

2. Literature review: Journalism, Narrative and Myth

Myth is a term with no singular historical usage; rather it has carried and does carry a wide range of defining features (Doty 2000:30).

It is through language and it is in history that we make our myths. In doing so, we suppress neither the past nor the future, but remain open to the potential of both. The only error is to posit an independent and self-validating truth beyond the temporal process of myth-making. (Coupe 1997:98)

A variety of theoretical models have been developed which posit journalism as cultural storytelling. Myth (Bird&Dardeene; Lule 2001), narrative strategies (Zelizer 1990), core plots (Davis 1984; Kitch 1999), fairytale (Turner 2000), master narratives (Rosen 2003), frames (Gitlin 1980), maps of meaning (Hall 1978) and ritual (Carey 1989; 1998) are some of paradigms developed in discussions of both the structures and cultural effects of news.

Myth is one of the most consistently used of these paradigms.¹ In a classic treatment of myth and news Bird & Dardenne (1988:71) wrote: “news stories, like myths, do not ‘tell it like it is’ but rather, ‘tell it like it means’. Thus news is a particular kind of mythological narrative with its own symbolic codes that are recognized by its audience.”

I will argue in this chapter that although myth provides a valuable tool for the analysis of journalism, the models of myth previously used by journalism scholars are inadequate. I will concentrate on a critique of three representative studies in order to elaborate some of the issues that need to be addressed if myth is to be used as an effective heuristic device in media studies. I will suggest that theories of intertextuality and narrative identity can assist in the development of a more cogent theory of myth. I will conclude this chapter by outlining a multidimensional definition of myth, drawn from this analysis.

2.1 Myth and cultural memory

Carolyn Kitch (1999) has studied the “core plots” of the era (decade, half century and century) end summaries of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Life* and *US News and World Report*. She situates her analysis in a theoretical framework that draws on Carey’s ritual model of journalism (Carey 1989). She emphasises

¹ Lule (2001: 7) notes that this work dates from the 1960s, became very popular in the 1970s and 1980s but, apart from a few studies, waned in the 1990s. For a comprehensive bibliography of this work see Lule 2001:205-6 notes 13-15. The recent special edition of *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol 79, No 2, Summer 2002 devoted to journalism and myth is indicative of a recent revival of interest in the usefulness of this concept.

that “such a ritual involves the repetition of familiar stories, a shared body of public memory and a social sense of time” (1999:124).

Her work is an interesting attempt to bring together theories of collective memory and public history with a cultural approach to journalism. But she fails to present a dynamic portrait of the way the stories she recounts interact with other ideological forces that shape broader public narratives.

Although she includes a brief section on the exclusions, which shape the era-end portraits, noting the “erasure of political radicalism, of feminism, of class and poverty issues, and of ethnic, racial, religious and regional tensions,” she asserts this “may very well serve a benign purpose”.

Not all omissions necessarily reveal political biases of the magazines’ editors however. Historian Michael Kammen notes that when scholars discuss how collective memory changes over time, they often “do so in a cynical manner, ascribing manipulative motives or the maintenance of hegemonic control by dominant social groups.” He argues that “if the adjustment helps to make the overall value system more coherent and functional, memory distortion may very well serve a benign purpose...” Like readers, journalists remember their own past through a selective process that emphasizes success over failure and pride over pain. (1999: 139)

Kitch and Kammen are almost certainly right that these omissions are not *only* the result of individual editorial decisions. Such omissions are, none-the-less, profoundly ideological in ways Kitch does not entertain and her dismissal of them as somehow ‘benign’ reflects the particular ideological position of her own analysis.

In her introduction she states: “this study contends that news media have become the public historians of American culture: they have self consciously taken on the role of selecting the most important people and events of the past and explaining their historical significance.” (1999:121)

Her failure to problematise this singular notion of “American culture” governed by “important” people and events, reifies rather than opens-up the diverse possibilities of American collective memories.

Kitch consistently uses terms like “a common cultural framework” (1999:121); “American collective memory” (1999:122); “communal voice” (1999:129) and “inclusive voice of the community” (1999:132). She collapses notions of public, community, nation, collective memory and culture and thus assumes a heterogeneous readership and nation across class, race, gender, space and time.

Although she makes use of Carey’s analysis of the “dark continent of American journalism” (Carey 1986) Kitch fails to appreciate one of his basic points. She quotes Carey – “we assume individuals are the authors of their own acts...” – in support of her contention that “the very choice of explaining events in terms of people endows the news (or history) with meaning” (Kitch: 130). But she misses his more fundamental point that the journalistic practice of ascribing motive to an individual is often an easy way of avoiding a more complex analytic investigation of “why”. Two sentences after the quote Kitch uses, Carey goes on to say: “The over reliance on motive explanations is one of the pervasive weaknesses of American journalism.” (Carey 1986:180)

Kitch fails to come to terms with either myth or journalism as ideological systems or as anything more than isolated texts to which she ascribes certain thematic content. Kitch says of the 1980’s:

During the 1980s, business leaders took centre stage as heroes and villains in a play about ambition and greed. The heroes including computer-visionary Bill Gates, down-to-earth Walmart founder Sam Walton, and flashy real estate magnate Donald Trump; the villains included income-tax-evading hotel queen Leona Helmsley and inside trader Ivan Boesky. (1999:132)

Such a simplistic mobilisation of “heroes and villains” is ultimately not very enlightening unless other factors are set in dialogue with such traditional stories. How, for example, do issues of gender come into play in the casting of Helmsley as villain and Trump as hero? How do the very different images of Gates, Walton and Trump – the new frontiersman of technology, the self made American and the sophisticated new urbanite – come into conflict, how do they alter the traditional notions of the heroic? How does the constitution of these heroes relate to other business narratives such as the emergence of globalisation?

Kitch tends to concentrate on fitting contemporary stories to traditional categories rather than creating a dialogue, which allows a two-way interrogation. One of the dangers in this type of analysis is to merely point to a historical mythic precedent as explanatory without examination of the ways the archetypal has been transformed in relation to current conditions. This is to ignore the ideological function of myth.

2.2 Myth and ideology

The classic statement on ideology and myth is that of Roland Barthes. In his seminal work *Mythologies*, (1972) he writes of the naturalising power of myth:

Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflection...Entrusted with glossing over an intentional concept, myth encounters nothing but betrayal in language, for language can only obliterate the concept if it hides it, or unmask it if it formulates it...driven to having either to unveil or to liquidate the concept, it will naturalise it. We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature. (1972/2000:129)

In such a Barthesian analysis myth is not constituted by the iteration of particular themes but by the particular actions of speech and its cultural codes.

While Barthes' ideological perspective on myth is an instructive counterpoint to Kitch's deployment of mythical terms, as Coupe (1997:156) has pointed out Barthes' ideological emphasis is both his weakness as well as his strength.

Barthes' (1972) analysis of everything from haircuts to wrestling to wine are deft, witty and original, and his essential point: that bourgeois ideology sets itself up – through a range of cultural forms – as natural rather than constructed is impressively made but in a sense ultimately catches itself in the same game. It is a form of “demythologisation propounding its own myth of mythlessness” (Coupe 1997:157). The collapse of myth into ideology not only forecloses any sense of dynamism that the concept might hold but also forecloses on the very term itself as a viable independent analytic concept.

Using a Barthesian, semiotic model Fiske and Hartley (1978) have analysed the production of British Television news. In a very impressive textual analysis they take Barthes' terms and central insights but build a model, which allows for a somewhat more dynamic relationship between text and audience.

Fiske and Hartley make the distinction between ‘myth’ and ‘mythologies’. They identify myth as operating at the micro level of textual relations while mythologies emerge as a network of related stories.

In a close textual reading of the images and accompanying voice-overs of each item in a British TV news bulletin, Fiske and Hartley show the activation of what they call a “myth-chain” which coheres in a myth of the subject under consideration. Their first example is a bulletin about the deployment of new SAS troops in Northern Ireland.

The viewer is presented with a series of images of soldiers marching in unison, of a soldier clipping a magazine on his rifle, of a row of colleagues staring over a protective set of sandbags at an undisclosed enemy. Together with the voice over text, Fiske and Hartley (1978:42) interpret these images as cohering into a myth of the British army as “our lads, professional and technologically well equipped.”

But Fiske and Hartley also read the news bulletin as a whole and note a broader mythology, which organises the mythic units presented in the individual news items. This overarching mythology is to do with the relationship between individuals (the soldiers) and major social institutions (the army).

All of [the institutions] are shown to be responding to crises bravely enough. But their efforts ultimately seem inadequate and are presented as being doomed to failure. However the individuals working within the institutions are shown to be acting as positively and as effectively as their institutional contexts will allow. (Fiske & Hartley 1978:47)

Fiske and Hartley argue that although responses to these myths, myth chains and mythologies are individually felt, they are not individualistically determined. They are a product of culturally agreed meanings and are thus in the realm of the “intersubjective”.

The internal psychological state of the individual is not the prime determinant in the communication of television messages. These are decoded according to individually learned but culturally generated codes and conventions, which of course impose similar constraints of perception on the encoders of the messages. It seems, then, that television functions as a social ritual, overriding individual distinctions, in which our culture engages in order to communicate with its collective self. (Fiske and Hartley 1978:85)

While the choice of frame by a TV news producer, or the choice of metaphor by a print journalist, may be either deliberate or routine, the consequent “map of meaning” produced exceeds any individual intent.

Hall and colleagues (1978) have referred to this sense-making process of journalism as a necessary interaction between the unusual “news worthy” event and the consensual cultural ‘maps’ of our societies.

[News] events cannot be allowed to remain in the limbo of the ‘random’ – they must be brought within the horizon of the ‘meaningful’. This bringing of events within the realm of the ‘meaningful’ means in essence, referring unusual and unexpected events to the ‘maps of meaning’ that already form the basis of our cultural knowledge, into which the social world is *already* ‘mapped’. (Hall et al 1978:54)

Hall sees this process producing a “tendency towards ideological closure,” (Hall et al 1978:64) which presents a societal consensus as if there are no major breaks, only institutionally manageable conflicts that can reconcile in the free market place of ideas.

However other theorists such as Stanley Fish (1989:141-60) present a more dynamic theory of communities, consensus and change.

Like Hall, Fish sees reader, writer and text as “constrained by the possibilities that are built into the conventional system of intelligibility” (1989:83), the acts of both composition and interpretation are governed by the norms of the communities to which the author or reader belongs.

However Fish does not see these “interpretive communities”² or their norms as monolithic or impervious to change. Rather he conceives of these norms as a set of “nested” beliefs that on occasion “may affect and even alter one another and so alter the entire system or network they comprise” (Fish 1989:146). In this model interpretive communities are not just mechanisms that produce stability and continuity, paradoxically they are also “engines of change.”

It is an engine of change because its assumptions are not a mechanism for shutting out the world but for organising it, for seeing phenomena as

² Fish’s theory of interpretive communities, originally developed in the context of literary studies, has been widely applied including Blatt’s study of statutory interpretation (Blatt 2001) Berkowitz and TerKeurst’s study of journalist-source relationship (Berkowitz & TerKeurst 1999) and Zelizer’s study of journalist identity and practice (Zelizer 1997).

already relating to the interests and goals that make the community what it is. The community, in other words, is always involved in doing work, the work of transforming the landscape into material for its own project; but that project is itself transformed by the work it does. (Fish 1989:150)

In later work both Fiske and Hartley separately develop much broader models, which similarly account for a more dynamic set of reader responses and media intertextuality. Fiske (1989) develops the notion of the ‘active audience’ that moves beyond a notion of texts/myths as ideologically prescriptive, to a notion of textual meaning actively discovered within the context of audience needs and experience. Hartley’s (1996) notion of ‘popular reality’ as a broad ‘mediasphere’ and journalism as the ‘sense-making project of modernity’ also signals a move to a much more fluid model more attuned to intertextual relationships.

2.3 Myth and eternal stories

Jack Lule, who has studied and written about the connections between news and myth for over fifteen years (Lule 1987; 1995; 2001; 2002), treads a path between the very loosely determined cultural model of Kitch and the somewhat over determined ideological model of Fiske and Hartley.

In his book length study Lule (2001) argues that seven “master myths” – the victim, the scapegoat, the hero, the good mother, the trickster, the other world and the flood – shape the production of particular *New York Times* news stories. Although he frames his study in the universalising language of archetypes, drawn from Jung (1959) and Eliade (1958; 1963), in his most cogent case studies Lule draws on a number of other frameworks to enrich his analysis, thus providing a contemporary politicised context for what he designates “eternal stories”.

His analysis of Mother Teresa as good mother, for example, shows how recourse to an easy mythic framework allows the eclipse of problematic structural issues concerning gender, religion and poverty. Lule also draws on

other theoretical frameworks such as studies of the human-interest story to show how myth can feed into reliance on journalistic routines leading to a naturalised, ideologically inflected portrait.

However his analysis of baseball player Mark McGuire as hero is less convincing. Lule admits from the outset that in mass-mediated celebrity culture, identification of heroes is problematised. However he finds in the *Times*' media coverage of McGuire's season-long attempt to break baseball's home-run record, a contemporary heroic quest. He argues that the structure of the hero myth can be found within the wider field of proliferating celebrity stories however it must be "retooled" for modern audiences.

Lule's work is difficult to critique because he adroitly covers most bases: he references Drucker's contention that sporting stars are "shaped, fashioned and marketed as heroic" (Lule 2001:85); race is included with reference to the media's lack of coverage of Dominican star Sammy Sosa's concurrent quest (2001:98); issues of masculinity and power are also discussed (2001:99). But Lule's concentration on the identification of an "eternal story" structure – hero born of common origins, sets out on quest, is tested and returns triumphant – limits his ability to engage with what is dynamically new about the modern celebrity/hero.

His modern "retooling" of the myth merely involves admitting change to the beginning and end points of the story.

"The celebrity hero already was well known: his story thus began with the quest. And the story finished not with the triumphal completion of the quest but with the season-ending cessation of the media spotlight" (2001:101)

He skates around some of the key issues but does not, for example, engage sufficiently with the "staged authenticity" (Rojek 2001:21) of modern celebrity or the commodification of contemporary sport and sporting personalities,

which radically recast traditional notions of “quest,” and the social value deriving from that quest.³

While there is certainly an argument to be made for the heroics of sporting contest and for the ritualised expression of identity by sports fans, mapping contemporary conditions against “eternal story” structures is at best a preliminary analytic tool not the diagnostic solution Lule promises.⁴

Lule argues that it is possible to hear “the myth above the din” of celebrity:

Here we must rely upon the power of the ancient and the archetypal. The myth of the Hero has endured since humans first told stories. The cycle and structure – the model and paradigm – still must be found today. (Lule 2001:102)

Here Lule seems to point to some deep, authentic, primal model that is at odds with his delineation in other places of the social construction of myth in journalistic texts.

Elizabeth Bird is critical of the “universalising” text-bound approach of Lule’s study. She argues for an anthropological understanding of myth “more as process than text and as a joint product of storyteller and audience.” (2003:159).

Although Bird is cautious about any easy constitution of “active audiences” who define resistant interpretations to popular texts, (Fiske 1989) she situates her critique within Hall’s (1981) framework of the “active work” of cultural transformations. “Existing traditions and activities [are subject to] active

³ Lule seems to accept and celebrate uncritically the idea that part of the “social value” (an essential component in his typology of the hero) derived from McGuire’s quest was a wholesome distraction from the unsavoury Clinton/Lewinsky scandal that was simultaneously playing itself out on the national stage.

⁴ In their analysis of the “cultural construction” of Tiger Woods, Polulmbaum and Wieting propose quite a different model. Rather than looking for a pre-existing story format they contend “that mining sports stories for nuance, background, contradiction, and complication is a productive way to study the prevalent “moral order” of a given community – from the neighborhood to the nation and even at the international level – and the ways this order gets embodied and conveyed.” (1999:70-1)

reworking so that they come out a different way: they appear to ‘persist’ – yet, from one period to another, they come to stand in a different relation to the ways working people live and the ways they define their relations to each other, to ‘the others’ and to the conditions of life.” (Hall quoted in Bird 2003:160)

Bird argues the need for multi-site ethnographic audience studies, which would attempt to conceptualise and understand the emergence of broad intertextual “mediascapes”. However she also argues that more traditional text-based studies can play a part in this project if they pursue a “thick” description, which looks towards the place of the text in everyday life.

The holistic, cultural focus of anthropology, reach[es] out from the story itself toward a set of connections between it and notions that are simmering in the culture at large. In this respect although the analysis starts with the text, I believe such a “thick” contextual exploration also sheds light on the relationship between text and reception. (Bird 2003:162)

2.4 Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality is crucial to Bird’s notion of ‘thick’ description. It has also been widely used as a conceptual tool in media studies, notably by Fiske (1989) in developing his theory of the active audience. It is a term first used by psychoanalyst and literary theorist Julia Kristeva and further developed by other French structuralists such as Roland Barthes.

Daniel Chandler (1994) presents a useful summary of the concept as originally outlined by Kristeva.

Kristeva referred to texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and a vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts (Kristeva 1980: 69). Uniting these two axes are shared codes: every text and every reading depends on prior

codes. Kristeva declared that ‘every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it’ (cited in Culler 1981:105). She argued that rather than confining our attention to the structure of a text we should study its ‘structuration’ (how the structure came into being). This involved siting it ‘within the totality of previous or synchronic texts’ of which it was a ‘transformation’ (*Le texte du roman*, cited by Coward & Ellis 1977:52).

It is in this broad sense, as a descriptor for “the universe of the text” and as an indicator that texts are always in some sense undergoing “transformation” that the concept of intertextuality will be most useful in this study.

However as Ott and Walter (2000) have pointed out the term intertextuality has been used in two quite different, and often contradictory, ways in media studies. While the original meaning of the term, as just outlined, was concerned with designating an interpretive practice, freeing the text from the determining authority of the author, some contemporary theorists have also used it to designate an authorial strategy. Thus the writers/producers of postmodern texts such as *The Simpsons* are seen to deliberately create an intertextual product through their strategies of allusion, pastiche and parody.

In this study I am primarily interested in intertextuality as a general textual property but on occasion I will point to specific strategies of allusion adopted by journalists. However although starting from quite divergent points of view I would suggest that there is a convergent relationship between these two notions of intertextuality.

As Ott and Walter (2000:441) themselves note, the preponderance of media adopting deliberate intertextual strategies may lead to changes in the way audiences engage and interpret texts.

The collage-like, participatory nature of intertextual media fosters an aggregative rather than sequential way of seeing and knowing. Instead of processing data as a finite set of causal relations, audiences favor a

spatial origination in which everything is related to everything else. (Ott and Walter 2000:441)

Thus the popularity of intertextuality as a textual strategy attunes contemporary audiences to working with texts in a broad sense. Intertextuality in both senses also points to the connections between textuality and subjectivity or what philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1988) has called “narrative identity”.

2.5 Narrative identity

For Ricoeur the mythic text of any community is “the bearer of something which exceeds its own frontiers; it is the bearer of other *possible* worlds” (Ricoeur 1991:489).

Mark Wallace notes that Ricoeur understands a text’s “revelation” in “performative” not “propositional” terms. Here revelation is understood not as something imposed but as an “event of new meaning between text and interpreter” (Wallace 2000:305).

[Ricoeur] refers to the ‘areligious sense of revelation’ just insofar as any poetic text – by virtue of its power to fuse the world of the text and the world of the reader – can become a world that I inhabit and within which I project my inmost possibilities. (Wallace 2000:305).

Ricoeur posits the idea of “narrative identity” (Ricoeur 1988:244-49) as not only a crucial form of knowing but also the critical mechanism of subject formation. At risk of oversimplification it can be expressed as: we are the stories that we tell ourselves. Or as Ricoeur says: characters “are themselves plots” (1992:143).

Ricoeur’s notion of narrative identity is not about self-absorption in the detail of our own stories it is about a dynamic relationship between our own stories and the stories of others.

The self of self-knowledge is the fruit of an examined life, to recall Socrates' phrase in the Apology. And an examined life is, in part, one purged, one clarified by the cathartic effects of the narratives, be they historical or fictional, conveyed by our culture. So self-constancy refers to a self-instructed by the works of a culture that it has applied to itself. (Ricoeur 1988:247)

The concept of narrative identity is not a static model of sameness, it highlights the fluid cultural understanding of contemporary identities but it never-the-less maintains a sense of "self-constancy". It is a "practical" term rooted in the question of agency: it answers the question 'Who did this?' rather than 'Who is this?' (Ricoeur 1988: 246) It applies equally to individuals and communities: "Individual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history." (1988:247)

Ricoeur postulates that both fiction and non-fiction narratives are a "vast laboratory for thought experiments in which the resources of variation encompassed by narrative identity are put to the test of narration." (1992:148) As David Rasmussen puts it:

One of Ricoeur's most brilliant insights is to reconceived [the] dialectic of concordance and discordance [of the sense of personal identity across time] on a higher level as the dialectic between sameness and selfhood thematized as a set of "imaginative variations" entertained by the narrative. This is the very point of narrative. Narrative does not seek to conceal this dialectic but rather it seeks out the contradictions. (Rasmussen 2002:63)

Ken Plummer's (1995) work on contemporary sexual stories also points to the dynamic interface between notions of myth, narrative and identity.

Plummer argues that radically new stories, such as gay and lesbian coming out stories, women's rape survivor stories and stories focused on recovery from

sexual dysfunction, are deeply connected to the traditional stream of storytelling. He shows that three movements are common to each of these new types of sexual stories: suffering leads to a turning point or epiphany, which in turn leads to a transformation, surviving or surpassing. These elements link directly to the traditional mythic patterns of journey, suffering and consummation identified by literary critic Langdon Elsbree (1982).

He argues that these connections between the traditional and the emergent are part of the political power of these new narratives:

These more general narrative patterns resonate through the stories of sexual suffering...Indeed one of the reasons for their 'success' in the late twentieth century – their widespread appearance – may well be that they speak to much wider stories that are part of our heritage and which are emotionally identifiable by listeners and tellers. (Plummer 1995:55)

Plummer argues that these new stories run alongside more familiar stories “providing a dispersal of critical commentary” (1995:132-3). Or in Ricoeur’s terms these new and old stories together provide a series of imaginative variations or possible worlds.

2.6 Towards a definition of myth

In concluding this chapter I would like to draw together some of the elements discussed into a set of definitional notes that provide a model of myth appropriate for use in journalism studies.

In his exhaustive study of different approaches to myth in fields as diverse as anthropology, theology, literary studies and cultural studies Doty warns that “myth is a term with no singular historical usage; rather it has carried and does carry a wide range of defining features” (2000:30). He argues for a “complex field definition” or a “definitional matrix” that “recognizes mythic multidimensionality in both origination and application” (2000:33).

The ten points below emerge out of my reading of the literature as outlined above. They are not meant to be exhaustive but they provide a general “definitional matrix” for my study of myth in *Good Weekend* journalism.

1. Myths are meaning seeking narratives that grow in narrative power through repetition, evolution and adaptation.

2. Myths bring into dialogue past, present and emerging paradigms; they deploy interactive sets of symbolic codes; although traditionally associated with religious or sacred stories and symbols, contemporary myths draw on a range of psychological, socio-political and scientific images and frameworks.

3. Individual myths are best understood as a node at the centre of a complex network of inter-related stories; as broad, intertextual narratives, myths can act as literary organising devices, which bring different, sometimes contradictory, textual elements into dialogue with one another.

4. Myths are social stories, which emerge out of commonly understood cultural frameworks; they narrate themes of fundamental importance to cultural groups; they can serve to confirm or challenge broadly held cultural beliefs.

5. Myths also provide narrative frameworks that are used by individuals to help organise experience; they influence personal identity formation; they can provide both restrictive and transformative models of subjectivity.

6. Myth is a pervasive narrative form: myths and mythic references can be identified in common speech, literary works, religious texts, journalism and other popular cultural forms.

7. Narratives that are not themselves myths can draw on mythic themes and serve mythic functions through strategies of allusion and explicit invocation.

8. Different myths and mythic references function with different degrees of emotional and effective power; they can be used as a simple type of narrative shorthand ('Steve Waugh is an Australian hero') or as a powerful life-changing story ('I've been saved by Jesus').

9. Sets of interlocking mythic stories can act together to form a cohesive mythology, which can work as a powerful ideological framework that underwrites either progressive or regressive directions for personal and cultural change.

10. Attempts to mobilise particular mythic forms can be either intentional or unintentional, however their ultimate interpretation and use is cultural, resulting from unpredictable text audience interactions; any particular interpretation therefore is never completely foreclosed and must be recognised as a possible reading.