



News on the Roll

Professor Christopher Cook

6 May 2008

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. And I should begin by thanking those amongst you who have stayed the course with me here at Barnard's Inn Hall over these three months. And the rest of you for having been tempted in by what I can only describe as a rather glib title for my third lecture on the visual imagery that characterises national television news in the United Kingdom. I have to admit that this title 'News on the Roll' was prompted by the opening sequence of Orson Welles's movie masterpiece Citizen Kane, that delicious parody of the American March of Time newsreel series that Welles rechristened News on the March.

In this cod newsreel, the life and death of Welles's hero Charles Foster Kane is gathered together with all the subtlety of a steam hammer cracking a walnut. But the strident commentary that wrenches English syntax out of any familiar shape, the blaring music and the extraordinary montage created a unique impression of Kane's titanic life happening here and now. And I want to argue in a while that the 'here and now' or to put it another way, the sensation that we are in a perpetual present tense is the hall mark of rolling news in its various forms. And if my examples today are drawn from the BBC's News Channel and Sky News, that simply reflects the fact that these are currently perceived as the most important rolling news channels in the UK.

Rolling news is new, not yet thirty years old. Ted Turner who is credited with having invented the format, first put CNN, the Cable News Network on the air in 1980. And I would want to argue it should be understood as the convergence of developing media technologies and delivery systems quite as much as a case of consumers developing an appetite for a different kind of news. Indeed, you might want to go further and say that this appetite is largely created by technological development. To take a simple example it's the geostationary satellite that allows us to see what is happening in America's back garden at this very moment as it's happening. Thus we suddenly become interested in seeing just what our Transatlantic neighbours are up to. And this simple example suggests another thing about rolling news: that it is hungry for pictures. You want to see the American neighbours in their yard, not hear about them. You could say that that Rolling News is a professional version of using a WebCam to talk to friends and family on your computer.

So before I try to explore what Rolling News is and what it delivers to its audience, how it rolls, I want to consider just a handful of the extraordinary changes that have taken place in broadcast news over the past two decades, technologically and editorially. Though you cannot always separate the two. And I'd like to play three clips that seem to me to encapsulate the ways in which broadcast news has developed.

Two things about the first two of these clips. They are both American, reflecting the fact that whether we like it or not it is the United States that shapes the broad outlines of UK News programmes. Not the content, of course; nor the editorial principles. Simply the approach. The other thing that these clips have in common is that they both date from 1991. So the historian in me is tempted to see that year as a moment of change in the way in which we consumed television news and the manner in which it was produced. Increasingly the last decade of the twentieth century seems to me to be the first of the twenty-first rather than the end of what that great historian Eric Hobsbawm christened 'The Age of Extremes'. But you must judge that for yourself.

This first clip dates from January 17th 1991. That was the day that Operation Desert Storm began with the

United States leading an alliance to drive Saddam Hussain out of Kuwait which he had invaded and refused to leave, despite all but universal condemnation at the United Nations. The start of the war seemed to take at least one news organisation by surprise. CNN had three correspondents holed up in a hotel in Baghdad, including Bernhard Shaw and the veteran war reporter Peter Arnett.

CLIP ONE: Report from Bagdhad January 17th 1991

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=DOPvdlQwfUU&feature=r>

Duration: 0.41

I have to say that that short report for CNN still makes the hairs stand to attention on the back of my neck! Just think. Here are reporters from the Allied side describing what our missiles are doing to the enemy's capital city. How the Iraqis are responding to the launch of what is generally believed to have been one of largest displays of fire power in the history of modern warfare. It's as if Richard Dimbleby had been in Berlin on the night of the 22 November 1943 reporting for the BBC as the RAF bombed the city in an air raid that killed 2,000 Berliners and rendered 175,000 homeless. No wonder that the Pentagon, assisted by Academics like Steven Livingston at George Washington University [Clarifying the CNN Effect: An examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention - Research Paper R.18 June 1997 - The Joan Shorenstein Center, Harvard University, John F Kennedy School of Government] started talking about the 'CNN Effect'. How twenty-four news coverage has had a new and direct effect on how the American government makes its decisions.

Peter Arnett's reports from Bagdhad when his colleagues left him on his own became the subject of considerable controversy, but this is not the place to follow that particular thread of the story. What is at issue here is that television news - by luck as much as planning - was in a place and at a time that it have never been before. I don't think that it's an exaggeration to say that at this moment the principal pleasure that television news gave its viewers changed. Where as before it had been about making sense of the world, now it was, quite simply, about being there. Thereafter the principal task for British news broadcasters will be to reconcile the public service criteria of informing and educating with the entertainment value of putting the viewer in the picture as it happens 'live'.

But you need the pictures and this brings me to my second clip. It is a shocking piece of video. Sickening you may feel. In March 1991 an African American taxi driver was stopped by the Los Angeles Police after speeding on the freeway. His name Rodney King.

CLIP TWO; Rodney King beaten by the LAPD

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=7ikXlmAk9Oc&feature=related>

Duration: 1.26

Rodney King being beaten by Los Angeles Police Department officers Laurence Powell, Timothy Wind, Theodore Briseno and Sergeant Stacey Koon after being chased for speeding. Four to six other officers stand by making no effort to restrain their colleagues as they repeatedly strike the black man and there is nothing on the tape that that shows Mr. King attacking the officers, as some have claimed.

The rest of the story is quickly told. Public outrage at what had been done to Rodney King increased tensions between the black community and the LAPD with African Americans growing ever angrier about police brutality and issues such as unemployment and poverty in the black community of South Central Los Angeles. Eventually the four police officers were tried in a California court charged with using excessive force and were acquitted. The announcement of these acquittals sparked the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

But it was the original video of the assault on Rodney King, shown around the world, that provoked the initial fury at the behaviour of the Los Angeles policemen and it was taken by an amateur who just happened to be there on the spot that day with his camera. George Holliday who wisely recorded much of the event from a distance. This is almost certainly not the first example of Television News relying on amateurs for its pictures. You will recall Abraham Zapruder's film capturing the moment of President John

F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas in November 1963. But I would want to argue that it is a start of a trend. Whereas once movie cameras belonged to professionals or at least professional amateurs, now developing consumer electronics have made cinematographers of us all. Look at my third clip - an underground train being evacuated after the bombings in London on July 7th 2005.

CLIP THREE: Underground train being evacuated, July 2005

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/video/2005/07/07/VI2005070701390.html>

Duration: 1.21

Images like these of the aftermath of the London bombings caused a reporter for the Washington Post to observe [Yuki Noguchi Washington Post Staff Writer - Friday, July 8, 2005; Page A16]

'Some of the most intimate images of yesterday's bomb blasts in London came from cell phones equipped with cameras and video recorders, demonstrating how a technology originally marketed as entertainment has come to play a significant role in up-to-the-minute news. The availability of the cameras, combined with the ability to transmit pictures and text instantaneously, is enabling the world to view news with nearly the immediacy of a victim or eyewitness.'

And towards the end of a thoughtful piece Yuki Noguchi enlisted the advice of a Media Professor for a comment - always a good strategy! Kenny Irby, visual journalism leader at the Poynter Institute, a Florida-based school for journalists was quoted as saying "The proliferation of cell phones and digital cameras . . . have led to a great deal more documentation added to the news stream. [Digital cell images provide a] unique voyeurism 'The intimacy comes out of the spontaneity.'"

There's that present tense again. And I'll to return to this idea later in my lecture. You might also want to reflect on Noguchi's opening thought 'how a technology originally marketed as entertainment has come to play a significant role in up-to-the-minute news.' I also want to talk about news and entertainment

In the meantime, should you doubt how important amateur footage is to news broadcasting today then let me read you the following which you will find on the BBC's Website:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/your_news/6719867.stm]

'Have you got a story to tell or is there something you think we should follow up? The One and Six O'clock and BBC News 24 and the news website want you to get in touch. The part you play in making the news is very important. With blogs, vlogs, mobile phones and digital cameras it is not just journalists who have a role in gathering the news. What is happening where you live? Is something significant, bizarre or unusual taking place? Every week we will follow up one of your suggestions so look out for us in a neighbourhood near you. Your News on BBC News 24 is the first news programme to be entirely based on emails and views sent in by you.'

Since this was posted, this month in fact, "BBC News 24" became "BBC News" as part of a £550,000 rebranding of the BBC's news output. But I see nothing on the website to suggest that the BBC News isn't just as interested as its predecessor in coaxing stories and images out of viewers. As for Sky News, they make no secret of their desire for material from their audience, soliciting blogs and photos and e-mails.

So how might we explain this flurry of interactivity? Is it a desire to extend the principles of democracy into news broadcasting? A newly found conviction that the people should have their say. 'The People's News' you might say? Perhaps, though there's no evidence that I've seen to suggest that any of our existing broadcasters are surrendering any ounce or gram of their editorial control over the material that they transmit.

Maybe it's a straightforward acknowledgment of the extraordinary technological changes that have overtaken our visual culture? An age when even the most basic mobile phone has an inbuilt camera that can record still and moving pictures. A time when even the least cyber-literate amongst us can 'improve' the images of that we record on telephones and cameras. And all of us can send the result as an e-attachment.

Perhaps it has something to do with immediacy, the present tense that News aspires to. The idea of liveness which seems to drive so much rolling news on both sides of the Atlantic. 'And now we go live to

our viewer in... '

But most of all it would appear to be an acknowledgement of the ever-growing role that the Internet plays in our lives. And how the Internet quite as much as news on television shapes our cognitive maps of reality. If news is information about the world then the Internet is bursting with news, and its news coloured by all manner of different shades of opinion. News too, that isn't mediated for the consumer in the ways that I described in my first lecture here. Whose News? Just Google the word 'Conspiracy' and you'll see what I mean. There are 37,700,000 strikes and then go to 'Top Conspiracy Sites' and you seem to have stepped through and beyond the doors of the wildest dreams of the man who runs that famous shop in Knightsbridge! As for the ubiquitous blog, as awful as the worst Christmas Round Robin Newsletter and as magnificent as The Huffington Post, it undoubtedly makes journalists of us all. Not necessarily good journalists, but journalists nonetheless.

When you look at the BBC News Channel or Sky News all that contemporary clutter on the screen, the scrolling headlines, the clock, the regular invitation to press an interactive button and get a longer version of the story it begins to resemble a web page. As Andrew Crisell has observed 'Consciously or otherwise, the crowded screen of the all news channels evokes the virtual display unit of a computer - an admission of the challenge the computer poses to television as a multifarious information provider.' [A Study of Modern Television - Thinking inside the Box Andrew Crisell - Palgrave Macmillan 2006 - ISBN 10:033396409-8 (Pbk) P56] And that brings us to a notable criticism of rolling news in the United Kingdom. We don't watch it very much, but we do spend an awful lot of time in front of our computers. According to BARB, who measure television audiences in the UK, Sky News is watched for about eight minutes a week. The BBC News Channel does rather better at thirteen minutes a week. But even if you add a minute per week for Fox News that's still only twenty two minutes a week when on average we watch a total of over twenty seven hours of television a week. [Figures from BARB - March 2008]

In 2004 the average broadband household spent 16 hours a week on line. ['Rolling News RIP' - Paul Mason , Guardian January 16th 2006]. 'Ofcom research reveals that average daily web use rose by 158% over the past four years' [International Advertising Bureau - <http://www.iabuk.net/en/1/iabpwconlineadspendfiguresfirsthalf2007011007.mxs>]. So we can extrapolate that on average a broadband household now spends about forty hours on line each week. One more statistic. According to the UK Press Gazette the BBC News website, reported an average of 13.8 million unique users per week between January to September of last year. [UK Press Gazette December 18th 2007].

Should one be surprised that rolling news sometime emulates and often tries to look like a website on the Internet? But it isn't a website and it isn't a conventional news programme. It's a hybrid and nowhere is this more obvious in its use of graphics and its title sequences in particular.

Here is the title sequence that precedes the 'news on the hour' on the BBC's News Channel.

CLIP FOUR: BBC News Channel Title sequence

DVD: BBC News 24, Sat 26th April 2008

IN: 04.12

OUT: 04.59

DUR: 00.47

That's surely one of the most elaborate title sequences ever devised for a news programme. But the message couldn't be simpler. Modify the BBC's motto, which appears below the Corporation's coat of arms, that 'Nation shall speak Peace unto Nation' - to 'Satellite shall speak peace and war unto Satellite' and you have it. The thread of molten red news flashes from the first satellite receiving dish through an oddly assorted selection of corners of the world, troops keeping the peace somewhere, Africa, Newcastle, China, Wembley Stadium, Westminster, India, Edinburgh, maybe Afghanistan or the Gulf, Washington to a second bank of satellite dishes. Then we are outside BBC Television Centre in West London and into the short graphics sequence that bridges the exterior shot of Television Centre and the pair of newsreaders in the studio. (I'll return to the graphic bridge in a moment.)

This is the BBC's news brand. The pictures tell us that they bring us news from all around the world, but nevertheless home thoughts will be just as important as those from abroad. Indeed that thread of molten red news seems to unite the world, to bind it together, suggesting not just that BBC News has a global presence, but that BBC is uniquely placed to make connections for its audience. Or even perhaps a version of the Internet itself, turning the globe into a village in just 40 seconds, with the BBC there at the global parish pump. And notice the other recurring image apart from the satellite dishes and the molten flash - it's that modern Cyclops, the electronic camera because it's the pictures that make the news. As for the pips that punctuate the end of the music. Are they heartbeats - BBC News taking the pulse of the world - or 'the pips' that once led us to the news on radio, and so a reminder of the BBC's history as a news broadcaster. That idea, I would want to argue, surfaces in the short graphic bridge that leads us to the two presenters in the studio. There's the globe that's always been at the centre of the Corporation's television branding of itself and behind it the names of the world's principal cities. And the Molten news flash - what's happened to that? Well it seems to have become a sequence of belts that girdle the earth rather like the Internet you may feel. Welcome to global news and a news that I'd want to suggest blends the BBC's version of its own traditions with the Internet.

Now for Sky News.

CLIP FIVE: Sky News Title sequence

DVD: Sky News, Sat 26th April 2008

IN: 05.09

OUT: 05.30

DUR: 00.21

That, you may feel, is a rather more modest calling card. Less the BBC's elaborately pillared portico to the news that follows than a modest porch put up by the local builder. But where does the imagery within the sequence seem to take its cue from? The computer surely. Those visual images of the stories we're about to be told bear a striking resemblance to the way in which a news page on the web is designed, which in turn takes its cue from the idea of Windows with a capital W. Once again we seem to be being introduced to a hybrid news, part traditional television - notice how the presenter, Colin Brazier welcomes us - and part internet. Did you notice the flash at the bottom of the screen inviting us to e-mail the programme?

All the examples of Sky News and the BBC News Channel that I'm going to show you this afternoon were recorded on Saturday 26th April between eight and nine o'clock in the evening. I quite deliberately chose a Saturday because traditionally it's a slow news day, and that ought to put any Rolling News Channel on its mettle. How do you keep the audience with you when the news is hardly breaking - not really unfolding even!

The time has come when we ought to consider what exactly is meant by the phrase 'Rolling News'. The first thing to be said is that it's a 'concept' and not a discrete kind of news. The 'concept' was pioneered by Ted Turner's CNN service, initially in the United States and then around the world. Turner created the Cable News Network in 1980 working on the assumption that there were millions of Americans who nowhere near home and a television set when the major networks ran their national news at 6.30 in the evening. When he launched CNN Turner - never a man to hide his light under a bushel announced that, "We won't be signing off until the world ends. We'll be on, and we will cover the end of the world, live, and that will be our last event. . . . and when the end of the world comes, we'll play 'Nearer My God to Thee' before we sign off."

And if the attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11th 2001 were indeed the end of one world, CNN were the first on air with the news. Carol Lin, the anchor on duty that morning interrupted an ad at 8:49 a.m. Eastern Time with an image of the first burning tower in Lower Manhattan. 'You are looking at obviously a very disturbing live shot there. That is the World Trade Centre, and we have unconfirmed reports this morning that a plane has crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Centre'. clearly something relatively devastating happening this morning there on the south end of the island of Manhattan. That is once again, a picture of one of the towers of the World Trade Centre.'

Rolling News came into its own that grim day in September 2001 and again when London was bombed

four years later in July 2005. Here was genuine 'breaking news', stories that twisted and turned and changed minute by minute. A story with pictures - often unendurable images. Which of us who watched the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Centre will ever forget that looped image of the second plane slicing into the South Tower? Pictures that begged for an interpretation.

But most news isn't breaking news... It happens and that's it. What do you do then if you're editing the BBC News Channel or Sky News? The answer would seem to be that you turn it into breaking news. And as luck - or maybe good judgement - would have it. There was just such a story on Sky News on Saturday 26th April. And we can follow it through its first hour.

For the BBC News Channel at eight o'clock that Saturday the top stories were the industrial dispute at the Grangemouth oil refinery in Scotland, Lord Levy's attack on Gordon Brown in an interview with the Mail on Sunday, the recount of ballot papers in Harare revealing that opposition to President Mugabe won a majority in the Zimbabwe parliament, a rabid dog has bitten three people at a kennels in North London; Amy Winehouse has been spending more time with the police, the singer was released with a caution after admitting slapping a man and Chelsea beat Manchester United.

At the same time - eight o'clock - Sky News led with the Grangemouth strike. Then came this second story.

CLIP SIX: Sky News

DVD: Sky News, Sat 26th April 2008

IN: 08.57

OUT: 10.43

DUR: 01.46

A sad story, the death of Dermot and Loraine Flood and their two children in what may be suspicious circumstances. But is it a lead story, up there with the Grangemouth dispute and the Zimbabwean recount? It's a risky thing to try and second guess any editorial decision. If you were here a month ago you may remember how at least one of my interpretations of ITV's coverage of the Katrina disaster provoked mirth and disbelief in my guests from the BBC and from Sky. I had suggested that a particular image of helicopters flying across a setting sun in New Orleans echoed the poster for Francis Ford Coppola's Vietnam movie *Apocalypse Now* and that the news story was suggesting a parallel between America's humiliation in South East Asia and what had happened in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina when the Federal government and the military seemed to have made another fine mess of it. Anyway, where angels fear to tread etc... The story of the Flood family may be there because it suits the audience profile of Sky News at the weekend, family orientated and readers of the tabloids rather than the quality press. Or was it because Ray Kennedy, the Sky Correspondent, knew more than he was able to reveal about the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of this family and so here was a story that was going to develop - the best kind of 'rolling news' story. Or was it simply that Kennedy was there and on the spot and ready to deliver live pictures and live commentary from the small community in which the Flood family lived. So fulfilling that essential precondition of the best rolling news stories, that they should be live and happening as we watch them.

I am going to concentrate on this idea of 'liveness' for the time being.

In *A Study of Modern Television - Thinking inside the Box* Andrew Crisell argues that 'Liveness is television's 'Unique Selling Proposition' [A Study of Modern Television - Thinking inside the Box Andrew Crisell - Palgrave Macmillan 2006 - ISBN 10:033396409-8 (Pbk) P54] 'Television is good for news because the ultimate goal of news is not only to convey the sights and sounds of the real world through 'actuality' but to convey them as soon as possible after they have happened - or better still, while they are happening. And news is good for television because it shows television's unique power to best advantage, recalling the good old days when virtually all its content was live.' As becomes clear when you watch hour of Sky News that I recorded that Saturday at the end of April, this story from County Wexford in the Irish Republic is the only genuinely live and developing story that Sky have on their hands, though all stories on television news are presented as if 'live'. That, as Andrew Crisell argues, is what makes television news so attractive, that 'we' and 'they' are here now.

Here's how Sky come back to the story later in their first bulletin of the hour. Up to now all that we have had is Ray Kennedy live on location, a photo of Mr and Mrs Flood on their wedding day, snapshots of their two young children Julie and Mark and general footage of the exterior of the burnt out cottage and a body being taken away in a coffin.

CLIP SEVEN: Sky News

DVD: Sky News, Sat 26th April 2008

IN: 14.44

OUT: 16.14

DUR: 01.30

Well caught Mr Brasier. That is of course is genuinely 'live' television, but as the presenter fumbles for the ball hoping to hear that the Garda spokesman is up and running, it's not at all what we have come to expect 'Live' to mean. Do you remember when the newsreader was forced to pick up the telephone on his desk to take a message from the gallery? Technical glitches are an affront to the visual polish of supposed 'live' newscasting.

In time - in five minutes to be precise - at the top of the second of Sky's four hourly news bulletins we get back to the Irish Police Spokesman 'Amon' Donoghue

CLIP EIGHT: Sky News

DVD: Sky News, Sat 26th April 2008

IN: 21.11

OUT: 28.30

DUR: 07.19

That whole clip lasts little more than seven minutes, but it seems an age. And you can almost hear the relief in Colin Brasier's voice when he's allowed to get back to the rest of the bulletin. Why does it feel so long? Well, to state the obvious it is long in comparison with what we expect of stories on a rolling news. The two preceding clips were both under two minutes. More significantly it's the same shot, 'Amon' Donoghue in mid shot talking to journalists. There are no cut aways, we don't see the media scrum and we don't get a reprise of the wedding photo of Mr and Mrs Flood, the snapshots of their two young children Julie and Mark or general footage of the exterior of the burnt out cottage and a body being taken away in a coffin. But something else is missing other than visual variety. This is source material waiting to be edited into news. News, as I suggested in my opening lecture is only news when it is mediated. We need someone to explain what the Garda officer is trying to tell us, to interpret his message, to read between the lines for us. And here, I want to suggest, we arrive at the fundamental dialectic of rolling news, between an opaque and often confusing reality and the sharp focus of the mediated news story that is constructed from that reality. Rolling News channels confirm our taste for order over chaos, understanding not confusion. In *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*, John Ellis, who teaches in the Media Arts Department at Royal Holloway College in the University of London, writes about how video graphics are used to shape and order raw news, but I believe that his argument holds good for the dialectic that I have just identified.

Ellis writes, '[News] bulletins are held together by their direct antithesis: the controlled image of the news anchor-person (whose title is surely significant), plus the highly contrived graphics that accompany the explanatory material provided by the anchor person. News has pushed its image acquisition technology (that is, its camera plus the means to communicate back to base) towards instantaneity. At the same time it has developed the use of real-time graphics seemingly as a counter-weight. To try and anchor these vivid and unstable images of the near-present. Visually, news is an unresolved dialectic between these two extremes of disorder and control.' [*Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* - John Ellis, London I.B.Tauris - 2002 P98]

And I think we find an example of just this when the story of the family tragedy in Wexford returns in the next Sky News news bulletin, the third of the hour.

CLIP NINE: Sky News

DVD: Sky News, Sat 26th April 2008

IN: 39.44

OUT: 42.15

DUR: 02.31

It's a perfect little news story now with a beginning, a middle and an end. It begins with a wedding photograph and pictures of the two dead children and the powerful image of a coffin being wheeled to a waiting hearse - marriage, birth and death you might say. We are taken live to the scene by the studio 'anchor' where all is explained by Ray Kennedy. Eamon Donoghue is now eloquently short and his message carefully shaped for him. And it runs at just two and a half minutes. And the sharp eyed amongst you may have noticed that at last the Sky caption has spelt Eamon Donoghue's name right. He's E-A-M-O-N now and not the phonetic A-M-O-N.

I find it interesting too that when Kennedy's opening commentary is establishing the storyline, the photographs of the Floods and their children and the shots of that coffin being wheeled on the pavement which had seemed almost clichéd when we first saw them are now some poignant and a cause for grief. What has been lost is what seemed to be dull, when at some length Eamon Donoghue explained exactly what the Garda did and did not know at this particular time and warned against the danger of speculating beyond the facts. But this represents another loss too, the story in its final form doesn't even possess the simple hinterland that the Garda interview gave it when we listened to Donoghue at length. Then there was time an opportunity to think beyond the immediate circumstances of four deaths, to wonder about rural Ireland and why most homes there possess firearms, to suspect that the police and the journalists knew more than they were telling us, to feel that there must be a history to this story. Now it's an elegantly wrapped news story carefully mediated for us by the reporter on the ground.

In a passage in his book *News and Journalism in the UK*, Brian McNair makes the point. 'In mainstream television news few stories can claim more than two minutes of coverage, requiring that the complexities and the messiness of events be glossed over. If they cannot be, the event may not be reported. The complex histories and processes underlying most events cannot be easily translated into television terms. For the same reason, it is easier for broadcast news journalists to prioritise effects over causes, such as in the case of an industrial dispute. The filming and interviewing of inconvenienced airline passengers at an airport is easier, more televisual, than is narrating the progress of 18 months of negotiations which led to the dispute taking place.' [*News and Journalism in the UK*, Brian McNair - Routledge Fourth Ed 2003 - ISBN 0-415-30706-6 (Pbk) P80-1] As Pierre Bourdieu has observed 'Television news is deracinated: neither the causes nor the consequences of the events it features are apparent.' [*On Television and Journalism* - Pierre Bourdieu Trans Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson Pluto Press 1998 - P6-7]

And another thing. What began as breaking news here on Sky, the *raison d'être* of Rolling News has become the carefully crafted news story that we expect to find on any regular news programme. ITV at 6.30 or 10.00 o'clock, Channel 4 at 7.00 and the BBC Ten o'clock news. Dare one say it, but in this case Rolling aspires to the condition of Network News. And we seem to have lost the vicarious pleasure of 'liveness' that is the promise of Sky News and the BBC News Channel. And would we have ever gone to Co Wexford last Saturday if there hadn't been any pictures?

In all that I have said this afternoon there has been the presumption that Rolling News is indeed Rolling News. But there are commentators who will tell you that it's not news but entertainment, or to use the vogue word, it's Infotainment. Winston Churchill, they declare, was right to call television a 'tuppenny Punch and Judy Show', though were he still with us perhaps he might have said 'a tuppenny Richard and Judy Show'. In a more serious vein in his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* the cultural critic Neil Postman writes - 'what I am claiming - is not that television is entertaining but that it has made entertainment itself the natural format for the representation of all experience - The problem is not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter but that all subject matter is presented as entertaining, which is another

issue altogether.'

Pause for a moment and you realise that the form itself of the newscast repays a debt to entertainment. Do you remember variety show, Sunday Night at the London Palladium for example? A sequence of utterly unrelated acts that were linked together by a host, Bruce Forsyth, Norman Vaughan or Jimmy Tarbuck. The principle difference between that kind of television entertainment and a newscast is that the news leads with its star story, while the headline act only appeared during the final fifteen or so minutes of Sunday Night at the London Palladium.

However, entertainment values drive content as well as form. We might look at one last example from the BBC News Network.

CLIP TEN: BBC News

DVD: BBC News, Sat 26th April 2008

IN: 18.46

OUT: 20.32

DUR: 01.46

Amy Winehouse arrives at the police station after being arrested for slapping a man outside a bar. And it's surely the pictures of the smouldering singer scowling at the world that earn it a place in the news pecking order. It's just about a news story, but perhaps not much greater than that for which the satirist Claud Cockburn devised this headline in The Times. 'Small earthquake in Chile. No one hurt.' But borrow footage of Amy and the band, shake in a music journalist and it becomes contemporary entertainment in two senses: the artist performs for us a la MTV and we get a flash of celebrity behaving badly. Come to think of it though it maybe that they're the same thing. An example of the celebrification of our culture. But that's another lecture.

Thank you.

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