protestor, rather than explicitly stating it.

'attempt to disrupt the royal procession'

The protestor is characterised as attempting to 'disrupt' the royal procession. It is true that the term 'to disrupt' is frequently associated with a negative viewpoint – 'to disrupt' is generally seen as a 'bad thing', hence the explicitly negative term 'disruptive'. However, this need not necessarily be the case. Negativity does not apply where the disruption is seen as in some way merited or when the entity being disrupted is itself negatively evaluated. For example, (once again from the Bank of English)

> As MPs return to Westminster, David Blunkett, the Home Secretary, and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, will outline how the Government plans to change the law to `deter and **disrupt**" the work of terrorists in Britain.

> Many demonstrators said that they would use force to **disrupt** any foreign military operation at the nearby Samungli air base, which could be used as a logistical base during a campaign.

> Several scouts may have been disappointed to learn that Jermaine Jenas, their promising young midfield player, was out injured, but there was sufficient resilience and ability in their ranks to **disrupt** a sluggish Bolton, who rested most of the squad that has guided them to fifth place in the FA Barclaycard Premiership.

The term 'to disrupt' can be associated with negative or positive viewpoints depending on reading position and/or upon indicators in the text as to whether the disruption is positively or negatively regarded. In our current extract, there is a potential indicator of a positive viewpoint – the prior characterisation of the protest as a 'lone Tiananmen-style attempt'. To the degree that this depiction establishes for the reader the protestor's bona fides, it also sets the terms by which the attempt to disrupt the procession will be seen as legitimate.

The evaluative mechanisms at work here, then, are significantly different in their rhetorical effects than those found in the previous two extracts. I note that a large majority of the respondents to the reader survey mentioned above view this extract as significantly less subjective and more 'factual' than extracts 1 and 3. It seems plausible that the basis for this view is the text's use of attitudinal triggers in place of explicit evaluations. Even though the respondents felt that they were being positioning attitudinally by the text, they were not easily able to single out specifically 'subjective' words or phrases nor to identify any opinions on the part of the author.

Attitudinal tokens have the effect of making the author's subjective presence less salient or less immediately discernible since the evaluative work is being effected, not by easily identified attitudinal elements, but by what may pass as 'factual' content. The author's subjective presence will only be noticed according to the degree to which the reader views as value-laden and contingent the selection process by which certain informational content, rather than other informational content, is chosen for coverage, or according to the degree to which some subjective aspect is detected in

the otherwise informational content – for example, the subjectivity of likening the current protest in London to the previous protest in Beijing. Texts which employ implicit rather than explicit evaluation in this way operate by manipulating and framing informational content in such a way that the reader is co-opted to do the evaluative work. The events therein depicted are made 'to speak for themselves' attitudinally as the reader is positioned to interpret them by reference to what may seem universal, or at least broadly-based, systems of value. As Macken-Horarik observes,

> "…within texts, it's implicitly evaluative meanings that are most coercive of the reader simply because they appear to pass beneath the threshold of conscious awareness. (Macken-Horarik 2003: 314)

In this instance, the attitudinal triggers operate to make seem natural and commonsensical a world view in which governments and political systems such as those of China are delegitimised and by which certain acts of protest – those against such governments – are assumed to be politically legitimate and morally worthy. Accordingly, any action by the local authorities to limit such a protest will also be construed as unworthy. This needs to be understood against the background of how such newspapers evaluate other protests. Anti-globalisation protests, for example, are treated very differently in the Daily Telegraph. Significantly, this positive perspective is being conveyed without being overtly articulated. A particular set of assessments with respect to legitimacy and illegitimacy is being conveyed by what can be presented as a 'factual' record of events. Consequently these are attitudinal meanings which evade scrutiny - they cannot be so easily challenged as 'just someone's opinion'.

Conclusions

I began this paper by mentioning the widespread belief that media news reports are, or at least should be, 'objective'. The framework I have outlined here provides the means by which such notions can be explored through theoretically principled textual analyses. The theory which informs the framework leads to the conclusion that simple distinctions between 'fact' and 'opinion' or even between 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' may not be particularly useful. It directs the analyst to see attitudinal positioning as a phenomenon which can operate just as easily in apparently 'factual' as in overtly opinionated journalism, though by different mechanisms and with different rhetorical effects. The analyst's focus then becomes one, not of separating the 'objective' from the 'subjective', but of identifying and understanding the different strategies or regimes of evaluation which can be observed operating across different styles of journalistic language. Specifically, the analyst is directed to consider such questions as whether the evaluation is explicitly asserted or implied, whether it makes salient the author's subjective presence or obscures it, whether it is construed as arguable or a 'given' and whether it is represented as grounded in human emotion or is institutionalised as a matter of 'ethics' or 'taste'. The framework, of course, is not limited in its application to media texts. It is relevant to any textual studies which have an interest in evaluation and the rhetorical functionality of language.

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