TELEVISION AND 'THE NORTH'

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by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of representations in the media has for a long time been of great interest to researchers, and has provoked studies dealing with many issues ranging from the portrayal of minority groupings, through protest and demonstrations to trades union affairs and to images of women. However on the subject of regional differentiation there has been very little work. There exists next to nothing on media representations of the North and Northernness which might address questions of how cultural differences of behaviour, lifestyle and belief are portrayed, and the assumptions constructed for members of other geographical communities of 'the North' and 'Northerners'.

This study is an attempt to examine some of the more prominent and familiar media images and to relate their themes, characteristics and styles of presentation to a more general discussion of the possibility of a genre of 'Northernness'. Due to the lack of previous work in this area, many of the observations which follow may appear disconnected and diverse, varying in detail and depth of study. It is then, perhaps, better to view it as a tentative collection of views and arguments concerning a field so vast that its boundaries have yet to be marked out distinctly. Rather than providing a comprehensive account of the treatment of the North it hopes to serve as a point of reference for more intensive, and much-needed, analysis to be conducted at some later date.

In subsequent sections I wish to demonstrate the major thematic concerns and styles of presentation which form the basis of the two most common ways in which the North is represented - the ideal of the organic working class community, and the ideal of the organic rural community. Arguments and opinions have been drawn together from a variety of sources, but initially two outstanding accounts of very different Northern communities have been adopted as a way of focussing the two 'ideal types'. Indeed Hoggart, Williams and Granada Television are very much of one 'moment'. The first of these is The Uses of Literacy by Richard Hoggart, concerned with an account of his childhood and upbringing in a district of Leeds, the second, W.M. Williams' Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth. On television, two such accounts can primarily be seen in the popular serials Coronation Street and Emmerdale Farm, though the influences and effects of these differing conceptions of the North can be seen to permeate many diverse media. Later sections will address more general areas such as the use of Northernness in comedy; the social function of accent and dialect; advertising; regional

specialities and the customs and practices of eating and drinking; the presentation of different regions on the news; and portrayals of masculinity and feminity. The aim is to demonstrate the more common modes of representation, and some of their complexities, and attempt to begin an analysis of why those particular forms are adopted and the socio/cultural function they perform.

Many more observations have been included, on a more general level, which have been made possible through having lived in a town community, on the Cumbrian Coast, (Workington) which yet lies close to the countryside of the Lake District. While not being unaware of limitations in attempting to theorise from personal experience, I feel that the knowledge and unique experience gained from identifying with, and actually being a part of, such a community and geographical location is extremely important in relation to an investigation of this kind. Rather than embarking on any intensive programme of data collection and audience research in the form of interviews or questionaires, many reactions to television programmes such as Coronation Street and opinions on a more general level have been assessed from interpersonal contact with a cross section of the community either at work (in the local supermarket, hotel, hospital and factory) or through simply being (and remaining) a Workingtonian and Cumbrian.

2. APPROACHES TO THE 'NORTH'

a) COMMON MYTHS AND ASSUMPTIONS

With or without actual experience of the area and its people, we all possess beliefs and assumptions about the North and Northerners, a considerable influence on such conceptions being the media. There is a famous starting-point in Orwell's work:

> ...There exists in England a curious cult of Northernness, a sort of Northern snobbishness...The Northerner has "grit," he is grim, "dour," plucky, warm-hearted and democratic; the Southerner is snobbish, effeminate and lazy - that at any rate is the theory...it was the industrialisation of the North that gave the North-South antithesis its peculiar slant. ...the Northern business man is no longer prosperous. But traditions are not killed by facts, and the tradition of Northern "grit" lingers. It is still dimly felt that a Northerner will "get on,"....that, really, is at the bottom of

> his bumptiousness. ...When I first went to Yorkshire some years ago, I imagined that I was going to a country of boors. ...But the Lancashire and Yorkshire miners treated me with a kindness and courtesy that were even embarrassing; for if there is one type of man to whom I do feel myself inferior, it is a coal-miner. ...There is nevertheless a real difference between North and South,...with no petty gentry to set the pace, the bourgeoisification of the working class, though it is taking place in the North, is taking place more slowly. All the Northern accents, for instance, persist strongly,...(1)

But with post-war television there has been a set of further developments. In an attempt to relate beliefs, media representations and 'lived culture', a useful introduction is an outline of some more common myths and beliefs about the North, and, through more detailed studies of the media presentations, to see how strongly such notions are mobilised and given form, before entering into a wider discussion of their implications.

i) Northerners as Friendly/Unfriendly The former view is often reinforced by accounts of hospitality, the willingness of people to talk to newcomers and virtual strangers, to offer help and be ready with advice or to give directions. Whether this is, as a characteristic, more true of the North, is debatable (similar 'friendly' traits can be observed in areas of the West Country and East Anglia) hence possibly showing that such characteristics of behaviour are more readily found in country and rural areas in general. The opposite view is, however, equally potent: that Northerners are reserved and withdrawn, almost hostile to 'intruders' into the community, being wary of anyone who talks differently, and requiring the newcomer to undergo a period of 'apprenticeship' before acceptance. Both traits can also be encountered operating simultaneously, through marked patterns of hospitality and hostility (offers of help extended yet 'talking behind your back' in the next instant). Such behaviour is not only complex but puzzling, especially to those from more singular urbanised areas.

ii) The North as Ugly/Beautiful Images abound of the North as heavily industrial, dirty, smokey, grey, and comprised of endless rows of terraced back to back houses which would have been demolished as slums long ago in any other part of the country. It is an image of the nineteenth century novel, of D.H. Lawrence, of L.S. Lowry prints and When the Boat Comes In:

a vision of hangover from the (industrial) past.

> But the North is not entirely an invention of the last century; it has its dales and moors, its sheep and castles. (2)

It is these latter aspects of Northern landscape which become transformed into the pastoral image, the rural/rustic ideal. In such a land of fells, lakes, valleys, rivers and moors, a haven can be found from the town/city - a land of beauty, wonder, charm, and the poetry books of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge. It forms an antidote to the style and pace of urban existence, a place of retreat and escape: a place where the soul can be 'freed' from socio-cultural constraints, and reborn into its 'natural' state.

> No living soul with poetry in his heart can fail to express himself among the wonderful surroundings one sees in the Lake District. (3)

Rather than being a place where people live, it is a place where people go to 'wax lyrical'.

iii) The North as Segregated/as Backwater One form of this view is akin to the slum/country dichotomy where the land would seem to be divided between the poorer areas of the workers (the mining villages) and the open estates or acres of land belonging to individual farmers/landowners. Similarly geographical features separate towns and communities, some often isolated by mountains, rivers or valleys with the jugular of the M.6 being the 'lifeline' the rest of 'civilisation'. New styles and fashions are believed to be slow to catch on, there is a tendency for more conservative ways of dress and thinking to prevail, and a wary scepticism of new trends and labour saving devices. It appears somewhat incredible that areas exist which still have to be connected to electricity supplies.

iv) Northerners as Quaint, Old-Fashioned and Superstitious Ruralness and backwardness would seem to go hand in hand, adding to the quaint charm of the area.

> The people who have been born in the Lake District or in the Border country are naturally more superstitious and more inclined to believe in fairies, giants, wicked spells, curses and enchantments than, perhaps, people from any other part of the country.

> Nature in itself is mysterious and magical, the folk who live near enough to nature can believe almost anything.(4)

...Because the area itself has been mythologised so must its people be differentiated from the rest - not necessarily special, merely quaint.

v) Northerners as Talkative Gossipping, telling stories, monologues of the 'good old days' and willingness to have a 'good crack' with anyone are an integral part of Northern life and being 'sociable'. Hence such characteristics have become trademarks of the average Northerner, habits easily recognised, and easy (for actors and scriptwriters) to convey.

vi) Northerners as 'Salt of the Earth' Again they are often seen as good for a laugh (n.b. their great use in comedy especially to represent low-life characters) being good, honest, no-messing ordinary folk, a bit basic perhaps, but on the whole 'all right'.

> ...rough and unpolished perhaps, but diamonds nevertheless; ragged but of sterling worth, not refined, not intellectual, but with both feet firmly on the ground - capable of a good belly laugh, charitable and forthright...possessed of a racy and salty speech, touched with wit, but always with its hard grain of common sense. (5)

b) IMAGINING THE URBAN - THE IDEAL OF 'STREET LIFE'

One of the major concerns in the study of post war Britain centred around the question of the disappearance/reappearance of working class culture. In his highly influential and acclaimed book The Uses of Literacy, Richard Hoggart concentrates on his own upbringing in the 1930's, finding his rear view of the past preferable to the present and seeing the mass media as one of the main contributors to the decline of traditional working class culture (its values and lifestyle). However, the tendency is to see Hoggart's work as a celebration of working class life and long standing traditional beliefs, an authentication of many (arguably exaggerated) notions. In his stress on the home/community he draws a glowing portrait of the working class mother, playing on the warmth and goodness of family life at the expense of the hardship and deprivation. What the account, overall, reflects is a class seen as a lifestyle and sytem of values (custom, leisure, the family) with the marginalisation of production, work

labour and political institutions.

> Hoggart understood culture in an essentially anthropological sense not as the artistic product of a given group of people, but as patterns of interaction, sets of assumptions, ways of getting along together... the 'common sense' of 'everyday life' for the working class, in a way that caught the apparent naturalness, down-to-earth, air-that-you-breathe feeling of such notions and yet acknowledged the specificity of the actual content of common sense. (6)

Common sense, for Hoggart, is at the same time wise and blinkered - an astute form of observation and prescription ('good sense') and yet unable to see above and beyond the immediate (limited and restricted). Many phrases, sayings and statements about 'life' can be cited as examples, many country-wide, others specific to the Northern regions. Often seen as relating particularly to the working class and more rural areas, common sense notions play a fundamental role in the organisation of behaviour and belief. It is especially such 'ways of looking at the world' which are important in relation to the construction of the Northern character and provide a way through which the many apparent contradictions may be explained and understood. Popular notions referring to 'human nature' and 'the way of the world' discount the possibility of change and 'naturalise' the social order. Often regarded as a key mechanism of ideological control (operating closely with the dominant structures) common sense however is not fixed to any particular class or group, being able to incorporate traditional and recent elements, alongside setting boundaries for new developments. Hence it can function, as Gramsci argues, as a means of resistance, self assertion and cohesion for a group or class, as well as a means of restriction. Its composite nature signals a site of contradiction between disparate ways of thinking. Later discussions will hopefully demonstrate the use of 'common sense' especially to signify working classness, ruralness, Northernness and as a bridge between programme and audience.

To return to the more general trends of post war development: profound changes were experienced on the level of family and domestic life, and more generally, the breaking down of 'traditional' working class communities. With the concentration of capital (regionally, geographically and internationally), the expansion of the labour process to production line technology, and the decline of 'heavy' industry, a process of transition occurred on a large scale (within the workplace and within the

community)

> Localities that suffer the sudden withdrawal of capital also suffer major disruptions in their patterns of social and cultural life. Cultural forms that have developed, for instance, in close connection with the original division of labour, may lose their very rationale. From the point of view of capital its mobility requires the mobility of labour. It therefore also requires the continuous fractioning of the local, more fixed patterns of reproduction it specifically requires the distruction of locality as a major form through which working people experience their social life.(7)

Old established communities and densely populated areas became broken down, the more run down areas demolished and the inhabitants rehoused in more modern yet often suburban areas. Long standing networks of family and friendship were severed, and the local points of establishing contact (the corner shop, the pub, club and street corner) were no longer immediately accessible. For the young the street or particular area formed a focal point of identification for collective solidarities - gangs or peer groups often being referred to by the label of a street or road. Perhaps to the older generation the loss of the old locale was especially pertinent, a place of family history and memories.

> Locality also seems to play a particular role within the cultural representations of older members of the working class - those who have been 'retired' from the front line of production, and are without collective defences against either their dependence on the state, or their subjugation to market forces. Here locality appears to be one of the central cultural configurations around which their responses are articulated; the area and what has happened to it becomes a key form or cultural metaphor in which processes of economic, political and ideological change are represented and evaluated.(8)

The number of elderly or middle aged people in Coronation Street is noticeable, and the pronouncements by veterans such as Ena Sharples and

Albert Tatlock on the state of the world/street today, compared to their youth, forms much of their dialogue. The loss of close kinship networks has also had its affect on domestic life,

> ...the isolated family could no longer call on the resources of wider kinship networks, or of the neighbourhood, and the family itself became the sole focus of solidarity. This meant that any problems were bottled up within the immediate personal context which produced them; and at the same time family relationships were invested with a new intensity, to compensate for the diversity of relationships previously generated through neighbours and wider kin.(9)

Coronation Street has managed to combine both elements of this equation successfully, action and problems being centred around and involving members of the same family within the confines of their household, yet affording the extended network of community and neighbours to enhance/aid the particular situation. Lack of supportive networks leads to a more vehement defence of family members (such as 'our Janice') against attack, while stronger senses of solidarity and confidentiality prevail in communal territories such as the local corner shop, where advice, help, aid or a listening ear are as important as serving at the counter. The older housing areas which had their own variety of local shopping facilities produced certain rhythms and relationships which organised shopping into a social activity, espeically for the women. With new housing estates being more centralised the rhythm has changed to a planned outing to get the week's supplies (bulk buying, freezer foods etc).

> From this standpoint the 'disappearing corner shop' is not a folk tale derived from excessive viewing of Coronation Street, but a direct consequence of the long term tendencies of capital accumulation and concentration, and a critical reorganisation of the conditions of existence of working class culture.(10)

The apparent break up of family life forms the other major concern surrounding studies of working class culture, the family supposedly bringing out the best in people, and the site of good traditional

values and qualities needed for successful development into adulthood.

> A family supposedly brings out the best in us...The rest of the world is divisive, competetive, harsh and brutal. It is also partly the world of work...But it is also the world of historical change of war and politics. The family, ideally provides stability and security against the conflicts and calculations of the present, and against the uncertainties of the future. This is why people can 'forget their troubles at weddings' and why they look backwards, to a golden age of big families, of music, of nurseries, when their emotional identities are threatened. (11)

The ultimate 'sin' in such a community is any action against the home and family. The task of 'keeping the home together' is seen as the womens' task, first and foremost. The warmest welcome that can be given is still 'Mek y' self at 'ome'. The mother, who issues such welcomes, is the pivot of the home. The domestic world is the whole of her world, as she, more than the father, holds the family together and provides comfort for its members. In this respect, the outer world of politics, current affairs and the news is left to the male (tending towards the conclusion that women in the North are less 'liberated' and outwardlooking than their Southern counterparts).

> ...a working class mother will age early, that at thirty, after having two or three children she will have lost most of her sexual attraction; that between thirty-five and forty she rapidly becomes the shapeless figure the family knows as 'our mam'...(12)

An extremely powerful signifier of the Northern housewife is a fat, shapeless, aproned matron with the proverbial 'heart of gold'.

However, it is only with the advent of old age that the distinction between the sexes, in appearance and prescribed forms of behaviour becomes diluted and subdued.

> As in many societies, old men and old women, especially after widowhood, may lose their distinctive sex roles. The old women go into the pubs and ignore or enjoy the ribaldry, the old men visit their daughters and daughters-in-law and dangle grandchildren on their knee. (13)

Segregation of the sexes takes on many forms, from the different attitudes to worldly affairs to the physical and social divisions of a formal or informal nature.

> It isn't only that if you ask a woman her political views she will look to her husband for guidance. Until quite recently there was a formal segregation of women from men...working men's clubs would not usually admit women. Some pubs...did not and still do not admit women...You see mixed crowds in the pub but they split into two groups with the men taking over one end of the table and the women the other, and two distinct conversations being held. (14)

The phenomenon of the Northern pub is discussed in a later section in more detail. Sports and hobbies provide the other main points of gender identification and differentiation. Pigeon racing (a favourite occupation of Andy Capp), along with leek growing, visits to the 'Dogs' or the races, clubs, football, rugby, and galas and shows are indicated as traditionally all male preserves in which wives and girlfriends are rarely expected to participate, except as observers. Sport vies with sex as one of the major topics of conversation at work, and covers a significant proportion of the more popular tabloids. Personalities are often referred to by their first names in a form of admirational 'mateyness', while great feats of memory are demonstrated in the recall of bygone fixtures and results. Gambling (on the dogs, horses or football pools) can provoke differing reactions: anyone with a 'system' is treated with some degree of respect (making a 'science' out of it), while the loser is regarded with scorn ('it's a mugs game anyway') - see the case of Fred Gee when he got into debt with the bookmaker. Women are allowed a comparative freedom in gambling - although as part of a social event (a night out) - through the trips to the Bingo halls:

> (Bingo) adds the thrill of gambling to a social process of being together...much joking and chaffing between the tables as the evening goes on. It is one of the few ways in which women can participate in the gambling interest of men.(15)

Music is another common feature of the night out, especially the 'free and easy' nights in the working men's clubs, where it is common for everyone to get up and give a 'turn'. The tradition of community singing

was celebrated through the ITV series The Wheeltappers and Shunters' Social Club, where the singing was punctuated by the comedians and the compare's calls for pies and pints and 'order please', around the noisy smoke filled room. So popular was the series that many requests were received for the whereabouts of the club and how to join. Again, linked very much to the industry of the area, brass bands retain a fond enthusiasm, and enable the community to maintain contact with the dying traditions of the colliery bands and miners galas. The television series Sounding Brass (set in Derbyshire) operated through a comic nostalgia for the sound of the North (now more commonly associated with the Hovis advertisement - see a later section). The balance between recreation and work is often seen as one of extremes, with the weekends being the 'life' of the working class, the short period of release from labour.

> ...it was Saturday Night, the best and bingiest glad time of the week, one of the fifty two holidays in the slow turning big wheel of the year, a violent preamble to the prostrate Sabbath. Piled up passions were exploded on Saturday nights, and the factory was swilled out of your system in a burst of goodwill.(16)

In Coronation Street this darker, more flagrant side of life is never shown. The action and events only take place during the week (on a Monday and Wednesday) never on a Saturday. The characters are rarely seen 'bursting out' at the weekends, with the only drinking depicted being social and sociable (everyone buying for everyone else and gossiping) primarily in the main bar of the Rovers Return. The only time other places of drinking are shown is when characters are 'winning' such as the plush hotel lounge used as a meeting place for Elsie Tanner and her (con man) friend.

Work and the informal cultures of the shop floor, pit and dockyard are central to collective common sense definitions of the value of work for identification (as the 'breadwinner/wage earner') in terms of masculinity, class consciousness, and forms of resistance to work (nb Andy Capp is often seen as an idealised stereotype of the working man yet his greatest ability appears to be ways of avoiding work and keeping his comfortable position on the sofa). Whereas a man's pride, identity and status (respectability) stem from his position in the labour process (or, increasingly, the lack of it), in terms of him being able to 'keep his family', in his being 'one of the lads', the woman's signal of respectability and social standing is through the home. Within the working class, complex divisions are created centred around the notions of 'respectability': a form of rough

v respectable opposition which is demonstrated through Hilda Ogden's set of plaster ducks on a mural ('low status') and her wish for a newly painted front door ('high status'). Objects, manner of speech, neighbourhood and patterns of behaviour and consumption also function as socio-cultural signifiers.

Even though work is designated as a male orientated arena, Coronation Street is somewhat unique in that the most visible place of work depicted is the factory owned by Mike Baldwin, where the workforce is all female, and the action commonly revolving around the 'us and them' tactics of union v management (female workers v male boss). However, even this more radical/representational form is restricted and contained:

> Mike Baldwin's 'factory' is 'domesticated' into a home where...women gissip over their sewing machines. (17)

The contradictory treatment of women will also be readdressed at a later stage.

Above all it is important not to see working class culture as being overthrown by a new one (whatever its character) but to view the post war years as a period of transition: a transition which does not involve the move away from a homogenous entity (the working class culture), but a complex ensemble of often contradictory 'solutions' and practices. It is an ongoing process which involved continuities and breaks, disappearances and modifications as well as adaption and incorporation. Hobsbawm has said:

> ...between 1870 and 1900 the pattern of British working-class life which the writers, dramatists and TV producers of the 1950's thought of as 'traditional' came into being. It was not 'traditional' then, but new. It came to be thought of as age-old and unchanging, because it ceased in fact to change very much until the major transformation of British life in the affluent 1950's, and because its most complete expression was to be found in the characteristic centres of late-nineteenth-century working-class life, the industrial north or the proletarian areas of large non-industrial cities like Liverpool and south or east London, which did not change very much, except for the worse, in the

> first half of the twentieth century. It was neither a very good nor a very rich life, but it was probably the first kind of life since the Industrial Revolution which provided a firm lodging for the British working class within industrial society. (18)

Many of the factors indicated certainly contributed to the changing face (rather than decline) of working class culture, such as the rise in affluence, change of locality, occupational skills and kinship networks, but do not offer a full and satisfactory account. Rather, it should be observed that:

> ...the particular cultural form - 'working class community' - rests especially on close, detailed relationship between work and non work and a geographical concentration of intra-class social relationships of all kinds. (19)

Within the concept of working class community there exists a whole range of divisions, strata, and levels of interaction, so discounting the notion that the culture of the working class is uniform. Furthermore, in the use of the term working class community, there exists a real danger of applying the label only to studies and visions of life in the industrial town and street, instead of underlining the fact that such cultural forms are not reproduced everywhere in the same form, or continuously. Both Coronation Street and Emmerdale Farm refer to working class culture yet in a significantly different manner. The point to be stressed here is the likelihood of the former being seen as a version of working class culture, the latter of rural culture.

c) IMAGINING THE RURAL - THE IDEAL OF 'THE COUNTRYSIDE'

One of the most detailed and comprehensive, if by now slightly dated, studies of a rural community is Professor W. M. Williams' account of village/parish life in the Cumbrian community of Gosforth (situated near the coast, the nearest town of size being Whitehaven). The village was chosen not because of its typicality, but rather for its unusual features, being mainly agricultural, remote, whose inhabitants were often born within a ten mile radius, and displayed a whole complex of internal division and feuds between the villagers, fell and lowland farmers. However, many of his observations provide a faxinating insight, from the

point of view of an 'outsider', into the activities, beliefs, customs, practices and characters associated with the rural North.

Perhaps the most immediate feature of the village community is the lack of (geographical) mobility. Most of the people will have been born in, and have lived in close contact to their village or town, and hence families can spread, literally, for miles, with most of the inhabitants sharing some common, distant ancestory.

> Farming provides a particularly continuous way of life and the incentive for mobility is even now small.. The programme of a dales sheep show today gives a long list of contestants sharing a handful of surnames.(20)

Similarly the auctions and the list of entrants in country sports and shows (such as Grasmere Sports and Cumberland Wrestling) will display a constant repetition of well known family surnames. Identification of the family to a particular area may also take the form of adherence to names of farms, or to land features (Merseyside, Tyneside or Swaledale and Wensleydale). Moreover, family names do not only serve as indices of place of origin, for quite often families are classified and spoken of in terms of being a particular 'type'. The characteristics and qualities of one or two of the more memorable members of the family colour the rest - a case of the 'sins' (or otherwise) of the parents being visited on the subsequent generations:

> As in Ireland and Wales common possession of a surname is seen (sometimes erroneously) as implying not only common anscestory but also common characteristics and family traits. The 'Xs' are 'gay queer', and the 'Ys' 'gay dishonest', while the 'Zs' are good solid industrial farmers - always have been and always will. This sense of family continuity and solidarity is further maintained by attaching ancestoral farm names to surnames...referring to married women by their maiden names and by the use of family Christian names passing from father to son and mother to daughter... (21)

Most of the farms' workforce comprises of family members, but even when labour is hired the notion of the family farm persists, with the 'hands' (like Matt in Emmerdale Farm) being treated as one of the family.(22) The community is further bonded through a delicate balance of relationships

between the different sectors within the community and their combined reactions to those outside:

> Farmers form a closely knit group and the distinction between the lowland and upland is more important than the distinctions between farmers and villagers. These divisions add interest and colour to local life. People try to score points at one anothers expense. But...it is a kind of play which makes it easier for the different groups to get on with one another.(23)

Such divisions and their repercussions provide one of the major pivots for the narrative in Emmerdale Farm, allowing for stories of rivalry between different farmsteads in the valley, and between the family farm of Emmerdale and the employers of Joe Sugden, the youngest son, N.Y. Estates (signified as an industrial not family concern). However such 'feuds' are never so deep as to cause irreparable rifts in community, for whatever their differences they still all remain first and foremost 'Gosfer'/ 'Beckindale' folk:

> ...relations of mock hostility bind the parish together as a community. 'Gosfer folk' remain 'Gosfer folk' to outsiders. Their special knowledge and enjoyment of these internal feuds adds to their solidarity against ignorant and excluded folk from elsewhere...(24)

Through joining the viewing community of Emmerdale Farm, outsiders (the audience) are given a privileged access to village life, which the vast majority will never have experienced first hand: they become part of the community. Acceptance into a village community may not, in actual terms, be so easy:

> ...any incoming stranger is expected to behave appropriately. If he does not do so he will be forced to live in a social vacuum without a local network of effective relationships. (25)

Reactions to outsiders, as stated earlier, are paradoxical: on the one hand appearing over-friendly and willing to help, yet requiring the newcomer to go through a period of assessment and initiation before formal acceptance or rejection is made. Two notable characters from Emmerdale Farm, (Henry Wilkes) and the Archers (Jack Woolley) successfully underwent

such an initiation period before becoming stalwarts of the serials - the local inhabitants now used to their 'city'/'Brummie' ways. With much informal social activity being comprised of 'popping in and out' of the ever open doors, or fetching articles for a neighbour from a shopping expedition to Whitehaven, friendship networks are constructed alongside blood relationships. In such a close community any insult to one is an insult to all and the informal sanctions of the group apply.

In recent years the growth of new housing estates and bungalows for town commuters has inevitably affected these social networks, and brought about changes in community relations. In the words of one of the 'Gosfer folk':

> "Yance over ivverybody was friendly wid ivverybody else in t' parish, and tha couldn't walk from t' church to to square without have a crack wid a whole lock o' folks on t' road. Now tha can walk up and down t' village all day without speaking to any folk at all." (26)

News, in such rural communities, travels fast. Through the agency of gossip, and its agents, the postmen, milkmen, newspaper deliverers and shopkeepers, the widely spread community is kept constantly informed. Predictably such a medium of communication is regarded as the preserve of women, although the men are seldom silent.

> ...in the village the web of community woven by gossip is in the hands of the women who meet each other face to face, co-operate in household tasks and meet in the shops. (27)

It is surprising though, that as a serial concerning life in a rural community, Emmerdale Farm does not boast more female protagonists.

Religion would appear to play a more central role in the lives of country and town dwellers than in the more urban areas. The character of the vicar in Emmerdale Farm is one of the focal points for advice, help, comfort, with scenes frequently being shown inside the church during a service (when families are gathered together) or in the vicarage itself. Even if the inhabitants are not particularly religious, church events such as jumble sales, craft fetes, whist drives and concerts are community occasions, affairs of the parish concerning everyone. It is common to see members of all denominations attending a Methodist or Roman Catholic 'do'.

> Assisting those members of the community who are least able to fend for themselves is one of the most concrete expressions of neighbourliness, in this respect the influence of the church is extended beyond the minority who attend services regularly. (28)

This willingness and wish to participate in parish (church) activities can be seen manifested in the strong adherence to religious and secular festivals.

> When considered in relation to the present social life it would seem that the social importance of the various religious festivals is closely related to deep rooted traditional values, and also to the extent to which each festival can be expressed in concrete everyday terms. (29)

Religious festivals are particularly observed because they affect the lifestyle of the individual and the year. Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Harvest Thanksgiving are very important to the people of the country because they feel it to be significant (in some religious or secular way) and because they can actually participate - can 'do something' which is ultimately connected with their everyday lives (the giving of harvest produce, the baking of pies and jams etc.). W. . Williams argues that at a time when such festivals as 'Harvest Homes' were dying out in many parts of the country, the festivals took on a greater importance in the North as they were a channel into which traditional (disappearing) values could be diverted. However this is to ignore the fact that such religious practices and doctrines contain such traditional values already. (Religion significantly plays a lesser part in the lives of the Coronation Street characters, where the only observance seen is at weddings and Christenings - possibly due to the lesser influence which nature, and the cycle of the seasons, has over their lives).

Sporting activities and leisure pursuits also seem bound up with the locality. The regular season of county shows feature events which test skill and stamina (ploughing competitions and fell racing) strength and fitness (Cumberland wrestling) and training (hound trails and sheepdog trials) alongside demonstrations of prize animals and home produce. Football and Rugby League form the other major concerns played on organised and informal inter-town levels.

In contrast to the organic working class town community the image of the countryside and rural dwellers is one of goodness, freshness, a simple honesty, and diligence as the seasons change and years pass by. None of the harshness of the town exists: only the hard but rewarding challenge of its men and women against nature - it is an idyllic backcloth to the town and city: a backcloth occasionally remembered and frequently visited, for pleasure, reassurance and escape.

3. MEDIA FORMS

a) CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONTINUOUS SERIAL/SOAP OPERA

This section is by way of an attempt to indicate the major factors which construct and constrain the continuous serial, many of which have been discussed in more detail by the authors of the B.F.I. monograph, Coronation Street. Here I am especially indebted to the work of C. Geraghty.

i) Time The serial appears at, roughly, the same time slot each week, and forms a continuous narrative not just a collection of single self contained stories featuring the same characters, or collection of episodes shown over the period of 2 or 3 months and then abandoned. Its appeal functions through its relationship to 'real time' - the passage of time in each episode being akin to the passage of time in the audiences' homes. The viewers tune in to find out what has happened that day. Hence, in Coronation Street, it is always a Monday and a Wednesday. The action of the characters is intertwined with the other events happening elsewhere - they are not left to live out their lives out of camera shot to reappear at some later stage (as in a novel), for they always have a recorded existence, if not on screen constantly, then returning to the events/ problems in the next episode. Significant events happening in the world outside at the time are often referred to or participated in by the fictional characters (such as Bank Holidays, the Royal Wedding and Jubilee).

ii) The Future The serial has an infinite future - events continue, people move in and out of the Street, as it moves along its course with the continual postponement of a final solution. The only finality in the serial would appear to be death (for the fictional characters and the real actors, as no role has been 'resurrected' with a different actor playing the part - so strong is the character/actor identity that Ena Sharples could never be any other than Violet Carson).

iii) Complex of Stories

> The audience is presented with a rich pattern of incident and characterisation - the dramatic is mixed up with the everyday, the tragic with the comic, the romantic with the mundane. (30)

Whereas Crossroads functions largely through melodrama, and The Archers is concerned with the hum-drum everyday existence, Coronation Street manages to include the comic (the home life of the Ogdens), the dramatic (shooting of Ernie Bishop), the tragic (deaths), romantic (weddings and courtships), the topical (strikes at the factory, Betty being mugged, Jubilee celebrations) alongside the day to day business of working, shopping, cooking and chatting. The narrative progresses through a knowledge of solutions to be reached, tensions to be resolved - of an equilibrium to be maintained (from the beginning to the end) before another event or problem takes prominence. Individual stories are continually being resolved or fade into the wings while others overlap. Each episode may contain the strands of 3 or 4 different tales, with possibly only one strand being resolved. Hence the play on the desire to 'know what happens next' is fundamental: the cliffhanger becoming the trademark of the serial.

iv) Uses of the Past With a popular serial like Coronation Street it is likely that a large proportion of the viewers are regular and avid watchers with a considerable knowledge of previous events and characters. With such a following any references, within current episodes, to the serial's history must be extremely accurate to avoid a flood of irate letters. The older viewers especially would seem to possess an admirable recall of each character's background as if they were events and people from their own past.. However...

> Conversation in serials seldom turns to past events and it is very rare for a plot to hinge on or be affected by what has happened even in the recent past...characters in Emmerdale Farm reminisce about the old life in the dales, but such references draw on nostalgia for a community experience rather than knowledge of events in the serial's own history. (31)

(It is interesting to note that in recent episodes of Coronation Street

and Emmerdale Farm the parent of a child born out of wedlock comes back into the characters life some 20 or 30 years later. the father of Betty Turpin's son, and Pat Merrick who had Jack Sugden's child). More commonly, important characters or events in the past are alluded to by the use of objects, such as the photograph on the mantlepiece. Alternatively, it is the serials' ability to forget the past (and not be obliged to bring all events and their implications up to date), that enables them to carry on - to have a flexible present to avoid repetition.

v) Plots These generally can be divided into 3 main groupings:

i. Big events (births, marriages and deaths) though used sparingly to give a sense of occasion.

ii. General plots - centred around relationships, families, at work and between generations in the home.

iii. Specific plots - related to a character type e.g. petty theft relating to Eddie Yates, gossipmongering to Hilda Ogden etc.

vi) Characterisation Even if the serial is based on a small community, such as Beckindale (Emmerdale Farm), a wide range of characters, alongside the regular ones, are continually popping in and out. The core of characters are generally families with temporary inhabitants contributing to the variety of stories and happenings possible. However the characters may be individuals in their own right with special idiosyncracies and 'trademarks', the vast majority can be grouped together into clusters of serial 'types'.

> Because the series has to be comprehensible to both the committed follower and the casual viewer, and the number of characters involved, characterisation has to be swift and sharp: the immediate sense of what a character is and what role s/he is likely to play has to be given quickly, using such elements as clothes and voice. The different styles of dress adopted by Hilda Ogden...and Annie Walker in Coronation Street tell us immediately the kind of characters we are engaged in. (32)

Such stereotypical images, Geraghty argues, are necessary for clarity, for the easy recognition of the character within the series; yet they also, in turn, influence the identification and reaction to such 'types' outside of the series (i.e. the view of people in the North

held by those living elsewhere, and, since Coronation Street is exported to many different countries, the view other nations have of 'the English'). These character types can be further divided into:

a. Individuated types - who have their own particular traits, often employed for comic effect, such as Albert Tatlock's stinginess (only drinking rum when someone else is buying) and Hilda Ogden's frequent mispronunciation. Hilda is also a combination of types - a gossip, a nag, though someone who, in general, is contented with her lot.

b. Serial types - common characteristics which link women e.g. the 'Elsie Tanner type' (inc. Bet Lynch and Rita Fairclough) as opposed to the 'spinster type' (Mavis Reiley and Emily Bishop).

c. Holders of Status positions - in terms of age, class, occupations, marital status, degree of responsibility. Characters such as Alf Roberts are often asked for advice and opinions (his role as Councillor lending him respectability), and Annie Walker/Amos Brearley attempt to elevate themselves to befit the position of landlady/landlord.

At this point I would wish to make a distinction between the two modes or forms of representation which constitute the major part of portrayals of the Northern character, forms which are often treated as interchangeable or one and the same thing, yet an important division should be made between the two a distinction which will be demonstrated more fully in the later section on humour. The term Stereotype is used to refer to a fixed mental impression, which is regularly displayed or referred to, an image which fixes certain details in the mind and formalises them. Particular features are drawn out and emphasised to the point of monotony, so that 'everyone' knows what a Northerner is - the vivid image of braces, flat caps, pigeons andpints or headscarf, curlers apron and ready for a bit of gossip. Caricature, however, I would argue, takes the signifying process one step further, drawing its material and power from the stereotypical representations. It is a grotesque representation of a person, place or object by the over emphasis of (already defined) characteristic traits. As in Roland Barthes' concept of myth as a secondary level of signification,[33] the stereotype works to imbue the object (flat cap) with a 'new' meaning, it becomes not only the symbol of the North, but ultimately bound up with notions of masculinity, Northernness and working classness. The point to be made here is that the

mythical order (the secondary level of signification - the stereotype - the myth) can again become the signifier in a third order system that of caricature.

vii) Gossip This functions to create a feeling of day-to-dayness (of the social interaction of members of the community) while also providing a commentary on the action (furnishing the audience with new information, details and so binding the various plots together). The locations used for gossip are those employed in everyday life - the pub, work breaks and the corner shop - places where characters can come in and out of the action, and contribute in a way which appears natural. By the variety of patrons, a whole range of perspectives can be given on each issue. Furthermore, the device serves to move the audience forward to speculation and anticipation, and generates discussion among the viewers themselves about the events and characters in the serial.

> The attraction of a successful serial is that it offers us a place, a metaphoric elbow on the bar, as commentator on the events as they unfold and our years of watching/listening makes us experts...The pleasure of such discussions comes from performing the delicate balancing act of discussing the characters as if they were real people with histories, motivations and futures, while at the same time recognising the formal conventions of the serial in which they appear. (34)

The different processes of social conversation are a further means of rendering action gender specific - whereas men 'talk', women 'gossip' - a distinction which is highlighted in the small tourist-type handbook Cumbrian Chat How it is spoke, under a section very interestingly entitled 'The Mass Media'

> The principle member of Cumbria's mass media is the blatherskyte, who is so good at rapidly spreading the news...When men speak together a good deal, the pursuit seems to acquire a higher stattus. The men are just crackin' whilst their better halves are clattin'; and you will often meet the remark, though the lady concerned is noticeably alive, 'She's a ter'ble body to clat' (a renowned gossiper). (35)

viii) Title Sequences These form the first point of identification and recognition. Coronation Street opens with the haunting melody of Eric Spear, which has been likened to 'Thanks For the Memory', while the camera pans from the modern block of flats to the row of regulation rooftops, chimneys and yawning cat. The location signalled is clearly an industrial township, which still retains the 'old style' back to back dwellings. Emmerdale Farm, by contrast presents a sequence of country scenes, faded into one another, like a brief glimpse of the passing of the seasons, or the day from sun rise to sunset, while accompanied by the lilting melody of the signature tune. In a similar vein, The Last of the Summer Wine has a smooth and lulling signature tune, while the music of another celebrated Yorkshire-based series All Creatures Great and Small is jolly in a quaintly old fashioned way. When the Boat Comes In foregrounds the past with an old nursery rhyme sung in a Geordie dialect by a grown man.

ix) Women In Coronation Street particularly, the most prominent and memorable characters are women. If asked to name 3 characters from the programme, the names of Ena Sharples, Hilda Ogden, Elsie Tanner and Annie Walker would for most people not be far from the top of the list. For successful communication the genre requires a certain degree of stereotyping and adherence to 'common sense' notions ('womens' place is in the home'), yet the characters' centrality is largely a product of their strength, power of assertion and visibility. However these women are handled in a contradictory way - independent, self-sufficient, and forceful, they are placed outside the 'normal' prescribed role of women as dependent and kindly through being of middle age, not part of the ideal family unit (mother/father/children), and often with 'a past' in terms of divorce, widowhood, family left home. Yet in certain subtle ways they still perform the 'traditional' female roles and tasks.

> The matriarchies that the programme celebrates are the matriarchies of place not of blood relationships. Annie Walker's pub is her family, Elsie mothered the 'daughters'she had taken in, and Ena Sharples, and earlier, Minnie Caldwell, are grandmothers to the street, with that combination of sentimentality and trustworthiness traditionally (stereotypically) accorded to such legendary figures. (36)

In this sense neighbourhood groupings would appear to be just as important as, if not more so, particular families. Though, through the

character of Annie Sugden, Emmerdale Farm is kept firmly and truly together through the effort of a strongminded and singular matriarch, as well as contributing to the community welfare as a whole in the capacity of 'community mother'.

b. FROM SOAP OPERA TO SITUATION COMEDY

One of the immediate problems encountered in this form of analysis is the lack of comparable soap operas of the Midlands and the South. In Crossroads, which displays the formal properties of the genre (being set in a number of related locations - the reception, offices, garage, restaurant, kitchen and private houses - and involving the constant flow of regular and temporary characters), the indices of the area are not primarily those associated with the Midlands. Although Birmingham is referred to, the cameras are never taken there, the surrounding countryside is rarely glimpsed, and the colloquial characters demonstrate little relation to the Black Country or Birmingham accents (with the exception of Jim Baines, the ex-garage hand and pools winner, since departed), especially the 'village idiot' caricature displayed through the overalled-woolly hatted-West Country speaking Benny Hawkins. Similarly 'Till Death Us Do Part cannot successfully claim to be the South's answer to Coronation Street. Although Alf Garnet is a character he is taken as a strong individual type and not typical of all Southerners. (Any analysis of the only possible contender as a representation of the Midlands, Empire Road, has been avoided due to the difficulties of obtaining copies of the series, shown a few years earlier, and the added problems of how far it is an adequate representation of black family life in a white, Midland inner city area). Many other series such as Robins Nest, Solo, George and Mildred and Terry and June, are confined in an anonymous surburbia, more middle class and 'southern'. Each series remains isolated from the other: detached and owner occupied.

So far the discussion of representations has centred exclusively on those commonly referred to as soap operas - their formal characteristics, themes and characters. However there is another genre associated with Northern situations which, although similar to the soap opera serials, bears some important differences. The situation comedy, although it may progress via the landmarks of events such as weddings and aniversaries, relies on less temporal development than the serials - nothing significantly happens in the last episode to upset the situation in the current week's offerings. Each episode is, more or less comprised

of a single self-contained story. The earlier series of The Likely Lads, following the exploits of two Tyneside lads in their twenties, has (due to popular demand) been transformed into Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?, but although unusual in that it harkens back to previous events and knowledge of the characters' backgrounds, the audience is not lacking in any respect in not having seen the earlier series for the past is cleverly woven into the present in each episode.

As well as the plots being restricted to single 30 minute slots, the number of characters and settings are limited, allowing little room for manoeuvre, with few characters leaving or new ones being written in:

> The perameters of the soap opera are liable to be a street, a motel, a small village community, rather than an individual family unit, a specific place of work, a couple of friends and so on.

Hence The Likely Lads and The Liver Birds are not so much about Tyneside and Liverpool, but about the humerous lifestyle of two pairs of friends or flatmates: 'Till Death Us Do Part is less about Southerness and Londoners, than about the Garnett family - a family - the action rarely taking place in a number of different locations or outside the home. The soap opera format is apposite to give a 'feel' of an area, to break out of the confines of a particular household or workplace where a number of different locations and personalities can move in and out of the web on intermingled plots and events, just as in 'real life'.

One current series of interest here is Last of the Summer Wine, based around 3 aging friends, Compo, Foggy and Clegg, with a small number of other (regular) characters. From its limited number of protagonists and self-contained plots it conforms to the requirements of the situation comedy, yet much of the action takes place on location in Yorkshire (in the village or on the moors), the outdoor shooting giving the series a distinct air of 'Yorkshireness' generally obtained in Emmerdale Farm. The actual village of Holmfirth in Yorkshire is quite a tourist attraction, for unlike the constructed set of the 'Street' at Granada studios, Last of the Summer Wine is shot on location. Again, much of the success of All Creatures Great and Small is due to the amount of location scenes, the panning shots of the moors and dales as the vet travels from one patient to another.

One further point of note concerns the historical drama series When the Boat Comes In, which is set in post-war Gallowshields (World

War 1), and concerns the fortunes of a small number of regular characters: the Seaton family and their relationship to Jack Ford and his 'family', Matt and Dolly. Yet through the careful storyline and location shooting a vivid glimpse of Northumberland and Durham in the forties is (re)created. The problems of historical reconstruction in documentary/drama cannot be addressed fully at this stage, but their relevance to a common (popular) memory and view of history of the North (past and present) should not be allowed to pass unheeded.

c. REGIONALISM AND THE NEWS

Though a study of this size is by no means capable of providing any form of detailed analysis of the presentation of news of the Northern counties, either on the local programmes or as part of the national news and current affairs network, it is however, useful to note briefly some of the remarks made by C.Brunsdon and D. Morley in their critique of Nationwide a study which highlights many of the observations made elsewhere in this project.

The nightly news magazine Nationwide (Monday to Friday on BBC1) appeared in early evening schedules next to the popular television soap operas (Crossroads, Coronation Street, and Emmerdale Farm), and as a way in which audience interest is kept after the national news, and before the evening's viewing begins. The practice was to have the local news taking the first half of the transmission (Look North, Midlands Today) and then a return to the central studio to 'go Nationwide'. Although it has adopted the policy of more use of regional studios and resources to combat criticism that it is still too metropolitan in outlook, many of the links within the programme are still done from London. One common method is to use the Northern areas to 'fill out' a story of national importance, rather than the regional event itself initiating the story. a 'national with regional effects' type of input.

Within the strategy of Nationwide regionalism is central, seen as necessary to establish a sense of national unity, to construct a close 'homely' relationship with the regionally differentiated audiences. The discourse is rooted in the populist 'everyday' perspective of events - based on a certain set of assumptions about 'what everybody thinks'. As in the soap operas, the dialogue is based on 'common sense' notions of politics, intellectualism and so forth, with the frequent use of popular terms of speech, phrases and cliches.

> They rest on an image of 'the people' outside the structures of politics and government. (37)
>
> (emphasis in original)

The Nationwide presenters form a regular band of personalities which we (the audience) come to know as visitors into our own homes, as part of the family, acting on our behalf and finding out what we (the nation undivided) want to know.

Above all the programme appears to be involved in the search for regional variety - the collection and portrayal of the unusual and traditional customs, the quirks, different ways of life and eccentricities, which draws its material greatly from the fields of leisure, hobbies and entertainment. Since the North is constructed as 'rich' in such aspects of behaviour, examples are selected for transmission nationally, so that the unusual (in the North) is frequently mistaken for/taken as typical (of the North). The ordinary everyday events, deemed to be unnewsworthy by such standards, are rarely, if ever shown. Hence it is little wonder that many believe that they are a 'gay queer lot' up North.

> ...the programme is able to stress regional differences (different dishes, superstitions, competitions), to present a Nation composed of variety of diversity, but also to unify the regions in the face of National Crisis: 'How is Leeds coping with the drought?'... (38)

A further, explicit, concern within Nationwide is with our national (cultural) heritage. This is often constructed through items centred around 'calender events' such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween and Bonfire Night; around events involving the Royal Family (The Royal Wedding, Births, Jubilee celebrations); around craft traditions or the (lamented) disappearance of our national monuments (ancient buildings, the country-side etc.). What is presented is

> ...national(-istic) politics, concern with our craft traditions and national heritage... (39)

Such a form of national politics is steeped in references to the changing face of England, the references to the country and how it is changing (almost always for the worse) - a rural nostalgia for the qualities the country appears to be losing.

> The only relation the centre (adult - city folk - bourgeoisese) manages to establish with the periphery (child - noble savage - worker/peasant) is touristic and sensationalist...The innocence of this marginal sector is what guarantees...touristic salvation... childish rejuvenation. The primitive infrastructure offered by the Third World countries /or in the case of Nationwide, 'The Countryside'/ becomes the nostalgic echo of a lost primitivism, a world of purity..reduced to a picture postcard to be enjoyed by a service orientated world. (40)

Hence the North becomes frequently mythologised especially with regard to its ruralness. What Nationwide presents is a rural world of agricultural production, but in relation to its value as 'human interest': the vanishing Britain, the threat to the countryside and the farmer who can play tunes on farm implements, and not the day to day concerns of such inhabitants concerning the rising price of animal fodder or the lack of social ameneties.

4. EATING AND DRINKING

In any study of a Northern or working class community it has been observed that the pub has always occupied a central position as a 'colonised institution', not formally owned by a class, but moulded to a class character; the users of the pub being more like members (it is often described as their 'local'), each one varying in accordance with the wishes of nearby inhabitants. In both Coronation Street and Emmerdale Farm the pub forms one of the most familiar settings with hardly an episode passing which does not have some part of the action taking place within the bars of the Rovers Return or The Woolpack.

The past five or ten years have witnessed rapid changes in ownership, from owners and tenants to brewery controlled managers, or the establishment becoming part of a national consortium such as the Berni and Toby Inns. More far reaching developments, under the process of 'rationalisation' (the closure or 'improving' of certain pubs) has led to changes in patterns of drinking. More large, plush lounges (with and without juke box and/or space invaders machine) are emerging, taking over from the compacts of snugs, bars, tap rooms and smoke rooms. Changes in clientele have followed (largely identified by the breweries) where the

prospective customers are seen as being of either sex, young, classless, and having 'taste' (drinking more Campari, wine and lager rather than beer and stout).

> This newly formed interpellation dissolves previous patterns and habits of 'how to drink' and substitutes them for new 'preferred' styles of drinking. (41)

In this effort to change the social and economic conditions under which drinking takes place, the pub goer is addressed as consumer rather than as member. Not only have the actual surroundings in which drinking takes place changed, but so too the entire 'character' of the pub.

These changes, significantly, do not appear in the familiar Northern pubs on the television screen, or in the comic strips in the Daily Mirror. The pub of 'character' the friendly 'local', still prevails in the world of Andy Capp. His view of drinking remains at its most chauvinistic - as a male pleasure and a man's 'right', for although Florrie accompanies him on some of his sorties, she is more often than not keeping a wary eye on him, half pint glass in hand, or is waiting up by the foot of the stairs as 'chucking out time' approaches. Hence, if Andy Capp is to bear any relation to the changing face of the British pub, he should realise that...

> It is high time that Andy Capp was given a new suit and took his wife out to one of the many popular North East pubs where he can still enjoy a pint of beer and Florrie can have a glass of sauterne with her scampi and chips. (42)

Nevertheless such changes have their more positive consequences, such as the breaking down of many of the barriers of the pub's male supremacy - a territory only to be entered by a female in the company of her husband. In some areas of the North 'men only' bars and clubs still persist but in the main the stigma of the woman entering the bar alone, or in single sex groups, has relaxed. Interestingly in the rural bar of the Woolpack few women are patrons (though there are notably fewer women characters in the series than in Coronation Street) whereas the Rovers Return boasts a whole range of female characters popping in and out (married or single, alone or as part of a group). The local is very much 'their' local whether they be male or female, and since it serves as one of the main locations for stories to unfold, the presence of most of the characters at some point in time is vital.

Even though the women of Coronation Street may like a drink themselves their selection is usually restricted to fruit juices, spirits, pale ale or the occasional 'half'. In the face of a domestic crisis or at the end of a 'hard day at work' the right of the man to go to the pub stands unquestioned and unchallenged. Though Hilda may moan and joke, Stan and Eddie still get to sup their ale.

> A man needs 'is pint; it helps make life worthwhile; if one can't have a bit of pleasure like that, then what is there to live for? It is 'natural' for a man to like his beer. (43)

As a social indicator, food, as much as dress and speech, is both class and geographically specific. Many regional specialities have become symbols or trademarks of the area, such as Lancashire hot-pot, black pudding, Yorkshire pudding, the 'stottie' cakes of Tyneside, and Cumberland sausage (where each butcher prepares his own special, and often secret recipe), and for the more seasoned traveller the Cumberland rum butter and Kendal mint cake. However, it is not just what is eaten, but where, when and for what purpose, that offers a more detailed insight into the culture of the North.

As previously stated the common notion of the North as 'friendly' is often substantiated by customs and practices associated with eating. Here time plays an important part in reinforcing class and regional differences. For the upper and middle classes the main meal (dinner) is taken in the evening, while in the more working class and rural areas of the North the most important family meal is tea (high tea). With the emphasis on the meal as a family occasion, many scenes from soap operas are constructed, literally, around the dining table. The kitchen in the Sugden's household (Emmerdale Farm) provides one of the most familiar settings of family life (conflict and reconciliation), being the place where everyone can get together, sit down and talk through their problems, or where outsiders are welcomed into the family. Notably, Pat Merrick's final acceptance into the family (as the prospective wife of the eldest son Jack) is symbolised by Annie's invitation to Pat and the children to join them for Sunday lunch (that most traditional of family meals). Similarly Eddie Yates' prison mate is welcomed by Hilda as 'one of the family' in the offer to stay for tea (Coronation Street). This practice of food sharing is again rendered class specific by the differences in being invited for a meal (the evening dinner where, by implication,

something special will be made for the guests) and the uninvited guest becoming part of the 'family', joining in with the family meal as a matter of course. Quite frequently it is difficult to leave a household without eating something, or at least having a cup of tea, without giving offence. With so much 'popping in and out', the rituals of neighbourliness and hospitality must be adhered to, and compliance expected.

> The dales farmers' wife does not give invitations but is quite happy to give meals to friends, or even acquaintances who arrive at an appropriate time. There is a strong convention in the South that you do not, without prior invitation, call on people at an hour close to a mealtime. The Northern housewives seem to expect the opposite rule. (44)

Whether the guest eats or not the pressure to have a 'cuppa' is overwhelming. In Annie's farmhouse kitchen the kettle is never literally or symbolically far from the stove, and, behind the many doors of Coronation Street, tea is ritually proffered as a panacea for all life's troubles. Here as in Emmerdale Farm and The Archers (Radio 4's rustic series) it is tea rather than coffee which is used, the latter not only being more expensive, but more associated with luxury and 'class', than the everyday beverage which after all is the 'national drink'.

This difference in preference is further demonstrated by the type of food chosen the Ogdens represent the more earthy strata of Northern life, sticking to 'good plain food' in the form of an endless repertoire of pies, peas, bangers and mash, fish and chips and 'fry-ups'. Like many of their counterparts they shun anything 'fancy' - maintaining a distrust for spices and exotic sauces (any kind which doesn't come out of a bottle). T.H. Pear in his observations on the class specificity of eating and drinking discusses the question of preference in terms of smell, arguing that foods such as kippers, bloaters, fish and chips, tripe and onions are degraded on account of their strong smell, while others are praised for their rich aroma. Similarly ignorance of other foods may contribute to and uphold the form of gastric conservatism that prevails in Northern households. Old eating habits, like many others, die hard. If home is where the heart is rooted, then home cooking is the best remedy for the stomach.

> The insistence on food which is both solid and enjoyable is not difficult to appreciate - 'as

long as y' get some good food inside 'y, y' can't complain... (45)

Even though the number of delicatessens, health food shops, foreign restaurants, and fast food take-aways is increasing, the adherence to home cooking remains as strong as ever (bound up inevitably with the politics of domesticity, the virtues of motherhood, and as a demonstration of prowess as a 'good wife').

'Home cooking' is always better than any other, cafe food is almost always adulterated... (46)

This inbuilt prejudice is demonstrated in Coronation Street through Ivy's objections to Gail working in the cafe (designated as a common place) when she should, implicitly, be at home making Brian's tea. However the cafe also performs a further role in its function as a social meeting place, a background for events, particularly in Coronation Street and Last of the Summer Wine.

e) ADVERTISING AND THE NORTH

Few advertisements deal specifically with the North or use Northerness to 'sell', but those that do form part of the powerful ongoing process of signification, generally using a combination of accent, dialect, objects and music already familiar to the intended audience. The public is addressed through a system of pre-established conventions and stereotypes in two major forms; those of nostalgia and humour.

The appeal of nostalgia is mobilised through the image of an organic working class, of a golden age, a changeless dream of the 'good old days' of cobbled streets, brass bands, homeliness and good times. Overwhelmingly this is the image perpetrated by the advertisements for Hovis bread. Visually the Hovis advertisements offer a vision of the past, a step back in time to the haunting melody of Dvorak's New World Symphony played by the inimitable brass band. The narration, familiar to comedians and customers alike, is that of a grandfather with a tear in his eye, reminiscing to a generation bereft of such joys. Only through the taste of Hovis may we hope to recapture and relive, if fleetingly, a bygone age and its pleasures. More recently with the innovation of Hovis Digestive biscuits, the advertisers have taken their format even further. In a scene entitled 'Macclestown 1900' robot workmen are shown sitting in a shelter eating the aforementioned biscuits. One makes electronic noises of approval (similar to those made by the Cadburys

Smash creatures), as the leader, in the familiar Northern tones, exclaims, "by 'eck lad, you must 'ave 'ollow legs!". Once more the music over-determines the action - the repetition of the New World extract - the 'Hovis music'.

Elsewhere the combination of bread and the North appears to be 'natural'. Old Tom Allinson, in his no nonsense accent declares to all and sundry that his bread is 'better with nowt taken out'. Again old = best. Even in the modern supermarkets the traditional values of bread (brownness as goodness) still have to be upheld. In his coming down from heaven to 'scout', Tom Allinson is morally instructing us as to the virtue of his bread above and beyond all others, and to beware of false imitations.

Though humour is implicit in the Hovis and Allinson advertisements, it is foregrounded in Bob Carolgees' escapades with Hellmans Mayonnaise. In his role of the tousled-haired schoolboy (complete with knitted tank-top and baggy shorts) he appeals to the audiences' sympathy by the 'sob-story' approach. His mother, significantly, is a bad cook (signalled by references to her 'door stops' and 'carpet' burgers), and hence, not surprisingly, a bad mother - she is seen running off with the coalman. Yet all is not lost, as, on discovering the Hellmans Mayonnaise, he transforms the unappetising fare into something 'stupendous'. One jar of Hellmans can, with a little bit of know-how, change your eating habits and, by implication, your lifestyle. No longer need your food, and yourself, be ordinary and uninteresting.

The rural image is by no means forgotten, finding expression through the celebration of Goldenlay eggs, in a sequence of awful puns which form the dialogue of three farmers resting in a barn. The goodness of the country is equated with the freshness of Goldenlay eggs - facts which are reaffirmed through the familiar Yorkshire tones heard down 'on t' farm'.

The series of exploits recounted by the grandfather to his grandson over a mug of Heinz Soup combine the nostalgia of a (comically fictional) bygone childhood with the wide-eyed innocence of youth. The broad Northern tones create the atmosphere of fantasy, charm and homeliness in these cosy domestic scenes.

Such advertisements, as Judith Williamson has argued, are successful not because they bear any direct relation to reality but because the 'reality' offered on the page or screen is a social dream - one which is perceived by a cross section of the community. Hence what the advertisements are selling is history - be it in the comic or idealised mode they

offer us a chance to recapture the lost: they provide us with 'pipe dreams of a happier past'.

4. LANGUAGE ACCENT AND DIALECT

"IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY...IT'S THE WAY THAT YOU SAY IT..."

In our society there exists a common assumption about the 'correct'way of speaking, which takes the form of adherence to a 'Standard English': a mode which (not accidently) bears many characteristics of Southern speech. Consequently, any Northern, Midland, Scottish, Irish or American inflection is treated as inferior, as a deviation. From its very label it is signified as the 'norm' (the standard) with regional variations being measured and assessed accordingly. It is a way of speaking which breaches geographical divisions (making regionality less distinct), yet one which reinforces divisions and assessments upon the basis of class.

In his book The Long Revolution, Raymond Williams traces the growth of Standard English and its development from the thirteenth century to the present day, especially in relation to its class specifity. At the time of the Norman Conquest 2 languages, apart from Latin, prevailed: French which was the language of the rulers and powerful, and English, the language of the lower orders. Gradually each tongue influenced the other and a common form of speech emerged eventually stabilising in the eighteenth century. However, such a 'common' language, although theoretically available to all, was still limited to the powerful classes, as the greater part of learning was restricted to a minority.

> Though wider education can resolve this, extending the area of the truly common language, it is probably still important, in English, that so much of the language of learning should have this special class stamp. (47)

Even today it is important to note the emphasis on Standard English teaching in schools (especially in relation to pronunciation), whatever variations of accent and dialect the pupils may possess - a situation which constructs a form of bilinguality from an early age. Both teachers and pupils recognise a language of the classroom, and a language of the playground (the home/the street). Each language has its own 'time and place'. The dialect can be spoken anywhere, but to 'get on' (in academic and professional terms) the individual must dissociate her/himself from the environment and use the accepted (superior) form of

address taught in the classroom.

The development of major institutions (government, education, law, religion, literature and the media) paralleled the emergence of a common language for those who participated in such activities. Yet this did not herald the demise of regional dialects, for indeed many variations continued to flourish. The significant feature was the rise of a 'class dialect': a language hailing from the South (as the home of the major social institutions), but not the language of those born there (Cockney). Instead it formed a language of the centralised institutions (of bureaucracy, education, officialdom, and 'the BBC'). It was a language, as Williams suggests, which served as a means for newly powerful and self possessed groups to acquire social standing via the elevation of a state of 'correctness'. As dialect marked geographical distinctions, so it also marked distinctions of a class character.

> ...its naming as 'standard' with the implication no longer of a common but model language represents the full coming to consciousness of a new concept of class speech now no longer merely the functional convenience of a metropolitan class, but the means and emphasis of social distinction. (48)

Though it is rarely stated that one way of speaking is 'better' than another, few people can remain unaffected by the (informal) prejudices that exist against talking 'common'. While some forms (upper class and standard) are acceptable, other dialects and accents are treated as inferior, with amusement, or with scorn, a Northern inflection in particular being strongly associated with 'earthiness' and the working class.

> The North is all too often taken to provide a permanent working class so that a Northern accent shows humble origins, whether it be heard in the mouth of a wool millionaire or a dales farmer. (49)

New internal barriers, within the Northern communities themselves, may be marked by means of accent - if children, when grown are to work in a family firm in close contact with local labour a standardised form of pronunciation may be more of a hindrance than a help, and alternatively even if the person has moved from the area for the purpose of education they do not necessarily become one of 'them' (snob, Southerner etc.) if the local dialect is retained.

With reference to radio programmes, T.H. Pear noted the tendency to use characters with Northern accents for more dialect and 'low life' parts, with the result that

> ...every night millions of non-experts listen to radio actors whose way of speech is intended to suggest a particular social class...a generation has grown up which not only accepts but copies prototypes and stereotypes suggested by the BBC and the colleges of dramatic art. (50)

Although dated, his remarks can be directed to the linguistic imagery used in the television soap operas, as a comparable source of audience attraction. In Coronation Street, overwhelmingly, different accents are used to denote moral positions displaying a great deal of variety for a serial so obviously based on the regional. Ken Barlow's standard English/college education is used to establish him a a moral arbiter, impartial, liberal, (and, by implication, with an opinion to be valued). Albert Tatlock's broader tones provide a more 'folk wisdom' view of the world, while Annie Walker's carefully refined tones signal 'apartness' (not one of the crowd).

> Hilda...is usually shown to be feckless, partly by the broadness of her accept (broadspeaking being less socially acceptable for women than for men); but when sympathy, even dignity is to be given to her, this is often signalled by granting her an astute (even comic) readiness with words. (51)

In continuing his discussion of the characteristics of social speech differences, T.H. Pear indicates the enormous variety of terms employed to signal feelings and emotions - yet, whichever is used carries indicators of region, class, motive and intention.

> Each social class uses special words to express approval, disapproval, endearment, intimacy, enthusiasm, disinterest and boredom; each ignores, ridicules or may amusedly borrow from other layers. (52)

Euphemisms, especially those used by Northern women in relation to parts of the body, natural functions or childbirth (cf. caricatures of such women by Les Dawson), where the phrase is mimed instead of spoken,

are regionally specific, while other phrases display the speaker's class origins immediately (serviettes v napkins, Men and Women v Ladies and Gentlemen, 'Sorry mate' v 'I'm terribly sorry'). Cliches are also associated with different groups and periods in time, however it is debatable how many were widely used prior to their appearance in television serials (such as Hilda's famous "muriel" on the wall), or how far they have become (un)consciously absorbed into common usage through imitation of the television characters and their lifestyle - now it is almost fashionable to mispronounce "mural", as everyone who watches Coronation Street knows what you mean. (A further linguistic community is forged comprising of the fictional community and the audience members). Sexual divisions in language are also signalled in the different modes of speaking used at particular times (such as the more earthy 'pit' or 'shop floor' languages of the men, the dirty jokes and ribald humour) while women appear capable of discussing almost any subject, however personal, with little provocation and in great detail.

Some of the more popular radio programmes on Radio Cumbria (BBC) are those using presenters who have pronounced local accents. One programme, largely appealing to elderly listeners, was moved to the afternoon, but is returning to morning transmission after numerous complaints from senior citizens that they went shopping in the afternoon and hence 'missed out'. Similarly the Sunday Post (which covers Scotland and the Border regions), uses a chatty, communal approach dealing more with the exploits of its readers than the weeks' events, serving to

> ...encourage at once both the pally feeling that we are all little men together, but that 'we do see life'... (53).

In all the serials and programmes studied the regional dialects are from Lancashire, Yorkshire and Northumbria the 'Cumbrian crack' remaining one of the country's most neglected dialects.

> "Ah knaw ivverybody dizna layk it they say it's nee way o' talkan', nut BBC keynd or owt o' that. But, if it dizna impress thee, there's summat wrang." (54)

However, the social value of accent and dialect to bind a community should not be underestimated. Old tags and sayings die hard. Although to argue that dialects (like old historic buildings) should be preserved is to make the assumption that people are willing to 'stay put'

geographically and socially, fidelity to the local linguistic traditions and dialect provide a source of comfort, a trustworthy point of reference.

5. HUMOUR AND COMEDY

YOU'VE GOT TO LAUGH....HAVEN'T YOU...?

One of the most striking features in representations of Northern characters is their value as material for comedy. Above everything else, Northerners, it would seem, are funny. They appear in many guises, male and female, thin and fat, old and young, yet bound by some invisible quality which signals them as figures of fun. What this section will try to demonstrate is the different ways certain characters and artifacts are treated and the possible effects such images have on audiences' conceptions and beliefs about people 'up North'.

The short series Comic Roots (shown on BBC1 in the early evening) gave an interesting insight into the background and people that had produced famous comedians. In two of the programmes, narrated by the personalities themselves, Les Dawson and Paul Shane (Hi-Di-Hi), the celebrity provided a potted biography and guided tour of his 'cultural heritage'. As in many other cultural forms, convention, stereotype and caricature predominate, with the opening music of Paul Shane's return to Rotherham being the excerpt from Dvorak's New World Symphony, more commonly associated with small brown loaves. Indeed Shane's first words are "I suppose you thought this was another Hovis advert...". Through the music-bread-North associations the audience is left in no doubt as to the whereabouts of Rotherham. The journey continues through many predictable locations (indicators of Northernness) to Shane's old school, his desk, and mealtimes, though he pauses to comment on the changes which have occurred, somewhat flippantly in the sex-role swap of boys in cookery and girls doing woodwork, yet more seriously when relating the fact that even schooldays can't be enjoyed now due to the prospect of unemployment and the lack of finance. From the schoolyard he (re)graduates to the pub, meeting veteran comedian Sandy Powell, and the singing M.P., while noticeably in the background (providing evidence of a 'real life' existence) sits a Bet Lynch-type character complete with 'glad rags' and bee-hive hair-do. A visit to the 'Dogs' ensues, featured as a family event (his wife likes a bet too) and hence (jokes) he doesn't get stick for going. The trip to Sherwood colliery with his mining mates is accompanied by another powerful signifier, the 'Heigh Ho' song from Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs -

allowing for a subtle comparison between the dwarfs and the bulky Shane. His first house is displayed, but its former glory and 'working classness' has been lost through modernisation, before he finishes his 'turn' (literally) by film of his performance at a 'free 'n easy' night at the Miners Welfare Club. His act is performed as if for the first time - complete with blundering, amateurish incompetence and an exaggerated flat cap.

This caricature of the flat hat was previously adopted by The Goodies in thier 'Bcky Thump' sequence, where their caps (like Pinocchio's nose) grew larger and larger as the story progressed...while they were simultaneously engaged in belting each other with monstrous black puddings. The stereotypes of the Northern lad as 'all flat 'at and black pudding' is stock comedy, but the use of caricature provides an additional source of humour - the character is even more ridiculous, even larger than life - twice as funny. Convention plays upon convention; the result being to 'get a laugh'. This particular use of caricature forms the basis of most of The Goodies brand of comedy - the audience expects giant kittens to terrorise London and outsize geese to drop golden eggs to the tune of the Dambusters. The larger their props and the more the action is speeded up, the greater the effect.

In the recently repeated series of Wood and Walters one sketch was a song 'Sing Something Northern', entirely comprised of cliches and Northern imagery (flat 'at, clogs etc.) - a cleverly constructed spoof, wittily enacted. Similarly the North is caricatured in the send-up of the soap opera genre 'Crossdale Street', which appeared as a made-up series in the Saturday morning children's show, Tiswas - its very title signifying the ridiculously improbable conglomeration of well-known programmes. More recently, the use of Bob Carolgees, a familiar Tiswas presenter, for the Hellmans advertisement, continues associations of a comic personality - humorous advertisement - appealing product. The transformation of the stereotype (Northern lad/traditional Northern fare) into caricature (the overgrown Northern lad/huge chunks of bread and cheese) functions as comic precisely by the recognition of caricature for what it is - an over the top form of representation. (Perhaps the fact that Carolgees was also associated with the adult slapstick show O.T.T. was not entirely coincidental).(55)

Although more a part of the night club circuit, the comedy troupe The Grumbleweeds occasionally make a television appearance, and at one

time hosted their own T.V. show. Once more they attempt to 'play for laughs' through the sketch featuring a caricatured low-life, broad accented Northerner. The figure is clad in regulation knitted 'pullie', baggy shorts, round gold rimmed glasses and balaclava. The whole appearance is dated: a stylised nostalgia as the focus of fun. 'T' old days' is the sole topic of his monologue - the worse the conditions, the better the memories. The narrative becomes more outrageous and incredible, akin to the renowned patter of the Four Yorkshiremen in the Monty Python sketch ("...Paper bag...You were lucky!...There were ten of us in a hole in t' ground..."), where the four characters sit in sumptuous surroundings with brandy glasses, attempting to outdo each other with tales of how tough they had it in their childhood. Nostalgia becomes exaggerated for comic effect, and exaggeration almost obligatory in such Northern yarns about the 'good old bad old days'. Even when a Northern childhood is alluded to in conversation, the speaker will frequently encounter a knowing smile or nod and some comment which may have come from, or have been influenced by, the Monty Python script.

So far the portrayals have all been of, and by, males, yet even more fruitful is the plethora of representations of Northern women - predominantly made by men, particularly on television and in the comic strip.

> ...the essence of cartooning lies in caricature, in exaggeration of characteristics in order to enable quick and easy recognition...'woman' becomes very tightly defined by her most easily recognised functions. (56)

The cartoon, as a static image, has to make its statements via a single action: all we need to know must be encapsulated in each frame leaving little space for subtlety (which may lead to misinterpretation or incomprehension). Moreover, to ensure successful communication the cartoon figures must be drawn in relation to the readers' expected common experiences. Consequently the need to avoid the 'in' joke (of the type commonly seen in Posy cartoons), in such papers as the Sun, the Daily Star and the Daily Mirror, where readership is from a wide section of the community, is fundamentally important. What such papers do display is a range of popular images (those which are already recognisable from past experience and hence do not challenge common sense assumptions of masculinity and femininity); an arena for the portrayal of women in their most stereotypical and saddest form.

> Sometimes it seems that womens' ability to absorb insult and injury is unlimited, accepting and maybe even believing in those grotesque images of themselves. (57)

Many comedians who top the bill, such as Les Dawson and the Two Ronnies depend a great deal on jokes about women, often dressing up as monstrous apronned no-nonsence matrons, the sort no one would like to have as their mother-in-law, yet a type which many do believe exist.

> The theme, familiar enough to everyone is that mothers-in-law, and by implication all woman past child bearing age, are outrageous freaks. An older woman is redundant, pathetic, horrible and dangerous. (58)

This frequent association of the mother-in-law/middle aged woman/ Northern housewives is possibly, as Polly Toynbee argues, due to her position of authority in the household. She stands up for the rest of the family, and any daughter in particular, so undermining the husbands' 'rights', and is dealt with by being turned into a traditional 'hate figure' or rather a 'figure of fun' (a 'natural' enemy). By being past child bearing she has, in some respects outlived her 'usefulness', and has become more assertive, independent, less manageable and (in view of the many asides referring to her size or ugliness) less physically attractive. Certainly Nora Battye (Last of the Summer Wine) is no pocket Venus, sporting the statutory apron, tweed skirt, rollers, and her own particular trademark, the wrinkled stockings. Although she may kindle a flame in Compo's heart, to many she is the epitome of the 'domestic dragon', warding off unwelcome advances with a harsh word, or more drastically, the end of a broom. Her physical unattractiveness is the essence of her comic persona (Compo's main temptation being those same wrinkled stocking-clad legs), but it has also elevated her popularity to the position of a 'pin-up' for a group of servicemen! Les Dawson's women are the archetypal gossips, large, unattractive, refraining from the mention of 'taboo' subjects such as references to parts of the body or pregnancy (words often being mouthed rather than spoken - though he demonstrated one possible origin of this peculiar practice by meeting the women who, working in the noise of the factories, used miming words to communicate to each other effectively, in Comic Roots)

Nostalgia again becomes reworked as humour in the strong Northern construction of the family holiday at the seaside - a lighthearted folksy tale of the 'chara' trips to Blackpool and Scarborough, complete only with the knitted bathing suits (which automatically sagged on contact with the water), the Kiss-Me Quick hats, deck chairs which collapse, and donkey rides. Les Dawson finishes his search for Comic Roots by riding off into the sunset on a seaside donkey. However the holiday by the sea is not exclusively the property of the North, as the advert for Courage Best Bitter (complete with Chas and Dave accompaniment), shows the delights of Margate in a similar and nostalgic way. Perhaps the spirit of the North (and the 'working classes') at play is best revealed on the seaside post-card.

> ...the fifty year old formality of seaside postcards; most of the year 'decent' working class people would hardly approve of them, but on holiday they are likely to 'let up a bit' and send a few to friends - cards showing fat mothers-in-law and fat policemen, weedy little men with huge bottomed wives, ubiquitous bottles of beer and chamber pots, with their endless repetition of beer-bottom-lavatory humour, their extraordinary changelessness. (59)

However, the need to examine why people laugh, and what is the comedy value of such representations, is important. In his book Colin Wellands' Anthology of Northern Humour, Welland addresses the questions of why humour is so integral and indispensable to everyday life, and how such a form of humour seems coarse (to "outsiders" ears) yet at the same time remains strangely irresistible and fascinating. In his quest Welland enlists an array of Northern personalities from the stage, screen, sporting and political arenas. In the field of comedy he indicates the great number of successful performers, past and present, who have hailed from the North - Jimmy James, Sandy Powell, Les Dawson, Jimmy Tarbuck, Victoria Wood, and Ken Dodd, for example. However, it is harder to draw up a corresponding list of performers from the Midlands, the South, or even, Scotland or Wales. This is not to deny that talent is not abundantly evident elsewhere, but those who quickly come to mind, such as Max Boyce, Jasper Carrott, and Billy Connolly, are more a product of their own individual brand of humour than typifying the area as a whole. For example the acts of Billy Connolly and Stanley Baxter differ as much as the men themselves. Connolly is a Scot, his humour is Connolly's

- Baxter is a Scot, his is Baxters. They appear to incorporate their Scottish heritage into their act, rather than it dictating its structure, themes, contents and confines.

In an attempt to identify exactly what elements constitute Northern humour as a brand on its own, and indeed its origins, it is helpful to return to some of the observations and the cries advanced in Welland's book. The recurring theme used to provide an explanation for the precise character of Northern humour is encapsulated in the frequent references to the industrial past (and, again compare Orwell). As Les Dawson notes:

> A lot of the jokes I grew up with were born of desparation - laugh rather than cry. All the traditional heavy industries of the North were sensitive to economic difficulties, whereas the South, where they had a much greater diversification of light industry, there wasn't the same unemployment...so their humour tended - and still does tend - to be on the surface. (60)

Hardship and deprivation, it would seem, brings out 'the best' in people: the ready quip, wise-crack or seemingly dead-pan way of delivering just the right comment for the moment were a result of, and vital within, the struggle for survival. While conditions are different now such 'bad old days' are still remembered and revered with a romantic nostalgia. It is this continuous and constant appeal to the past that demonstrates the tireless nature of the humour. No matter how old and worn a joke may be, new generations are emerging who haven't yet heard it. Hence a bridge is made between generations by means of the shared joke.

Welland argues that the Northern accent lends itself to comedy via its ability to make words sound funny.

> The Northern language is wonderful material to use in comedy. A Southern comedian who normally speaks in an ordinary Southern voice will adopt a special voice to be funny, perhaps a broad Cockney or a Cyril Fletcher voice. Even Stanley Holloway adopted a Northern voice for his monologues. (61)

It can be argued that a corresponding Southern humour can be found in Cockney banter, with its rhyming slang and chirpy resiliance, or in the heart of the Black Country, but the area which shares many of the formative factors

(hardship, high unemployment, and small close knit communities) is Wales. But while they have much in common there is no strong tradition of Welsh humour - no essence of "Welshness" as opposed to jokes <u>about</u> Wales. As Paul Daniels says

> 'They don't talk right'...'You can't crack gags with a sing-song voice. Wax lyrical yes, but be wise-cracking funny, no'. (62)

Perhaps more than anything there exists a warmth in such humour, a cosy matiness with few holds barred, and a general sympathy for the underdog who is generally the butt of his/her own jokes, cynical, world weary and down (if not yet out). Exaggeration is almost obligatory yet there still remains those elements of truth. The essence of most of this down-trodden, self depreciating type of humour is ridicule, the pleasure gained in laughing at someone elses expense.

> The major emotion that is produced in the reader is one of scorn, and to be scornful it is necessary to convince oneself of one's own superiority. (63)

In adopting this argument, class and gender would seem to function to give feelings of superiority - the laughing at others who are in some way 'lacking' or imperfect to give outward expression to an inner feeling of contentment and satisfaction. Hence geographical and social locality is another social mechanism for creating/reinforcing divisions between regions, sexes and classes. But perhaps the enjoyment of such representational forms reveal more about the audience members themselves, their ability to laugh at themselves, their idiosyncracies, and shortcomings, without necessarily accepting these as 'true' pictures, or as accurate and faithful studies of those who live 'North of Watford Gap'.

6. <u>THE NORTH AS GENRE</u>

In order to attempt to summarise the ideas and theories contained in this paper, and, hopefully, advance suggestions for further research, I wish to draw on previous work from the area of film studies and criticism, on the subject of genre, and argue for the existence and great potency of a <u>genre of the North</u>.

The concept genre is in itself problematic, not clearly definable, referring to formal distinctions (as in literature - the novel, poetry, etc.) structural distinctions (rules of operation defining comedy or

tragedy) and subject/content distinctions. However in general it is taken to refer to a system of 'family resemblances' - conventions of style, imagery, and thematic concerns which also influence production and reception (audiences' expectations). As T. Ryall argues, genres are

> patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual films and which supervise both their construction by the film-maker and their reading by an audience. (64)

Hence the emphasis is on the rules and norms governing style and content - a guiding force for the artist/film-maker/scriptwriter and for audiences who 'read' it. Such styles and conventions transcend the individual films (programmes/images) forming links and bonds between many seemingly diverse artefacts, until such a genre becomes part of everyday vocabulary, easily recognisable as a marked category such as the Western, Gangster Movie, Melodrama and Detective Thriller. It is this emphasis which goes beyond the simple notion of the media artefact being simply a product of the author's own imagination and talent, seeing it as also subject to economic, social and ideological forces - at the same time an artistic form and industrial product.

Most cinemas, advertisers and television companies require mass audiences for profit (financial return) or prestige (increased percentage of the viewing ratings). Therefore there exists a clear need to develop some formula to guarantee return for capital, a method of standardisation of production. In short the formation and exploitation of a particular genre, a popular format used repeatedly to maximise effect:

> more products were manufactured as like the original as possible...Film-makers strove to achieve a similarity between the 'model' and their product i.e. a relation of 'realism' between the forms of expression (the continuous flow of narrative) as well as the forms of the content (standard themes...) (65)

Here concepts of realism and convention are aligned, but in such a way that the film appears 'realistic' only insofar as it conforms to the conventions previously established in other films.

It has been argued that such practices lead to a standardisation of product, a reliance on 'tried and tested' formulae which, eventually, would appear to stifle creativity and prevent the emergence of new genres.

However it is important to remember that no genre is fixed and static, nor is it uniform. As it has been stated earlier, representations of the North may be fitted into various categories - the working class town, rural life, glimpses of the past or comedy/light entertainment. Each of these sub-genres may differ in tone and mood, but share common iconographic details (objects and character types). Many co-exist on the screen at one time, others take prominence in terms of popularity for a while, then decline, perhaps to re-emerge at a later date. However, before discussing the role and function of genres in more detail it is more helpful, at this stage, to provide a brief summary of the elements which constitute a particular genre: the actuality (historical or contemporary) from which the genre grew, the iconography (particular imagery associated with that genre), and the thematic constructions which may be developed.

Colin McArthur sees the historical/social reality as providing the subject matter for the genre in the first instance. For example, the Gangster and Western films were both concerned with particular cultural phases in American History. The elements of a film or programme are inseparable from the historical background (past and contemporary), and the socio-cultural conditions in which the text was made - the social structure, prevailing ideologies (dominant and oppositional), events, objects, the significance of traditions and rituals, and influential figures. Therefore in attempting to understand the North as genre it is important to provide such a historical explanation.

To return to the earlier section of 'Street Life' and 'Rural Life' which formed the two major modes of representation, it is the historical background of working class struggle and the legacy of industrialisation which provides the key to the 'series' success, influence and popularity. Coronation Street provides the representation of a permanent urban working class. It is founded upon peoples' knowledge of past events, or, in the case of younger viewers, conceptions and beliefs about what such times were like (drawn from similar representations). From a period of industrial greatness and prosperity the North withstood the break up of its communities, the loss of major industries, the fragmentation of extended family relationships, and the decline of its particular cultural practices, traditions, customs and behaviour. Simultaneously the mass media expanded rapidly, cities grew and townships extended as workers migrated into areas of employment. In the '60's the North gained a high degree of respectability through such social-realist treatments

of 'Saturday Night, Sunday Morning' and Room at the Top, which fore-fronted the Northern accent and provided a 'break' for a new kind of actor such as Albert Finney.

Whole new patterns of living were established which failed to compensate for lost lifestyles. In Salford, the model for Coronation Street, the close affinity with the environment was shattered with the demolition of rows of terraced back-to-back houses, and erection of high rise dwellings. The failure of such a housing policy is evident. Such communal reorganisation is directly responsible for the 'idealisation' of the North through the need to reconstruct cultural identity. This reconstruction may appear in the following (though not mutually exclusive) forms:-

i) Direct
- dealing with historical elements (actuality)
- set in the past (fictional)

eg. When the Boat Comes In, All Creatures Great and Small

ii) Indirect
- or contemporary
- set in the present yet not exactly 'true to life'
- a mirror of the past (popular memory of 'good old days'))
- life as it is lived (for some)) eg. Coronation Street
- life as it could/should be lived)) eg. Emmerdale Farm

iii) Additional
- Can be Direct or Indirect PLUS i.e. the use of comedy for effect
- tongue-in-cheek, cliches, exaggerated caricatures made from stereotypes
- more blatant eg. Brass

Whichever form or forms the representation takes certain images constantly recur, becoming 'fixed' indices of Northernness. The flat cap, braces, apron, rollers, black pudding and clogs are merely a few items from a very long list symbolising working classness/Northernness, or Masculinity/Northernness. Particular characteristics reappear, recognisable 'types' exist within and between programmes, contributing to the audiences' expectation and (preferred) reading.

The series Brass appeared on television after the completion of my dissertation which would explain its omission from the general discussion of media representations of the North. However it is worth including a few remarks and observations at this point. Rather than being a

comedy series set in the North and in the past, it occupies a rather unique position in that although it employs all the imagery, stereotypical characters, themes and concerns which would identify it as part of the Northern genre, it is in fact a representation of a representation of the North. Caricature rather than stereotype prevails in this reconstruction - a humorous play on already recognisable structural forms and images, tongue-in-cheek, and (arguably) over the top. What the scriptwriters have presented is the archetypal 'Trouble at t' pit' tale, a pun creating the name of the main male protagonist (Bradley Hardacre), more buxom women, more naive working class lads, and, significantly by references to other genres (the teddy bear-carrying boss's son mocking Sebastian Flyte in Brideshead Revisited.)

Many other genres, so firmly established in common vocabulary, have afforded this kind of "in" joke - Love at First Bite for the Dracula genre, Blazing Saddles for the Western. The Northern genre, I would argue, has reached a stage where this treatment becomes possible - a celebration of the genre and light hearted relief for its followers. After such a representation (of a representation) the audiences' expectations when viewing again will be altered. Now when viewing a Western one almost expects the cowboys to ride past the orchestra playing in the middle of the desert (as in Blazing Saddles). Similarly with the North, any cliche is made all too apparent. It is possible, too, that with this parody a moment of decline is signalled - or that new departures become imperative. Of this the obvious example, too late for this paper, would be Brookside.

Although I have attempted to demonstrate the existence of the Northern Genre as an entity in itself, it is by no means as distinct and clear-cut as may be supposed. Nor has it suddenly emerged in the past two decades. Formally and ideologically it incorporates and displays many of the properties which have hitherto been associated with another genre; that of Melodrama. What happens to the central characters in the series/film has effects on all the other family members, supporters, opponents. This can be literally, within the confines of the single household, or the 'extended' family - the community as a whole. The endings of the various episodes (even if many stories overlap) are generally happy, while music is a key element in the articulation of meaning (see earlier references to signature tunes) and hence for emotional release. With the family remaining central, struggles are struggles within the domestic confines, displacing any notion of

class opposition and struggle. Viewed as 'popular culture' melodrama has tended to be marginalised (as opposed to 'high culture') labelled as "women's pictures", often ridiculed and rarely taken seriously. Yet the popularity of both Coronation Street, Emmerdale Farm and Last of the Summer Wine is tremendous, spanning generations and cultures as well as both sexes.(66)

With the two themes of working classness (urban and rural) appearing to form the major pole through which the North is mobilised, represented and understood, any analysis would require, from its outset, some knowledge and employment of the concept of class structure and the cultural practices which define one group in opposition to another. Class, in this respect can be demonstrated as a form of solidarity (the characteristics, practices and beliefs which unite people as a community, which express the common identities of people in the North and elsewhere) and social distance (the factors which distinguish Northern people and lifestyles from others). One of the more powerful mechanisms of the expression of solidarity is through the transmission of common sense notions of life and how it should be lived, as a matter of patterns of thought and social relationships rather than some intangible badge the wearers display. It is more:

> ...a relationship between groups which...despite their diversities and precise ranking, along with indices of status, income, occupation, taste and style of life have, at their heart certain common assumptions about life. (67)

Within the confines of the soap opera and comedy genres, anything which cannot be seen to be caused by, or related to the people present is omitted and unquestioned. Major social and political explanations, opinions and comments are left untouched, with the major source of unrest and anxiety being viewed as stemming from within the characters or families themselves (attributed to their, innate, psychological make-up, good/bad luck, or simply 'the way of the world' philosophy). Hence Coronation Street:

> ...by its success made more socially (and accademically) respectable the widespread myth that somewhere out there, remote from the metropolis and yet thereby nearer to the heart of England, is a society where blunt common sense and unsentimental affection raises people above the concerns of industrialisation, or unions, or politics, or consumerism. (68)

Such fictional communities offered to the viewer, are total cultural enclaves, an industrial working class setting for one (Coronation Street), and a rural (Emmerdale Farm) or middle class one for another (Crossroads), with little sense of comparison or contrast, let alone conflict, between them. Hence class is seen, as in Hoggart's accounts, as very much a matter of custom/practice/beliefs rather than of power, ideology or the mode of production.

It has been argued that the class that controls the means of production will also control the means of ideological production, using such resources to construct and maintain its own dominance, the only ideas being disseminated will be those conforming to its own class interest. Yet, as has been noted, the ideas and thematic concerns contained in the representations of the North mentioned, are highly complex and often contradictory - based on different relationships its holders bear to each other, and to their socially defined position within the class structure/social heirachy. Rather than being a simple reflection of class interest such representations allow for the transmission, formulation and containment of many diverse and varied ideas. By this token the representations of Northern women can be interpreted on many levels - forming part of a polysemic discourse of certain 'preferred readings' (of the particular character/women in general) but also allowing for other negotiated or oppositional/radical readings (to use S. Hall's categorisations - cf The Nationwide Audience, D. Morley). The notion that because cultural production is the product of capitalist commodity production, the ideology contained will function to secure the existence of the dominant, and reproduce existing relations (characteristic of The Frankfurt School of thought) does not adequately account for the uses to which the consumer/audience member directs his/her selection of programme etc. Though it is by no means possible to give a detailed analysis of audience reactions and responses to many of the aforementioned media artefacts, it is clear that in respect to their great popularity, soap operas, series and advertisements dealing with the North give a great deal of pleasure.

In their book Reading Television, J. Fiske and J. Hartley draw on the research done into the area of the audiences uses of the media and the gratifications obtained from such usage. The four main categories, as advocated by D. McQuail concern relationships, between medium/product/audience for the purpose of:

> Diversion - the escape from routine (the problems and concerns of the world) into a situation of fantasy and fiction: a form of emotional release.

Personal Relationships - the identification with characters of soap operas for companionship, for a point of discussion with others, use as a substitute family (especially for the elderly and lonely).

Personal Identity - to use as a point of reference for current trends/beliefs, the exploration of reality (to 'find out what is going on'), or to reinforce already formulated personal values (to know if people still think as you do)

Surveillance - to maintain an overall view of the environment.

This account is important in that it breaks from the previous, limited, notion of the use value of popular television (press, radio) as merely for escapism, and hence allows for interpretations to be varied and multi-range of possible gratifications. Although the portrayals of women are to a great extent within pre-existing stereotypes, a lot of their appeal may be gleaned from the unusual number of strong independent and self-assured middle aged women (who significantly retain a greater sexual attraction than the younger women.

Despite the need to retain a concept and understanding of class and culture

> The mass medium is paradoxically classless - in the sense that most of its content derives from the experience of, and is directed towards, members of what we can see now is the class to which the vast majority of us belong; the subordinate class in itself. (69)

Fiske and Hartley adopt Marx's definition of class in itself and class for itself. Class in itself refers to the objective existence of classes produced by the social structure, derived from the material, social and economic 'conditions of existence'. Differences are based on inequality (of power, wealth, security, opportunity, resources, ownership and control of the means of production).

> Class in itself, derived from inequalities based on economic 'conditions of existence' exists irrespective of how people themselves (whether they be victims or beneficiaries of inequality) see and respond to their class condition. (70)

Alternatively class for itself refers to responses which may cut across classes for themselves, and become voiced in pursuit of common interests, in combined forms (such as the Labour movement or trades unions)

> the (sometimes only potential) awareness among people of a common identity springing from their common experience. (71)

This appeal to 'us' as members of the same class for itself cutting across barriers of race, gender and geography, can possibly be seen as the key point of identification and enjoyment for the audience watching Coronation Street and Emmerdale Farm: what they see represented are "people like us, yet not like us".

The use of the North to signify a golden age, a nostalgia for disappearing communities, lifestyles and values is perhaps its most potent form constructing a continual rearviewing of society, and its reassessment in terms of what we have lost/are in danger of losing. This is not to argue that many of the 'traditional' values and customs are not very much an integral part of Northern community life (in town or country), but that there is a slim dividing line between actual observation and experience and the tendency to 'look back with a fond smile'.

Each section in this study requires more detailed and comprehensive analysis. The question of audiences' responses to such programmes and representations, and the relation such responses bear to the conceptions they hold about the North is by no means an easy problem to approach - necessitating the collection of information from a very broad and diverse sample of inhabitants of the more Southern counties - a formidable task in itself. Similar studies of representations of The Midlands or The South would be exceptionally useful.

Finally, the attempt to summarise the findings of this report into some form of inventory of the different codes of representation, with prescriptions for how they could/might be deconstructed and reformulated has been rejected, at this point in time. This is not to argue that many of the representational forms are not stereotypical and restrictive nor is it to condemn them for refusing to portray characters in radical and different ways. However, the largest omission and criticism to be made from my own point of view is the overwhelming concentration on the image of Lancashire, Yorkshire and Northumbria to the almost total exclusion of Cumbria. The major form through which an image or 'feel' of Cumbria can be obtained is via the ideal of the countryside (The Lake

District) and the language of romantic poetry and tourism. The Lake District, perhaps more than the Yorkshire Dales would take pride of place as the ultimate pastoral scene, for even though the area displays characteristics of the organic working class townships and the village communities, the only relationship it would seem to bear to the media is touristic.

> each great urban civilisation creates its own pastoral myth, an extra-social Eden, chaste and pure...(72)

Cumbria, it would appear, is that Eden.

The geographical distribution of resources in terms of broadcasting is still largely concentrated in the South, the only major export of Border Television being the quiz show Mr. and Mrs. (Granada and Yorkshire television, by contrast are two of the more wealthy and largest of the area networks, Granada especially having interests in many branches of the leisure industry). Certainly material exists which would serve as ideal material for serialisation or on which to base a play or drama series. The 'Herries Chronicle' by Hugh Walpole, chartering the fortunes of a Cumbrian family from the seventeenth century would be akin to a Northern 'Poldark', whilst the numerous novels of Melvyn Bragg continue to remain in print rather than on screen. Perhaps with the expansion of resources facilities and research, more adequate representations of life in Cumbria will be made possible, and the particular forms of 'cultural imperialism' which are manifested in the media's North/South divide will be changed, altered and eventually removed, and a subsequent reformulation of opinion and belief about this little publicised part of the country.

> Rumours circulate that t'lektric, fish fingers, and pedal bins have reached some parts of Cumbria, so there is hope that it may soon have an even more satisfactory T.V. system. (73)

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