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# CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

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## Stencilled Occasional Paper

48.

TELEVISION COVERAGE OF SPORT

by

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Media Series: SP No. 48

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September 1976.

## Introduction : The Depth of Field

"Experience, though noon auctoritee  
were in this world, is right ynogh  
for me". Wife of Bath's prologue.

Throughout this paper my intention is to investigate the various ways in which the media, particularly the visual side of television, present sport. Coverage of sport has been chosen for two main reasons - notwithstanding my own interest in the subject. In the first place, I have chosen it because it is an area normally considered to be apolitical and impartial; "neutral" and "non-partisan" are words often used in this context. I hope to show that this consideration is a fallacy, and that television coverage of sport is a highly constructed viewpoint, which involves not just a preferred reading of the game, but the construction of definitions which tell us how and what to think about the world we live in; what to expect and what to look for. In short, it favours a particular kind of society located in the construction of images which mobilise and enlist ideas about how life in that society should be lived and organized. The society is the class society of the modern Welfare State which cherishes and champions such values as competition, individual effort and reward, and exceptionality (which does not challenge the status quo) enshrined in notions of the 'quirky', or superlatively in "the biggest", "the longest", "the fastest" and "the greatest"; and recycles the myth of equality (either of opportunity, or in the distribution of screen-time on television) and claims to know the world by measuring and quantifying it. Secondly, as sport occupies a major position in popular consciousness and culture, I was interested in seeing how television dressed it and served it up. Hence my principal concern lies with the transformation of the raw event into a commodity for consumption through the mediation of television. Whilst I am concerned with the similarities and differences between sport and its coverage, the thrust of this paper has been to concentrate on the coverage end of the chain, thus there will certainly be lacunae, I suspect, in my handling of sport as such. I hope also to show that the handling of sport in a certain way has implications beyond the sport itself in that it might incur more than just a selective view of the game, and often does involve whole world views of a particular society in the terms that it sees itself, albeit ideological terms, favouring a certain system of social relations which are conducive to one type of economic organisation as opposed to another. Such world views may be transmitted fairly transparently in the form of what is taken for granted (quite often signalled by phrases such as "Of course" and "Most people"); or they may be constructed by the media (where phrases like "of course" define something new, rather than reignite an 'old' knowledge though <sup>they</sup> masquerade as such).

Chapter 1 deals with some of the terminology and preoccupations which have informed my work and its structure. It also attempts, briefly, to outline certain key guiding theoretical concepts underpinning this paper. The second chapter focuses down to a micro level and tries to concentrate on the visual handling of the Olympic games by television, although at times the verbal seems so important that it cannot be omitted. Likewise, at some point I refer to newspaper coverage on the grounds that it served to illustrate values, priorities and ways of setting up the topic common to both television and newspapers. However, I may have been too vague in asserting whether it was the media generally, or television specifically, that I was talking about. I had originally envisaged a chapter on cricket and football. The limitation of space was the chief constriction here, although I did try to cast a line into these fields where a comparison

was felt to be germane and illuminating. All in all, the dissertation is an outline and exposition, by exploration, of a selection from a mountain of material, mostly examples, amassed over the last six months in the course of closely observing the topic described here. It may be considered as a trial run for a subsequent piece of work which is planned to deal with the relationship between ideology and technology and the kinds of determination, interdeterminations and overdeterminations which are operative in any given instance of applying technology - in the form of a skill of the 'professional' - as a technique in making meaning through a complex mediating process.

September 1976.

## Chapter One

### A Zoom Movement

The transformation of a given raw material into a specific product by a particular form of labour is what I understand to be a practice, in the sense that Althusser uses it. (1) Practices relate to levels where a labour of transformation takes place; economic, political, ideological, theoretical. The levels, or instances are relatively autonomous from the social formation as a whole, in that they are not only determined by it, and in consequence, in the last instance by the economic level, but may also determine it. Each level, then, generates its own kind of determination, as well as echoing the determinations of the whole, in a way that may spill over and effect other levels, the power to do so is known as its specific effectivity which may contribute to the accumulation of causes and their exacerbation, in the whole social formation, in a conjuncture which is said to be overdetermined. (2) A level or instance is differentiated from another in that it cannot be reduced to the terms of another without distortion, misrepresentation, and force-fitting. Both sport and television occupy different spaces in the social formation the terms of sport are not those of television and when those terms are transferred to television then they undergo a transformation. That is what I understand by the practice which constitutes television coverage of sport. The product is sport-on-television.

To understand this practice in its specificity I have brought to bear a certain reading of the term 'code', from the area of semiology, which is not unproblematic. By 'code' or 'codes', basically I mean two things. A code is a system of signs and symbols for transmitting messages. A message may carry information, ideas, impressions, values, and may do so denotatively, on a literal level, and connotatively. (see Barthes: Mythologies; Hall: Social determinations of the Newsphoto) A code is social in that it is shared by a group of people who are familiar with it to the extent that they use it for making messages and understanding them (this too is by no means unproblematic, see Hall: Encoding and Decoding). Codes transcribe the world from one level to another - the world of football as played to the level of a televisual discourse where football is signified. Codes are ways of signifying; a sign has meaning in terms of a code which encapsulates it and maps out the parameters within which meaning is to be found. Codes are also the means by which meanings are produced. In one sense, they are terms of reference for a coherent discourse; in another sense, they are the actual processes which make that discourse, are specific to it, and without which the discourse as such could not exist. This is the second way in which I use the word "code". A code is a specific process of inscribing or inflecting meaning peculiar to the medium in which the message is transmitted. Here, lighting, editing, camera movement and angles, the film stock (or sensitivity of the camera tube to electrons), screen format and lenses (see Commoli; also Screen No. 1, vol. 13, no. 1/2, vol. 14). In both senses of the term, a code may be represented metaphorically as the application of a screen or a combination of filters held up to the world which let through some things and bar others. Even what is allowed through is reflected or changed in some way, by the filtration.

A dimension of the television message which has not been at the centre of my attention is that which permits 'dots' to appear on the t.v. screen and be read as 'pictures'. That aspect of production has been omitted in preference to an analysis which is conducted towards investigating the

optical properties of the lens. My chief concern has been with what appears on the screen as pictures after the first operation of decoding the dots as pictures has taken place. Hence the concern with framing, angles, what the lens does and the implications attached to that. In method, it is largely interpretative, retracing the steps back to the camera stage.

Lenses have been isolated as significant because a study of their properties and potential offers an opportunity of demythologising the notion that the photographic process of light passing through a lens is bound by rules of science and so the view it affords must be objective and so like having a window onto the world; and, by establishing what kind of range of uses is available, given a certain stage of technology and know-how, what determinations there are on the preferred choices of codes which constitute the repertoire.

Different lenses at varying prices and from different manufacturers, and of various focal lengths (the distance from the optical centre of the lens to the image plane when focussed at infinity) produce different effects. While they are all subject to the laws of how light travels through air and glass, the paths, luminosity and colour composition vary from lens to lens and can be manipulated by both design (in the components, elements and coating) and application.

A word about the cameras and lenses used on Outside Broadcast. Standard O.B. cameras have a lens with a 16:1 zoom ratio - although cameras with a 40:1 zoom ratio are now available - which means from the most wide-angle setting (the widest angle of acceptance, that is) to the most telephoto (the narrowest angle of acceptance) the image size of an object in focus increases sixteen times. The zoom movement effects a change in the focal length of the lens. On a 35mm. camera a lens with a focal length of 50 mm. will roughly render the same image size as the eye (through perspective, and different points of focus near the camera, proportion is distorted and there is a slight amount of magnification, as focussing involves adjustment to the make-up of the lens). A telephoto lens is one which has a greater focal length than 50mm. on a 35 mm. camera. Wide-angle is less than 50 mm., on a 35 mm. camera. Standard t.v. studio cameras have a zoom ratio on their lenses of 10:1. It would of course be possible to use a studio camera for O.B. work and to adequately present a view of a sport (with notable exceptions, such as golf). What would be missing would be the close-ups of the players (in cricket and football, a 16:1 ratio is rarely required - i.e. rarely do you see a ball filling the whole screen). The facility to go in tight is thus seen as important in covering the game. Close ups of the faces of players are valorised with the result that part of framing the game involves encoding it with a powerful lens, and encoding it in terms of individualisation which leads to the coverage's manufacturing of 'personalities'. Part of reading the game, or decoding it, on television is inflected through the expressive code of the human face - the human angle. The television spectator comes to view the game through this code, following the expressions of joy, anger, frustration, irritation or disappointment. Such identification is one of the ways that the coverage is partisan - not all the players on the pitch receive equal handling; besides which the viewer has to situate him/herself in relation to these expressive codes. Angles such as these easily come to pass for 'knowledge' of what the game is about. This effects an ideological closure, because there are no alternatives, one is left to accept or reject the image on the screen purporting to be evidence, or negotiate with it. Whatever one does, it is in relation

to what is present on the screen (split image screening would go some way towards mitigating this problem; while not a total solution, it is a point of reference worth bearing in mind as part of a possible repertoire).

When I talk about ideology, it normally involves a notion of taking a part to represent the whole: partial accounts masquerading as full explanations because the camera was there, this is how it happened. Even where there are physical limitations which determine the type of coverage which is gone in for, it is seldom without ideological effect. A telephoto lens might be required because it is impossible to get close enough to the action and produce an image of acceptable size. A property of that lens is that it foreshortens the distance between objects in the depth of field in front of the lens. In television coverage of cricket this is the accepted norm and it is never contrasted with shots of the bowler to batsman action from the side - (possibly because it would reveal too much about the framing of coverage behind the bowler's arm) - thus giving some impression of the immense distortion that the standard coverage produces. It is not just that the two creases look closer together than they really are, but it also affects what the telespectator thinks the ball and the batsman are doing. Similarly, wide-angle lenses have a tendency to exaggerate distance and to curve straight lines as well as to make parallel lines converge. A very wide-angle lens gives a monumental effect, with figures near to the lens looming much larger proportionately in relation to figures further away from the lens. It may be that only a wide-angle lens will render everything in the frame that is desired, especially in a confined space. The result however will make that space look much wider and favour, through sheer proportional image size, that which is nearest the camera. So while there may be technological determinations, there are always ideological spin-offs. A recent example of the kind of thing I mean, was a photo which appeared a few months ago in the Daily Mail accompanying a story about immigrant families who receive hundreds of pounds per week from Social Security and live in expensive hotels (as if in their immigration papers they put down that they wanted to stay at the Waldorf). The photo featured a young male sitting on a hotel bed. The bloke was halfway along the bed, and the picture included most of the bed and most of the room with the result that the room opened out like a massive gorge immediately in front of the camera to taper to a fine point at the window both these points were connected by the length of the bed. It looked quite spacious but in fact was probably only eight by four and a half feet. Here I would question why the photographer wanted to use a wide-angle, for it seems to me that its use was ideologically overdetermined.

## Chapter 2

Scarcely An Event Without Incident

In this chapter, I shall concentrate on the way in which television dealt with the 1976 Olympics. But first, I want to say a word about the Sport Calendar. Every four years, households who have successfully managed to avoid even the remotest contact with sport, are harpooned by two weeks of incessant coverage of the Olympics (this year it was eight hours a day). Or they don't watch T.V. It is not impossible to come away from the television with the impression that athletic activity, particularly at a competitive level, takes place fairly infrequently compared to, say, football, for example. Similarly, with tennis, for years I thought that Wimbledon was the main tennis tournament in a season which lasted little more than four weeks. Nowadays even the notion that games are seasonal is becoming increasingly challenged as training and pre-season fixtures occupy a large proportion of the 'closed' season. Such are the pressures and demands of professionalisation whose ideology has also been carried over into the amateur sphere. The impression that these sports are sporadic is chiefly due to the fact that television is only concerned with them sporadically. This is one of the ways whereby the selection made by television is not only interpretation, but also becomes the dominant definition for the whole. While sporadic, setting up the topic in this way is not random. Along with the ranking of sports in order of preference, established in part by cultural codes extending beyond the range of television alone, as well as being formed and transformed by codes specific to television, for example, football in relation to other sports or cricket in the summer - there is also a calendar of sport which assigns the various sports and sporting occasions their relative weight. 'Glorious Goodwood', The Grand National, Ascot, The Derby, The Ashes, The Olympics and the F.A. Cup Final, are all examples of major sporting events by tradition, but also by definition. T.V. has taken them up and transformed them in translating them into televisual events. You need only look at the coverage of not just the Cup Final itself, but of Cup Final Day, as it has come to be, through the intervention of television. Coverage starts at about 10.30 in the morning with interviews of the lads at their hotels, talks with the managers, and this year with the referee, and the routes the teams took to Wembley through the previous rounds. This takes up by far the larger proportion of air time in relation to the match itself. There is not just an atmosphere created for the match but a whole ambience of a particular day is manufactured in terms of viewing the event through television instead of, say, in terms of mediating a situation in which the participants are untrammelled by the intrusion of television crews who are defining their situation for them in the way that they set it up: when the teams shall be filmed; what they shall be doing on film; the sorts of question posed by the commentator. Such events are seen to be the apex of the various sports or the one occasion when those not normally bothered about sport, join forces with the fanatics to share in a common cultural experience. The sport calendar operates in much the same way as does the folklore calendar which forms part of the repertoire of Nationwide. Certain days in the year are dealt with in a particular way which frames our knowledge and expectation of the world in specific ways. Thus we find the celebration of Halloween, April Fool's Day, Midsummer Night, St. Swithen's Day, the Glorious Twelfth, mark out for us that some days are more special than others by virtue of their date and traditional characteristics associated and attached to them. These calendrical events transposed into televisual terms effect an ideological closure by creating a situation which invites and involves us, the viewer-spectators, to share a common experience - like communal birthdays. They draw on, and reproduce in the drawing, a common cultural heritage and history - a dehistoricised history - which naturalises human reality into already conceived and conventional categories and which neutralises fresh



experience by forcing it to conform to an order and ever pre-existing order. History is homogenous, cyclical, and repetitive but in a reassuring sense so that comfort is always afforded and the predictability of life through these cycles of regeneration is part of a comfortable and undisturbed continuum. Our otherwise 'normal' (and dull?) lives are punctuated by these calendrical events to add some relief to the monotony of an otherwise undifferentiated sequence of days. Whether they provide us with something to look forward to or a date to positively avoid, we nevertheless accede to the demarcation of the year in this way and hence of social reality to the extent that we define ourselves in relation to them, accept them or no. There is a kind of condensation which takes place whereby all the previous April 1st's or Motor Shows converge and collapse the complexity of history and historical change into a simple linear progression whose centre of rest is good old basic Human Nature whose wants and needs haven't changed that much but whose means of satisfying them have become more sophisticated or improved by time, magic or machine. Hence, in a edition of Nationwide (27/8/76) which celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Grehound racing in this country, with pictures and film dating back to the early times of the sport, the only tangible difference between what it was like then and now was the quality of the photographic images (one talks about something specific, such as sport but often this mobilises wider world visions by implication and association). Phototechnology has moved on a pace since 1926, and, of course, the clothes are slightly different too. The overall general effect is to iron out history to a smooth, even plane which proceeds from point A to point B as unproblematically as the axiom "the shortest distance between two points is a straight line". And of course, the fetishing of dates in the shape of anniversaries reinforces this effect, in the form of creating some sense of stability, something we can be sure of which helps us to find our way around the world along with the many other marker-lifebouys which map out the world for us and divide it up in certain ways.

An aspect of Nationwide's calendar is that Friday night is Sports night. At around 6.45 every Friday, Jimmy Hill presents Sportswide which, as the label suggests, is both part of Nationwide, and relatively autonomous from it, in that it deals specifically with sport in terms of 'the nation'. What constitutes sport, however, is principally football and the nation devolves, and becomes decidedly Anglophile, to exclude Scotland quite deliberately (cf. the concept of 'the nation' in Nationwide as such, which includes the principalities and talks of 'Britain' and 'the British' invoked in the catch-all pronoun "we") and by habit Sportswide tends to ignore Wales except for Rugby Union. It serves as a kind of gourmet's guide to the week-end's - normally Saturday's - sporting fixtures. Apart from being calendrical in terms of its slot on the Nationwide agenda, it is calendrical also by virtue that it is only featured during the professional football season. All other sports come after football. The relative importance and weight assigned to the other sports depends on a number of factors. As I've said earlier, the pride of place allotted to football comes as no surprise when one considers that it is the number one spectator sport and possibly second only to angling in terms of the number of people who actually participate in it. If television does privilege football over other sports then it is an instance where the weight given by television coverage to a past-time may be said to be in direct relation to the cultural significance conferred on the sport by the majority of society as a whole.

However, there seem to be other determinants affecting the choice and selection of sports covered on television which do not necessarily come into the reckoning when football alone is considered. I am not convinced that sailing is a widespread 'popular' past-time or that many

people identify with the fortunes of the likes of Morning Cloud and its owner-occupants. Not as far as sport is concerned, at least. Yet it occupies the same space on the main news as does football, cricket and sometimes rugby union. It must have something to do with what Frank Bough describes as "our preoccupation with the sea and water and messing about in boats" which is reflected in the "successes we frequently have in Olympic competition", when Reg White and Ronnie Patterson won the Gold and Silver in sailing at this year's Games. A preoccupation which was also connected to 'our' history and heritage in terms of British naval conquests set up in a way which speaks to, and for, all of us by referring to a common school-history-book, folk-myth incident. I quote in full because it represents one of those frequent interstices between popular ideology, which plays a large role in framing, and in the discourse of, Nationwide, and the ideology of sport, here met in the one man who does the "linking" job so adeptly for both Nationwide and Grandstand:

Well, now, the British navy may not exactly rule the waves quite as emphatically as she did when Drake was in his prime, but there's no doubt at all that our preoccupation with the sea and water and messing about in boats is still showing itself in the successes we frequently have in Olympic competition.

(Frank Bough, Olympic Grandstand, 29/7/76)

By drawing on a common knowledge and reproducing it on this occasion, Bough posits a connection and relationship which was not necessarily there, or if so, only latently, thereby defining the situation for us and channelling our appreciation of the sport and hence the sorts of things to look out for, i.e. the ranking in importance of aspects selected out of the game as significant: these selections often pass for the whole story, more about which, later.

Television coverage of sport is also determined by the level of competition involved, so that you tend to find international events are generally ranked above club level - with the occasional exception in football where club allegiance among the fans often rates higher than fealty to the national side. Sometimes, a sport only reaches prominence on television through international competition. These ascending levels of competition, accumulating significance for the specific sport concerned, may be seen as a pyramid the tip of which represents the highest level of competition - that between nations - spectacularizing what it's supposed to be about to play or run for one's country in a big international event. Geoff Boycott's rejection of this view of playing for one's country has been responsible, in part, for his systematic exclusion from the England selectors' consideration. Instead of construing being picked to play for England as first and foremost an honour, he preferred to see it as playing for another team whose selection, organisation and management are just as liable to criticism and improvement as county clubs. There is still a vow of silence imposed on members of an England cricket team which forbids them to talk freely about matters such as selection, captaincy, and tactics for a period of time long after the event is finished and completed. The pyramid of competition is reminiscent in structure of the pyramid in knock-out competitions - where everything gravitates towards the grand final through the rounds gradually eliminating all the competitors except the ultimate winner. This gravitation, scaling the echelons of competition, competing within a given level, to win both the bout and a pass to the next and higher round, reproduces the same kind of mythology as our liberal capitalist system which says that you get what you deserve. It can be seen aptly in the ideology of equality in

education - everyone is equal before the starter's pistol or a GCE 'O' level paper. When the pistol's fired you're on you're own, and if you've got it in you you'll make it! Inherent in the structure of the various levels of competition, the 'rounds' are stages of excellence, more status is accorded to coming eighth in an Olympic final than first in an all-comers event at Crystal Palace. Certainly, the pyramid is part of the ideology of sport, but television picks it up and reifies it further. By concentrating on certain events and not on others t.v. defines the game in terms of the importance which it attaches to the game, the index of which is the amount of air-time a game or particular sport receives in any one year.

The pyramid of competition and gradual elimination of competitors which inheres in the sport (in its ideological form i.e. sport doesn't have to be about competition in such a break-neck way) becomes also the pyramid of significant competition when translated into televisual terms. It is of course true to say that television and sport share the same kinds of determinations and reproduce the dominant ideology which serves to maintain and purports to understand and explain the modern capitalist world without recourse to looking at it precisely, hence explanations tend to exclude anything to do with specificity of modern capitalism, and attractive partial accounts parade as total explanations or become lost under a welter of crude mysticism. But having established that, it is important to go on to say that the sport discourse and the television discourse (not that there is merely one by any means, but in this case, the television discourse which relates to the coverage of sport) are two distinct areas of ideological activity and inflection. Television adds to, subtracts from, and in the process may substantially transform the raw material which it is working upon, in this instance, sport. Athletics, for example, are by no means unmentioned by television for the best part of four years, but they are quite subsidiary to football in the winter and cricket in the summer and horse racing all the year round, for the most part of three years. The Olympic cycle determines their place and ranking to the extent that coverage of athletics accelerates in the fourth year especially in the last six months. During the past year we have been primed with all kinds of appetisers for this year's Olympic games. Relatively (to their usual coverage) 'minor' events come into the picture in so far as they provide either the breeding ground or sorting house for athletes who will represent us in the games. I would argue that here the emphasis is on national representation rather than just the level of competition because this mobilises a whole lot of other media values. Representation is open to identification - 'our' man out there doing something for us, and also appeals to the media man's role itself as our representative in the field. Maybe you are watching the all-comers games at Crystal Palace, but it is always with an eye looking forward to the Olympics. All other competitions are not only hierarchised but framed in terms of the Olympics. B.B.C.1 ran a marathon series on the Olympics called The Olympiad, which just about filled the gap between the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics and the last few meets before Montreal, a programme which gave all the background and history of the games in terms of previous winners, bests, personalities and tryers.

This summer was marked out as special because of the Olympics. The cover of the Radio Times for week beginning May 29th featured a shot of Andy Roberts hurling down a beauty at another West Indian batsman with the ball caught in mid-flight: the first Test started that week. But the wrapper on the top left hand corner announced "Olympic Summer begins this week" six weeks before the opening of the games. Inside, on page three, Grandstand was trailed to feature Olympic swimming trials at Blackpool inviting you to "spot an Olympic medal-winner before he or she actually wins a medal, now's the time to start watching". It is perfectly feasible

to conceive of a swimming competition in which the same participants took part which would be ignored by Grandstand, this time next year for example, or on a Five Nation Saturday afternoon. Somehow, the whole complexion of the summer is supposed to change, and with so much effort channelled that objective it is not surprising if it succeeds in some measure.

As my principal concern is with the visual aspects of television coverage of sport, I shall now turn to some specific examples. At the end of the games, the indefatigable Bough enthusiastically (as ever) pointed that Olympic Grandstand had relayed over twenty different sports. But interest in the games was not as general or as all-embracing as that might indicate. Some sports were definitely built up and cued more than others. The chief focus was on the track events even though in the first week we had seen gymnastics every day. The track events were constructed in such a way that all other sports (with the possible exception of swimming where a gold and silver were won by David Wilkie or where Britain gained an unexpected medal, such as in the Modern Pentathlon) dwindled in comparison. Much of this construction was verbal by way of working up to the real reason why we'd all looked forward to the games so much. Britain's strongest chances were on the track. This is partly a definition by tradition - a tradition which says that Britain produces, or at least concentrates its athletic energy and resources, and enlists the aid of sponsorship towards, running. Foster was supposed to come back with his head bowed with gold dripping from his neck. This was not just a vicarious delight in his capabilities but also a continuation of a line, albeit jagged, of British competitors going to the Olympic track and returning as successful heroes. Hence David Coleman could call the 5,000 metres "the Blue Ribbon of the games" (reiterating what 'some people' have called it). One wonders whether it is the Blue Ribbon in Romania. Tony Gubba set the 5,000 metres up in the following way: "to-morrow's 5,000 metres final could be the greatest race of the games, and perhaps one of the best in Olympic history" (26/7/76). These words were accompanied by a zoom movement as if to underline what he was saying. It is no co-incidence that Britain's greatest hopes were in that race with Stewart and Foster - "the cult figure of British athletics" (Ron Pickering) - both through to the final.

Now the visuals proper. It was either a Canadian company, or an American one which bought the rights to cover the Olympic games, hence my comments and critique - such as it is - will only concern the B.B.C. in so far as it selected certain images to pipe across to us, and in as much as B.B.C. commentators anchored these pictures. As a general observation, there tended to be two main preferred types of televisual coverage both, to differing extents, premised on assumption about how t.v. should apply itself to sport. The principal point of view was concerned with a kind of verisimilitude from two considerations. Firstly, immanent in the coverage was the belief that television offered a window onto the world. The semi-iconic properties of the image, and the reproduction of certain conditions of normal (i.e. with the human eye) perception contribute to the suspension of disbelief in the aspects of image which are really nothing like normal vision. Certain televisual codes function to reproduce as close as possible the 'what it was like to be there'. An example would be a medium long-shot of the starters lined up before a race. Other codes with the same ultimate objective in mind deviate to produce something which is quite unique to the medium itself - such as the zoom in on a particular competitor's face. The cultural code of the human angle displaces regard away from the artificiality of the processes inherent in the medium. Or the zoom may be seen to be the only way photo-optics can even approximate the way in which the eye is capable of dwelling on a 'full'

scene yet at the same time swoops in to concentrate most of its attention on a single item. The second aspect of verisimilitude is concerned with showing what it is like to spectate from the point of view of the ideal spectator. The camera positions seem to be in response to the question of what would be the best overall view of the race which would enable all the participants to be seen in relation to one another. In other words the positions depend upon what the game is seen to be about - in this instance, racing is about positions and vying for positions - and how that is best conveyed, from the point of view of an ideal, privileged spectator's position.

Thus anything else which the game might be about is pushed under a preference for constructing the game and setting it up in a particular manner. Any spectator is looking for some things more than others - a preference is made to value strength more than grace in the sprint, because also, as it turns out, the strong ones tend to be better at it than the graceful ones. In this case winning is of the utmost importance; it is the fact of winning which holds the scale of values of strength over grace in that particular constellation. If t.v.'s principal concern was with showing what it was like from an ideal spectator's angle (though no spectator could have enjoyed such advantaged positioning as some of the camera placings undoubtedly were) a secondary but by no means insignificant role was to use t.v. as an instrument of 'expert' analysis. This aspect was double-edged, for in one sense, the analytic role of expert reconstructed the part played by the expert-commentator - expert in the sense of practitioner of sport such as Ron Pickering for athletics and gymnastics, and Hamilton Bland for swimming as opposed to David Coleman for athletics, David Vine for gymnastics and Alan Weeks for swimming, all of whom are experts at t.v. commenting on sport. The analytic function of the t.v. lay also in the fact that it was 'expert' in its own field, namely that of recording action and movement in such a way as to render a perception of the event quite different to that permitted to any human eye however expert. Some of the slow-motion replays revealed aspects of the game not necessarily present to normal perception at normal speed, as well as affording umpteen opportunities to re-view the event. It is this secondary aspect which is most revealing in ascertaining the extent of the technical repertoire available to the visual media. The application to sport of t.v. does not have to try to create the impression of looking through a clear window at the event in a pure state. It could be taken into the areas of exploring the medium and at the same time exploring those very aspects of the games which are not perceivable to the eye, or which are displaced through the media's concern to reproduce the dominant elements of the cultural code and in doing so defining and redefining it. An interesting excursion into this kind of exploration was the film Visions of Eight which represented the attempt made by eight directors to cover different aspects of the 1972 Olympics and their results were fascinating in comparison with each other as well as by contrast with the t.v. None of them were over concerned with winners so much as all the secondary-so-called-aspects of the sports, like the sprint or the fanaticism and parochial world of the weight-lifters taken up by Mai Zetterling. This year's coverage of the pole-vault had much in common with Arthur Penn's contribution to Visions of Eight involving three or four cameras from very different angles with their respective views. The combination of these cameras when played consecutively including slow-motion and still-framing enabled a much fuller understanding or insight into the nature of pole vaulting and separated it out from high jumping with a long stick. The state of competition or the achievement purely in terms of metres and centimetres were not seen to be all the sport involved. But this imaginative and penetrating handling was the exception rather than the rule. It would of course have been possible to create an



impression in the pole-vault of competition by the use of split-screening as they did with the cycling. In the cycling, the two teams which were competing against the clock and which started at opposite ends of the velodrome, were both present on the t.v. screen at the same time and seemed to be facing the same direction and racing one another merely through the use of split screening: two cameras, one for each team, transmit an image of each team which shares the total area of the screen, one is placed above the other.

By contrast, the events on the track, also covered by four or five cameras, were mundane if only because the chief concern there was with 'showing it as it is'. For something like the 100 metre dash only two cameras would be used and possibly a third for the slow-motion replay. One camera would be <sup>at</sup> ground level and cover the start and the second would be fixed relatively high up adjacent to the finishing tape. The sprint from start to finish would then be covered by one panning camera with a lens setting sufficient to include all but the slowest competitors. In other words, the 'whole' race would be present. The third camera is positioned at a point somewhere beyond the finishing line so that the angle of acceptance includes the width of the eight lanes. The runners then are coming towards the camera. With the side-on camera which covers the race as it is run 'live' so to speak, the difference in speed and distance gained is accentuated thereby revealing at any given moment the state of competition and the hierarchy of winning and losing. The view afforded by the third camera on the other hand reduces this element of difference so that for the most part the runners look to be neck and neck. This is because a telephoto lens of a greater magnitude is employed by camera three thereby distorting the spatial relationships between the various subject planes. The effect is known as foreshortening and is particularly obvious when watching cricket on television. This is a technological overdetermination. It is a property of the optics of the lens to produce that effect. However, the application of that lens with that effect has ideological dimensions. The telephoto's ideological effect applied head on in that way, is to iron out differences, to play them down; whereas the choice to use a medium focal length setting at medium-long distance for camera one, also means an ideological effect of exaggerating the differences between competitors by highlighting the spaces between them. On longer races it isn't always possible to frame the whole field of competition so the cameras keep up with the front runners. Thus in the 400 or 800 metres there is a fairly rigid set up which is quite consistently observed. At the beginning of the race, just before it starts and for the first few yards, there is a high shot from behind the line of competitors which is fairly wide angle, taking in the bend. Once the runners are away there is sometimes a zoom in and pan, but as soon as they are in the first straight they may be picked up by a second camera which always takes over before the second bend. This one is positioned opposite the first camera and so the runners are then coming towards the camera from left to right. It is possible, indeed likely, that these two cameras are responsible for similarly high shots at their respective opposite ends. It is the second camera which picks up the finish at the tape at varying focal lengths depending on the state of the field's dispersal. That's the basic repertoire of angles and shots. There are deviations from this, for example, in the Hurdles there was a ground level camera (the same used for the line up before a race) used on one of the bends which was so low as to render the effect of drama and spectacle, because the height the hurdlers were seen to jump from looked greater than in fact it was.

The deviations from the normal set up - the high inclusive angled position of the ideal spectator's viewpoint - are interesting in so far as they reveal the media's preoccupation with certain values and how the media shape and reproduce those values. Having established the basic ground-planks for a rudimentary grammar of uses and applications, I should like to make a further general observation of a technique which was widely employed by way of introduction to a selection of the media's manufacturing of certain values and how it is achieved. The winner of a race, the gold medalist, after breaking through the tape, could often be seen vignettised in the surround of a crowd shot. This is a composite shot from two cameras and was also used to include the starter with his pistol at the beginning of a race. It is a less sophisticated form of split screening and CSO.\* The overall effect of this vignetting for the winner isolated him or her by excluding the others in the field, the work accomplished by zooming in tight, and by foregrounding the winner amongst an amorphous crowd with readings such as coming out of the masses to raise oneself above them, standing out in a crowd, the exceptional individual differentiates his/herself by outstanding achievement - all pandering to some kind of hero-worship by singling out the individual as special, because of winning fetishising the fact of coming first, but bolstered securely by the specific media handling of it.

I mentioned earlier the technique of showing two competitors or teams simultaneously on the same screen. I would like now to move on further in that direction towards an analysis of media created or inflected sports events. Technologising competition plays a larger part in the coverage of the Olympics. In 1972 time was measured in tenths. This year, time was split further into hundredths. It also seems that the presence of the electric clock is more prominent and intrusive now than four years ago. This technologising of competition goes hand in hand with the notion that technological advancement is synonymous with progress. It is a situation in which superlatives, best, fastest, quickest, most efficient, sort out what is significant and what is not worth bothering about - superlatives which are constantly being improved upon in the sense that what was yesterday's best has a better counterpart to-day. At the back of this notion lies a positivist assumption that everything in the world proceeds as if in a straight line. Its ideology is progressivist. What matters most is being able to quantify in order to distinguish and rank according to the distinctions discovered. So while the Swiss Timing digital clock in the top right hand side of the screen testifies the increasing ability to measure more and more finely human output in a particular way - in this case in terms of exact time as a function of speed - it also reinforces through a systematic reification certain aspects of bourgeois ideology more than others by celebrating them in this way. The presence of the clock also makes it possible to distinguish between more than one performance, which, if the same were to occur off the sports' track, would be indistinguishable. It forces a comparison and with that reinforces a certain hierarchy. All are equal before the starters gun, but at the end of the tape, there must be a winner and a range of losers and if straightforward side-by-side competitive running does not sort that out, then technology will come to the rescue. This has a further reified spin off. By also showing the time of the previous best, World Record or Olympic Record, next to the time run by the leader in the field you have only a comparison between the two but a race between present and absent competitors. Here is another instance of dehistoricising history.

\* Colour separation overlay, as in News at Ten where the background to the presenter is seen to be behind. This is produced by two cameras forming a composite image.

Through the intervention of technology applied in this way competition can take place between the dead and the living! Furthermore, if the previous record is cracked it carries with it connotations of an improving world. If human nature hasn't changed that much since the Greeks, it is nevertheless comforting to think that we have come on a bit since then and that 'our own' Geoff Capes can putt a shot further now than Hercules could then. But the difference is always conceived in terms of a linear progression. The tele's role in all this is to shape our spectating eyes to look for and cherish more, certain aspects of the game above others. Virtually the whole of Hamilton Bland's commentary was embedded in terms of records and bests. If it's not a big record like the Olympic or World record then it is a personal best, all British or all-time Smethwick record - of course, it mitigates failure too, when our team doesn't do well there is supposed to be comfort in coming last if it is a personal best, the implication being that the participant couldn't have done better. Here is a representative sample of Bland:

And twelve thousand metres. The World Record at this stage was twelve minutes six point two, and almost certain, a sub fifteen minutes is on the cards. All we've got between them now is some sixteenth for the next three hundred metres and we could see the first ever sub fifteen minute fifteen hundred metres. .... Thirteen minutes six point eight eight. But Goodell at the bottom of the picture looks to be stronger and stronger. So this boy is World Record holder, remember, for the four hundred metres free-style.

The Final of the 1500 metres 24/7/76.

The whole event is viewed solely in terms of records. If that is the anchorage of the visual then it is difficult to negotiate an oppositional reading. Firstly because the coverage of swimming involves a 'dry' camera which is always parallel ( through tracking) with the leaders, so the essence of swimming is reduced to a straightforward race as on the track or between horses. Hence you don't see much of the skills employed or tactics and as they are not elaborated by the commentary it is difficult to produce an alternative reading from the visuals alone. One might not, I think, unreasonably expect an expert to fill in what is going on, the finer points of the endeavour. Hamilton Bland himself is an ex-Olympic swimming coach! It is interesting to note that when he was commenting on the 200 metres Breast Stroke in which David Wilkie won the gold, he actually says "In this race of course time's absolutely irrelevant". The same apotheosising of records can be found in the track events relayed by Coleman and Pickering. After the 400 metres Hurdles in which Alan Pascoe came last, Pickering had this to say:

This is the third successive Olympic games when a new dimension has been brought to the event. David Hemmery who shattered the Olympic record and won by such an enormous margin (the reference to another Englishman but one who did exceptionally well to mitigate Pascoe's performance). We couldn't believe it when John Akibua did exactly that in Munich four years later. And now this man Ed Moses makes it all look so easy.

(25/7/76).



and Coleman's two pennywoth:

And this afternoon we've had three marvellous moments  
in track - Three World Records.

If the discourse in which one talks about such things is framed in this way, and the vocabulary for such a discourse is proffered so unremittingly, then it is not easy to talk about the game, and to construe it in a significantly different manner. The fetishism for records and bests and arranging winners from second and third and these first three from all the rest, works in the same way as Television coverage of football fetishises goals and the last player(s) involved in touching the ball before it wound up in the back of the net, and is analogous to the way t.v. goes in for the fight for the top of Division I and the struggle to avoid relegation at the bottom of Division I - the inverted mirror image of the top of the table. Yet the commentary which accompanies cricket both in the different worlds of radio and television, does not fetishise to nearly half the extent, because inherent in the ideology of cricket is the notion that it is a complex game with many variables and many a skillful aspect. You only need watch or play village cricket to appreciate that: every ball gets a a trickle of applause either because the bowler did something clever or the batsman was sharp or the fielding was on the mark or the combination was a pleasant one. This attitude about the game has carried over into the media's coverage of it. Although the visual angle decidedly reduces the game to a tussle between bat and ball, with the fixed camera high above the bowler's arm or behind the wicket's head as a standard ball by ball convention. More of which later.

Frank Bough, too, tells us what we're interested in when he switches to the Medal Table to see what impact 'we' have made on it. If that is important, then there are other things which are nearly as important, one of which is being British. Hence when Frank reads out the positions in a competition his voice falls and fades at the end of the utterance to denote a lack of importance compared to the earlier part of the statement:

Britain's placing: Malcolm Jenkins was eighteenth (optimistic raising of the eyebrows) and Peter (inaudible on my recording) was twenty-eight. And Ireland's Richard Flynn was fifteenth.  
(20/7/76).

Quite obviously the Irishman according to the yardstick of sorting the sheep from the goats, was the one with the better position. But that concern becomes displaced in the shift in the structure of values which says that it is better to be British and come twenty-eighth than to be Irish and fifteenth. It is part of the them and us theme that runs through Nationwide. At the end of the day what matters is being British - at least we didn't cheat, the Daily Mirror remarked at the end of the games, referring to Onishenko's disqualification on those grounds and also casting a covetous glance at the Russian domination of the Medal Table. The Medal Table, the first three over the line and the omnipresent Swiss Timing all testify to a preoccupation with figures which is akin to the belief that figures are facts and are objective. Frank's obsession with this reveals this pseudo-objectivity. "We're keeping up with the facts and figures of these Olympic games" means that we can orientate ourselves in relation to them or because of them for we'll know something more then. It is another point on the compass and so another marker in the world. Facts and figures cannot be denied, though they can be ignored if necessary. They are the ultimate truth of the matter.

The central importance given to figures is registered in the visual discourse as well as the verbal where it receives perhaps its most elaborate working up. This was especially evident in the coverage of the Winter Olympics. In the Slalom event, for instance, whilst a skier would be descending a slope, the time it was taking would be rattling round the top right corner. The previous best time would be projected on the top left side, and at the half-way mark the current competitor would have his or her time frozen to compare it to the best so far. This produced the impression that the skier was actually competing against another at the same time. Instead of a comparison between the particular application of skills and techniques, that might be said to comprise the sport and to some extent contain the essence of that sporting activity, not only was the endeavour reduced to a race against the clock, but that reduction brought about a further reification, that of artificially producing the effect of face to face competition. Thus television here substantially modified the nature of that sport by shaping it to fit other models of sporting activity defined in the dominant code of competition. What it also achieves, in common with the fetishising of World Records and the like mentioned earlier, is a further alienation whereby man is divorced from all complexity of his activity and reduced to little more than a machine which yields so much return from a given investment, raw material in the hands of a trainer. Figures become not just the measurement of a certain type of success defined in a certain way which valorises some aspects of the same activity above others, but they are marker-bouys against which everything that passes through the sphere of calculated measurement also affords a measure of security. From figures can be devolved standards. So when, in gymnastics, Nadia Comaneci kept breaking the maximum total of ten marks, there was more than just a hint of chaos round the corner in Ron Pickering's voice when he exclaimed "Where do the judges go from here?" It was the same commentator who made a distinction between gymnastics and other sports by saying that gymnastics couldn't be "judged by electronics and computers" as it involved "human merit, grace and skill". That doesn't say much for the other sports! And indeed that was the 'angle' on the gymnastics with plenty of slow motion play backs, and sometimes three different cameras in different positions. Much of the coverage was ground level with the occasional elevated placing, but that seemed to be because it was not physically possible to get to the other side of the floor and satisfactorily plunk a camera there. Hence shots tended to be medium wide angle if the action was going across the screen as in the floor exercises and less wide angle when the action was coming towards the camera such as some shots of a gymnast running towards the horse before taking off. The angle of acceptance always includes the task and the participant. There is only a zoom in when the competitor has finished and is receiving applause or when he or she is returning to the team's pit. It is as though the floor is a stage not a t.v. studio for the conventions have more in common with the theatre, and some types of early cinema, formally, than sport t.v. or even television drama. Thus there is the connotation of (high) culture more than (mass) entertainment and hero-worship that you find in athletics and particularly football. Here, because it was difficult, certainly to unexpert eyes, to judge a performance in terms of beating a clock or thrashing a competitor face to face. Commentating and viewing was more likely to be either boring because it was relatively new as a covered sport or because it ranked low on the scale of sports, or it was open to more complex appreciation because it was not force-fitted into the linear mould. Nevertheless the points did matter, and David Vine and Ron Pickering would exude with superlatives when the points were known, and also the top left hand corner of the screen carried an inset of the electronic scoreboard which flashed the judges' decision after every performance. It seems to me that gymnastics coverage is

different to that of say the track. Partly to do with the sport and the physical limitations imposed by being indoors, no doubt. And it also shares some of the ways in which other sports are framed - skating for example. Yet, there was a time, not so long ago, when track events only flashed up the time of the laps at certain stages in the race, not all the time; and the presence of the World record as it stands at the beginning of the race only goes back to Munich. Similarly, it isn't impossible to imagine that gymnastics might become fashioned more along the lines of running sports.

Framing or shaping the event involves an elaborate construction by the active agency of the media part of whose aim is to make its very construction transparent, as if no manipulation were implied. In its attempt to bring viewers the 'raw' event as it happens, so to speak, as if the presence of the crew and the equipment and its installation were not a significant intrusion on the events in a substantial way which re-structures them by assigning an order to them, television coverage prefers to play down its presence as an active mediator in a process of structuration, while playing up to its self-conceived function as an informed eye. Such structuring is inscribed in the ideology of the professional practice of making television. It is good to cut smoothly from one camera to another, whilst panning often involves too much intercutting which jars on the viewer and draws the attention towards television as artefactual reconstruction and not accurate documentation - where the television version could be seen to actually stand in for the event. The camera is set up as an impartial witness whose evidence is incontrovertible because it was 'there' and its images are merely produced in two dimensions what we take to be real in three dimensions - this is brought about scientifically: rays of light and all that. If it produces an image of what the world is like, then it also bears an impression of what it is about, too. This view is opposed to one which might be concerned to reveal, instead of occult, the processes of producing images and how this process may be seen to be one which signifies and makes meaning. The notion of mediation is taken to be a means of 'passing on' in a passive sense and matters such as selecting the angle, the lens and its specific properties (focal length, depth of field and perspective) are never questioned because they become reflex actions when deciding on composition and visual coverage. Everything is reduced to a matter of good or bad camerawork or production, if necessary by referring to the established canons of t.v. aesthetics. What makes more interesting compositions also marks the definition television imposes on the world and the way in which that world signifies. I have it on reliable authority\* that in t.v. camera composition, straight lines for instance, suggest strength, security, vitality and manliness and if overdone can imply harshness, whereas curved lines suggest grace and sweetness and if they're overdone then insecurity and weakness result. So much for objectively representing the world in the 'look, no hands' manner.

Sport on television mobilises media values from other areas such as we saw briefly earlier with reference to Nationwide and Frank Bough. Although it is constituted relatively autonomously as a special area of coverage and concern occupying a place of its own in the menu or programme - even the cameras are slightly different for O.B. than for studio, incorporating a 16:1 zoom lens as opposed to a 10:1 - but also dovetailing into other areas such as popular current affairs (Nationwide) television, just as sport, in the raw, dovetails into other ideologies such as nationalism, for example. In intersecting in this way, it serves to reproduce, on an

\* A B.B.C. handout to cameramen.

ideological level, the type of conditions conducive to a specific kind of society, the modern liberal capitalist society, by valorising attributes such as competition ('free', of course), winning by merit of working hard or just through being 'gifted', or being British. In tune with all this television frames sport in terms of wider media values, active in shaping other television coverage. For example, the unique or the individual, or better still the unique individual. Of course, sport, through its meritocratic hierarchy abounds with opportunities for individualisation from its most successful to its most abject losers. In the course of the 90 metre ski jump, all the jumpers looked alike - especially on black and white where the colour codes<sup>aren't</sup> available - were largely indistinguishable all donned in crash hats, goggles, dark sweaters and trousers, ski boots and skis. The chief means of identification is the number worn on the back and chest, but without the aid of the commentator to tell you who is wearing that number, it doesn't mean a thing. Differentiation is then made at the level of the verbal anchorage when David Vine says something like: "Here comes the truck driver from Ohio" or "The New Zealander who's only got one eye" (still wearing a pair of goggles of course): or "Last year's World Record holder" or "The 1972 Olympic/Runner up champion". There are a sufficient number of masks available to Vine to put round many of the already selected participants (we saw about twenty out of a possible fifty or more) to provide enough differentiation. Such differentiation also produced an isolation effect whereby these individuals, exceptional in some way, not merely as skiers and Olympic skiers at that, but also as one eyed truck drivers. The implication is that you too could ski like this even if you work on the buses and have a gammy leg - such a selection obviously an exception and not the rule serves to perpetrate the myth that skiing is classless, not the predominant preserve of the leisured bourgeoisie. These people thus are raised head and shoulders above the ordinary throng and press (i.e. us, the viewer-spectators) through the application of a code, here the valorising of the unusual or the exceptional, which may have nothing to do with the sport itself qua sport. Again, Nationwide is such stuff as these things are made on. "One thing you wouldn't expect a blind person to be able to do is to draw pictures" exclaimed an incredulous Tom Coyne on Midlands Today. What 'we' would or wouldn't expect is defined for us as part of the normal everyday world as constructed by Nationwide (see Media Group '76's forthcoming paper). Such 'taken for granted's', produced on hand like holiday snapshots testifying to a normal existence, reinforces a certain conception of the world which defines the parameters of normality to include the exceptional but not the weird, absurd or abnormal (those who refuse to live in that predefined way and are beyond the pale). The exceptional in the normal carries with it connotations, and here is the making of myth, of being able to overcome adversity or the confines of a dreary life through sheer determination, the will to make it and effort, without recourse to why these qualities are valorised or come to be needed in the first place. Social determinations are figments, dreamt up by sociologists in order to prevent people from getting on - i.e. believing in this myth. If the verbal discourse was marked in this way, then so was the visual discourse. The uniform coverage I've been talking about of the jumpers was the general manner of television appropriating the event. However, just as the verbal went in for differentiation, so too did the visual in its own fashion, analagous to, but not the same as, the verbal. Maybe it was overdetermined by the verbal, but the discourse of the visuals is not the same as that of the verbal; it is, relatively autonomous, having its own rules and specificity of production, grammar and syntagmatic chains quite distinct, if homologous and complementary to the verbal. Most of the ski jumpers isolated out for special treatment by the verbal discourse, were also signified in a different way visually. This mainly consisted in featuring the jumpers

cued in a special way for slightly longer than the others by concentrating on them for a few moments before they descended the slope, or just before the goggles went on. This procedure was sometimes followed for the slalom events too. Thus showing the face mitigated against an otherwise anonymous celebrity whose name, even if victorious, is difficult to put a face to. This goes for a number of racing drivers, though it applies less in the last two or three years than the period leading up till then: it certainly applies to scramblers and speedway stars. These angles and inflections however slight inform our reading of the game in significant ways. We now know not only what to look for but who to look for, and the t.v. likes to back favourites.

Women skiers look very similar to the men gliding down the slopes. Not that they are treated in the same way, however. The skiers' uniform is fairly indiscriminate of sex. But the roving television eye is not. Somehow it manages to find occasions to reinforce sexual stereotypes. The woman whose hair falls down from beneath her woolly hat attracts the cameras to record her descent more than the woman who finishes ahead of her. The idea that women are never equal to men in sport is inherent and unquestioned by television coverage. It is a kind of sexual apartheid, where it's okay for women to compete against each other but that that is separate from and should never interfere with, and certainly not challenge, men's competition. This applies across the board, to an extent which was epitomised recently in the sports' section of the Daily Mirror, when England played Australia at Lords in a one-day game. It was the first time women had been allowed to play at Lords and make full use of the facilities. There was a photograph of Heyhoe-Flint in cricketing gear leaning over a pram occupied by a small child with the caption depending on the pun of being at the Nursery End. Of course, where else would you expect to find a woman who 'goes to' cricket; the small article that accompanied this photo was replete with sexual innuendo which, apart from being sexist, ridiculed the idea of women's cricket as serious out of consideration. I have yet to read on the same pages something like "Clive Lloyd, father of two who likes to cook Bolognese for his wife when she's had a hard day, scuttled his way to 65 runs yesterday wearing a new crew neck sweater instead of the traditional vee-neck". The fact is that the values which rate most highly as significant ones and ones which make winners are for the most part in athletic exertion, masculine interwoven with connotations of virility as opposed to femininity as well as giving full play to specifically male muscular development to the extent that in such cases the women could never be a serious threat to their monopoly. The men have defined the games in terms which suit them and fit them best. But there are undoubtedly sports in which women could compete with men gymnastics and the slalom being among them. In television's handling of the slalom, the women were seen, in the case of a successful run completed by a woman, hugging and kissing the team colleague who had just run well. At the end of a man's successful run, there was no handshaking to be seen, let alone kissing. The camera did not deem it a significant moment to be concerned with. This omission or imbalance in the repertoire used for men compared to that used for women says two entirely different things about the sexes and re-produce the idea that "That's what women do. It's okay, they're like that. You don't see men doing it" - without taking stock of the formal aspects of the coverage which pertain to the coverage of men and women in sport. Of course, the notable exception to this is footballers who hug and kiss on the field, but only when they've established themselves as 'butch' figures by scoring a goal. But even that came in for a purge, the F.A. mooting that it ought to be banned and players booked as it was not in the spirit of the game, which was, of course, masculine. I would like to digress once more (it won't hurt now) by casting a side glance at

the brouhaha that John Curry's skating set going. All the pictures in the press at the time presented Curry either smiling with his arm around his mother - for maximum Oedipal reverberations - or with him in some fantastic balletic pose picking up a bouquet or arms extended finishing a pirouette. The Sunday Mirror had to print an inset picture of John H. Stracey with a quote from him as a head "From one world champ to another 'WHAT A GEEZER!'" to legitimate Curry's gold. Curry's style caused no small amount of confusion even consternation between the sports pages of the various papers. If the Sunday Mirror had to refer to the heavy masculine judgement of Stracey, the Evening Standard daringly printed "Would some fool say Curry skated like a gay", and in the text that "John Curry does not conform to the only model of manliness that the old guard allowed." The Sunday Times pundit, Robin Marlar, was forced, rather dizzily, clearly in some state of shock, to talk about Curry's performance in terms more akin to aesthetics and art to accommodate the volte-face that Curry had effected as an image of an Olympic gold medalist. I shall quote in some detail Marlar's comments because I think they illustrate in a nut-shell the framing of sport which defines it in terms of a masculine hegemony and reveals something of the sublimated sexual side which openly avows itself when forced, as here, as party to good, clean heterosexual fun (maybe even as a fop against gay inclinations):

"John Curry is tall. His body is lean. Students of posture and gesture would have plenty to study. He is neither flagrant nor flamboyant. .... It is his head which commands attention the thick curly hair providing a noble proportion to the whole and the sunken cheekbones setting off the expression in his eyes and about his mouth. He is an attractive man".

The picture accompanying this article makes Curry look like Bowie, with the eyes, lips and the angle coming from below. Lifestyle is not important, says Marlar, and intending to continue in the same vein:

"When you look at a painting (the aesthetic strain) you don't make up your mind on its merits because of what you think of the painter. .... Happily for the human race the main stream is heterosexual".

I wonder if any football or cricket player has caused him to run out of his usual armoury of sports' journalism, only a deep steeping in a liberal education could produce such double-double standards:

"My main concern is that because of Curry, men's figure skating will be branded as the slightly precious self-indulgent vehicle for homosexuals. Many (sic) would feel that an obscene fate for an Olympic event."

The Sunday Times, 15/2/76.

I only hope his fears prove to be prophetic.

Before rounding off, I shall say something about spectacularization. Sport is a spectacle: an activity to be viewed where there is a clear distinction between those who act and those who watch. Television has always seen itself as part of the entertainment business. As well as being concerned with verite, it is also preoccupied with presenting this verite as interestingly as possible. To achieve that it must consult the cultural codes of appreciation in the realm of spectating - i.e. pre-television codes - and recreate them in television terms. In so doing



it also creates codes specific to television for signifying interest. Borrowing heavily from the repertoire of values both the press and the theatre, entertainment is moulded by guiding concerns such as drama, suspense, shock, waiting for the unusual to occur in the course of the hum-drum unwinding of events, the human angle: faces of passion, anger, joy. These concerns synthesise with the concerns mentioned above in conjunction with the desire to relay the raw sport as purely as possible to capture what is thought to be the essence of the sport - pure in the sense set up by television and it conceives its role in relation to the game. However, having a camera positioned 100 yards away from the action so that the participants do not trip over it in the course of their endeavour, does not amount to non-interference, nor can it be seen as stepping back to view the game more objectively. The swimming shots mentioned earlier which followed the front swimmers by tracking along the side of the pool, were not half as interesting or spectacular as the opening sequence to Olympic Grandstand which incorporated underwater shots of the swimmers which apart from being unusual also showed something of the techniques involved in swimming. To place a camera in the pool and have an underwater photographer or even a fixed remotely controlled camera would either have interfered with the event and most likely affected its outcome or would have been an expensive and elaborate exercise to deck the pool out with the facility of underwater photography for t.v. coverage. Maybe that is to come. But the main considerations were physical limitations and also how the event is predominantly construed, which, as I have already noted, was in terms of a race, like runners, like horses, like dogs, like bikes all differences subsumed under the weight of the general and broader heading Racing.

With the 90 metre ski jump, in addition to dwelling on the competitors at the start of their run, the same camera zoomed out (in one movement of the lens, not gradually) to a wide-angle of acceptance and gently panned while the skier descended the slope, diagonally from the top right corner to the screen to the bottom left hand side. At the moment of take-off, a second camera took over whose lens was considerably more telephoto than the first, looking on the skier so that the body, arms and skis filled nearly all of the screen. The jumper thus moved across from right to left. The camera panned with the jumper to produce a blurred background, a created illusion to signify (usually fast) movement. On landing camera two was brought back to capture the moment of touch down and zoomed in at the finish, to varying extents, to include a full length shot of the jumper more or less filling the screen. Now, in the first instance, the dwelling on the skier going down the ramp, is concerned to convey action and speed, letting the skier move against the background giving some idea of the acceleration reached at the end of the descent. Clearly, a closeup of a begoggled death defying face would not render this effect. Concern for showing this aspect of the sport over determines the technical choices put into operation. The diagonal angle of descent across the screen enables maximum movement of the subject with minimum movement of the equipment - the longest straight line on the screen being diagonal. Although some zoom did occur sometimes towards the end of the run-way. Setting up the camera in that way with little interference and offering a great angle of view, seems to connote 'the look no hands technique', the laissez-faire policy of sports coverage from the point of view of the ideal spectator's eye, ideal because the position is high up and privileged vis-a-vis the actual spectator's position somewhere on the ground. As Frank Bough, awc struck, observed towards the end of the games, "Modern television allows us to return to Montreal as if we never left the stadium" as if the t.v. sets in the corners of our front rooms registered our presence

upon what is flashed across the screen like being beamed aboard the Star Ship Enterprise. As soon as camera one cuts to camera two accompanied by a tight telephoto shot, a different angle on the sport is represented. From seeing a man propelled by the gradient of the slope in relation to the forces of gravity, we now see a man flying in mid-air (seemingly) without propulsion, and divorced from what has put him there, apart from the imposing presence of the pair of skis on the end of his feet. Like Gawain's magic green belt, it suffices to wear the gear to execute the skill, it is not possible to glean from the pictures what makes a successful jump or what is the difference in the styles and techniques of the various participants. One waits with baited breath; will he or won't he come a cropper? - we can't see the landing point nor judge how far away it is from this shot. A switch to camera two shows us that he is in fact making a safe landing, then it closes in on the man who did all that. Both cameras are positioned high up in relation to the ground and where the spectators would be. But one camera normally covers a lower angle giving the impression of being lower down - on a par with the take off point or just above the level of the landing skier, and the other camera also positioned high seems like it is low because it is angled up at the skier in mid-air. This is the physical switch between the two cameras and their distinct perspectives characterising each of them wide-angle to telephoto in conjunction with zoom, accompanied by the holding in suspense on the one hand, and then the relief of that moment I have characterised as the big dipper effect where the undulating topography produces complementary but quite different effects between going up and going down. I must add that there was a third camera positioned in front of the ski jump looking up the slope, but it was rarely used. One reason might be that as the action was coming towards the camera distance would be so foreshortened that the object of the jump, to jump the longest distance with most style, might be displaced in the attempt to find a breath-taking angle. Hence jumping across the screen was preferred although in the shot with the jumper in mid-air, distance had to be conveyed by time as the shot was so tight, or with the runway shot, by allowing the subject to move diagonally across the screen so that the area covered by the ski jumper was laid out before us rather than condensed through the normal lens perspective or squashed even more by the employment of a telephoto lens which would be almost inevitable given the distance the camera had to be away from the action. If it were a ski high jump then perhaps that would be a preferred usage. Also if some misfortune were to befall some hapless character the third camera would have thrown in its two ha'p'th. The intersection here with tension through drama, and being on the watch out for the unexpected, is almost as important as the sport itself, in fact it may even be said to be the key factor in framing the whole coverage. Tony Gubba opened the second week of Olympic Grandstand by drawing the drama up to the level of the sport in saying that in the previous day's events, there had been "as many incidents as gold medal performances" cueing us to watch not only the sport but also the drama. There seems some credibility to the notion that 'sport' here takes on the meaning it had in sixteenth century English, where it could refer to spectating on other people's misfortunes especially witnessing them as they happen. Tony Gubba ended the transmission by recapping on the drama as an appetiser or 'hook' for subsequent Olympic Grandstand coverage, by listing what he thought were the incidents of that day where there was "scarcely an event without incident. There was the man who fell with a gold medal almost in sight (a recording of this is shown). Falls as well for the girls in the hurdles (another video recording played back). There was the girl who was just that split second too eager (recording of Australian sprinter false-starting).



The 5,000 metre man who nearly fought too hard (play-back). And, (having built up to such a crescendo) almost worst of all the hammer throw that went off course (pictures of it)". All of which is supposed to have you out of your seat commensurating with Gubba with a "fancy that" attitude.

Not that the coverage is as spectacular as might be. While coverage is angled to incorporate elements of the spectator, there are, as I have said, physical limitations sometimes, or a greater desire to refrain from over indulgence in such shots on the grounds that it deters from objectively reporting the game. There are some really spectacular shots from behind the goal in football, but it is only when there is a goal scored or an incident that this camera is called upon. The preference is for the camera fixed high at the half way line so as not to privilege one side above another. Of course, one side is nearly always played up more than another. It is a bit like playing chess with yourself, it is difficult to be 'fair' and equal to both black and white. Some teams and styles of play have more media value than others. This slots in with what I have been saying about individuals, backing favourites and winners, isolating out certain people or aspects above others. It would be more honest at least to acknowledge such biases rather than claim objectivity or neutrality. In cricket, too, there is a fixed repertoire of shots. Every time the bowler's arm swings over in a delivery, the standard is one from a high positioned camera behind the wickets to show both the batsman's end and the bowler's. Apart from the terrific foreshortening brought about through the application of a telephoto lens to include just the two ends and the wicket-keeper (every time a batsman raises his bat there is the impression that he is going to hit his wicket) so that 22 yards looks like half a dozen, in terms of the visual discourse alone this fixed position always prefers the end with the larger image size. That is a technological determination. Both the verbal and the visual discourses tend to frame the whole game in terms of this picture area and focus down on bat and ball in a way which makes them predominate above other aspects of the game to the extent that when the ball is played the camera either has to pan or another camera picks it up. The opening sequence of Cricket Highlights features a very different type of coverage with rapid intercutting between shots which not only show the conflict between bat and ball with the particular batsman and bowler merely as the bearers of this conflict. But with close up shots of wrist work and footwork and full length shots of batsmen an insight is afforded of the particular skills being brought to bear and what it is which marks out Richards or Lloyd as unique batsmen without mystifying them. Again, the opening sequence of the Winter Olympics showed a vertiginous shot of the ski jump as seen from the top of the run. The camera, fixed to a ski, presumably, then proceeded down the slope with accumulating speed to a take off. The run way below seemed miles away through the wide-angle lens, which exaggerates distance and accentuates curvature (even where lines are parallel to normal vision). Without actively tampering with the sport in this way, this type of coverage is out of the question, for, either all of the competitors would have to strap a camera to their skis or one or two would have to be selected to do so. And on the basis of both the selection of who is to wear the equipment and the extra weight carried, an imbalance would result. Even given the definers of the coverage, the attempt to capture the essence of the sport, the intersection of other media values and their negotiation in the coverage of a given event and the concern for impartiality, the television coverage of skiing was remarkably similar to the Martini and luxury advertisement found among the pages of skiing magazines. Both the articles and the adverts in those pages resembled one another in their photographic representation, sharing some aspects of television coverage. The framing

is similar: low angles, i.e. looking up as if in reverence, at the snow on the trees (blurred or not) connote a certain life style of Winter Hols in the Tyrol with Martini to drink and apres-ski boots to wear as opposed to Bacardi in the Bahamas in the summer. It is not just the event in this case skiing which is spectacular, denoted by the photo of a skier in mid-flight from beneath, but it is the whole way of life which is invoked and tantalisingly offered with the product (yoghurt and toothpaste is also sold in the same way). Skiing is a marketable commodity. But who is it that can afford a winter holiday let alone the price of skiing equipment the lessons and the time it takes to learn? What sort of people do it? I shouldn't wonder that too many truck drivers do it. Because the signification works on the level of connotation, the real basis for the sport and the kind of life that affords it (hinted at in the very instance of connoting but seen as something to be desired, aimed for if you have not got it, part of everyone's life, if they want it - the carrot of embourgeoisement) is never made apparent or delved into. This is what lies at the back of David Vine's singling out of a truck driver. It is a contradiction, and the ideological work done at the level of the verbal discourse backed up by the visual, is to fabricate the impression that the sport is not class based and culturally determined (i.e. who it is that goes in for skiing and how and why, of course there are some countries for whom skiing is relatively cheap and 'popular' because of geographical reasons). The coverage occults both its own process of production by failing to acknowledge that presence alone is tantamount to structuration, and the real social relations involved in the sport.