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DOWN ON THE FARM: SOAP OPERA, RURAL POLITICS AND THATCHERISM

by

Charmaine McEachern

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Adelaide, December 1990.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this work is original, except as acknowledged in the text, and has not been submitted, either in part or in whole, for a degree at this or any other university.

Charmaine McEachern.

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SYNOPSIS

This thesis addresses the relationship between television and social power. It argues that the events, relations and activities of British politics were essentially about power, about the structured inequalities of British society and the social and cultural processes which produce and reproduce them. Power is contested, and the thesis conceptualises Thatcherism, not as a hegemonic force, but as a political arena of struggle. Television was one site of contestation. To study television from this perspective, the thesis uses a long running and on-going drama serial, often referred to as a soap opera, rather than the more usual news and current affairs. *Emmerdale Farm* is set in the Yorkshire Dales. The thesis argues that the rural location is important when it comes to exploring Thatcherism and develops a theory of representation which avoids empiricism, while treating as significant the tendency at all levels of the serial's production and distribution for "the reality of the Yorkshire Dales" to be used as referent. Representation is understood as a political process. Production is central to this process as it forges interrelationships between images, social practices and constructions, discourses and other representations to construct meaning. A study of the production process of *Emmerdale Farm* reveals some of the bases of the relationships which constitute representation. Internal power relations produce points of contestation over social and cultural processes implicated in the content of the serial. Television drama conventions shape meaning in *Emmerdale Farm*, and naturalism gives a strong moral dimension to the political space created. This moral dimension is reinforced by the rural location of the serial as it articulates with cultural ideals about the rural in Britain. The thesis considers the interrelationships between various social constructions of the rural as they are mediated by *Emmerdale Farm*'s own construction. The political significance of the

serial's content is analysed through this mediation. The relationships between different kinds of constructions of the rural are studied through a consideration of three rural issues in the late nineteen eighties: overproduction, conservation and the environment and rural depopulation. The issues have to be understood in the context of Thatcherism and the efforts of a Conservative government to find ways of managing a declining capitalist economy. The moral dimension of *Emmerdale Farm* becomes highly significant in the consideration of these rural issues as they relate to Thatcherism's programme and vision for British society. Though the serial interrogates the terms of Thatcherism throughout, it consistently contests these through character and narrative. In the final analysis, it constructs a moral economy which is at odds with Thatcherite individualism and the market economy model of society. The thesis concludes that the serial provides a conservative critique of Thatcherism at a time when consent for Thatcher's rule was at its most intense. It thus resists a new hegemony but affirms capitalism itself.

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PREFACE

This is a thesis in the Political Anthropology of Britain in the late nineteen eighties. It is concerned with culture, particularly the relationship between cultural and political processes. It is based on a fieldwork period from December 1986 to February 1988 and focuses on what was happening in a farming area of the Yorkshire Dales and at Yorkshire Television in the production of *Emmerdale Farm*[1]. This study was done during the period of Thatcher's most obvious dominance, with the 1987 election giving her a third term of rule, with the economy seeming to work (growth, low inflation and falling unemployment) and privatisation in full swing. The stockmarket crash of October certainly hinted that all was not well. It predates the full exposure of the problems and contradictions of the Thatcher experiment evident now with inflation higher than it was when the Government was elected in 1979 and with real balance of trade and balance of payments problems. The fieldwork period also predated the most serious debates about the Thatcher Government's attitude to the European Economic Community, although elements of these were present, particularly in the arguments over agricultural policies.

At the time, many argued that Thatcherism was close to establishing itself as a hegemonic force, having changed the face of the nation, impelled a change in the Labour Party, and even changing, or so it seemed, how people thought about everyday things. In retrospect one can see that this was not so. This study continually makes the point that Thatcherism's hegemony was contested throughout, even in the most unlikely places, such as a rural soap opera.

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1. Fieldwork was done in both Upper Wensleydale and in Leeds, the location of Yorkshire Television which makes *Emmerdale Farm*.

INTRODUCTION

Since its deployment, television has been debated as a significant social institution. Blamed for a plethora of society's ills, it is simultaneously used in campaigns to fight them. It is regarded as crucial to the political processes of a liberal democracy, while being criticised trivialising political issues. Preoccupation with television's mystique, with its power, produces numerous articles in journals, magazines and newspapers. Further, television participates in this interrogation by routinely analysing itself.

This perception of television's social significance is also reflected in academic analyses of television. Although there are a variety of theoretical perspectives, most are fascinated by the effects and consequences of television as a medium. Arguments about effects have become the dominant discourse through which to debate the central role of social power in television. What that power is, how it works and what it does remain contested. This contestation focused through effects, usually reduces power to a single dimension working through television's content, the reproduction of ideas in its programmes.

In this thesis, I too pursue the question of the relationship between television and social power. The thesis considers the role of television in the production of knowledge in Western society and acknowledges that power must always be implied in such a production. This also suggests a relationship, within the production of knowledge and here the thesis proceeds from a position which likens the making of television programmes to the production of ethnography in Anthropology. Clifford (1988) has drawn attention to the nature of ethnography as text and demonstrated the ways in which anthropologists have constituted their relationships with the Other in order to authorise their accounts. Power (manifest in different ways) underpins both the relationships and the accounts (cf Peace 1990, Rabinow

1986). Something similar happens in the production of television programmes. Here a specific social domain and its people are constituted as Other, and television, like ethnography, uses particular techniques to give them voice, while at the same time authorising the particular constructions being made. Since ultimate control over the construction and the voice is in the hands of television personnel, they, like anthropologists, dominate the power relationship between themselves and the people they are presenting, constructing. Indeed, this thesis argues that this process of representation involves the objectification of the Other.

Representation is an important dimension of this thesis. Indeed it is central as a problem of general cultural concern and as a specific means through which to pursue the question of power and television. In focusing on representation, the thesis turns away from any formation of the concept which is grounded in empiricism, in comparing television to some already constituted "real", though its concern is always to uncover the relationship between television and power in the social world. Representation is understood as a process and a mechanism which relates numerous images, social practices, discourses and sets of relationships. Such an approach makes it possible to comprehend and explore power as multifacetted, rather than monodimensional. It relates power and authority within television to similarly structured processes and relations in the social world of both audience and producer. It extends representation beyond ideology, making it possible to understand varieties of power operating in different dimensions.

Such an approach demands a study which takes the analysis of power out of the domain of the purely theoretical and abstract. This thesis first narrows the focus of power to explore the relationship between television and national politics. Specifically, it explores the ways in which a British television continuing serial, *Emmerdale Farm*, participated in the

politics of Thatcherism in the late nineteen eighties. It argues that such a politics was precisely about power and that even drama, by exploring the social world in personal terms, engaged with Thatcherism and therefore participated in the politics which focused on it. This is considered in Chapter One.

Much work on television is too deductive, generalising about television and social power on the basis of very specific textual studies. For this reason, Chapter Two locates the textual aspect of the study of *Emmerdale Farm* within an analysis of its production as a serial. As an interpretation of Thatcher's Britain and a mechanism of representation, *Emmerdale Farm*'s production process locks author (a collective as with all television production), text and audience together in culture. Power in production is a significant part of the process of the construction and processing of meaning in the programme.

Chapter Three remains within the production process of *Emmerdale Farm*, now extending the serial's political dimensions by considering the ways in which the very conventions and practices of drama can themselves produce political significance. It argues that the political space constructed through these conventions is of such a kind that it enables, indeed promotes, particular kinds of interrogations of the processes of Thatcherism.

In Chapter Four the rural location of *Emmerdale Farm* is the focus as another dimension of the politics of the programme. Here, the construction of the rural in an aesthetic mode through television production is compared with the ways in which the people of the Yorkshire Dales construct the rural through their experience of *living* in the British countryside. Significant discontinuities, but also continuities, between the two kinds of constructions indicate the ways in which the serial's rural location is constrained by the Yorkshire Dales of lived experience but also becomes, through typification

and idealisation, an important dimension of the serial's engagement with the politics of Thatcherism.

In the next three chapters, dales' constructions and *Emmerdale Farm* constructions are compared to establish the significance of the ways in which the serial used various rural issues so that its exploration of British society implicated the wider political dimension of Thatcherism itself.

The theme of Chapter Five is overproduction and rural recession. The various discourses through which this was constituted, established a European context for rural crisis. The chapter considers the discourses, who they authorise and the kind of construction of crisis which they constitute and traces them into the discourses of *Emmerdale Farm*, exploring the transformations which they undergo in this incorporation. Using similar techniques, Chapter Six focuses on the issue of the environment and conservation and Chapter Seven, that of the changing demography of the British countryside.

Chapter Eight synthesises the disparate insights and arguments about power and representation in *Emmerdale Farm* and the serial's operation in the wider political field. In the context of a more closely focused discussion of Thatcherism as a particular view of the world, it summarises the content of the serial's engagement with this view highlighted in previous chapters and demonstrates both the critical dimensions of the serial and the limits of its critique. The method of the thesis has further enabled the study to include a temporal dimension which takes account of, not just power as different relationships in representation, but television as having different significance for power at different times. Indeed the possibility that there are eras in television is a major supposition of the thesis, not so much in the fairly direct form posited by Fuer (1984), but more like the complicated relationship uncovered by Gitlin (1983). The method of the thesis enables these complex

relations to be systematised by locking the serial into the broadest political field of British society.

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CHAPTER ONE

MEDIA, POWER, REPRESENTATION AND HEGEMONY: THATCHER'S BRITAIN AND RURAL SOAP OPERA

INTRODUCTION

Sharply focused by the nineteen seventies' motif of 'crisis', the nineteen eighties saw the whole of British society subjected to social and political change in the name of economic reconstruction and the reestablishment of an internationally "Great" Britain. The political project initiated by Thatcher when she came to power in 1979 was ambitious; the overturning of the taken for granted post-1945 welfare state and its replacement by a new market dominated Britain in which privatisation, individual economic rewards and competition were the key words.

Thatcherism as a political process is essentially about power and heavily contested. A prior conceptualisation about the character of power is useful. Power is envisaged as a variety of social processes, the essence of which is inequality, in a whole series of social locations. As such power is a relationship which produces and maintains this inequality and through which struggles over it are fought. This process of struggle is political and occurs at every level of society (Hall 1987: 20). Hall expresses this broad definition of politics well:

> Politics...is where forces and relations, in the economy, in society, in culture, have to be actively *worked on* to produce particular forms of power, forms of domination. This is the production of politics - politics as a production (1987: 20).

The political battle for and against Thatcherism was fought throughout the nineteen eighties in all areas of social life. This thesis is concerned primarily with one site of this contestation over Thatcherism, that of the media, specifically television.

THATCHERISM AND THE MEDIA

Though many have criticised the domination of finance in the reconstruction of Britain and have pointed to the decline in manufacturing with its catastrophic effects on old industrial communities (Riddell 1985: 231, Pollard 1986: 196-203, Nairn 1986: 238-244, Glyn and Sutcliffe 1986: 245-246), Thatcher and her Government pointed to the City of London as proof that economic recovery had been achieved and that Britain was once again a world force. The 'Big Bang' in 1986, which linked London by computer with the other major world financial centres, was greeted with euphoric celebration as a symbol of Britain regaining world dominance. Symbolically the City's importance was profound. It marked modernisation, change and power. It was the icon[1] of Thatcher's 'popular capitalism', of a strategy seeking cohesion and total commitment to a capitalist society - activated both by greed and self interest and by the sense of effective power (Leadbeater 1987a: 18-23). At the same time, the domination of the City and finance implied differentiation, inequality, the widening gap between the haves and have nots (Halsey, cited in Gamble 1987a: 15).[2] Thatcherism's elevation of the City revitalised London as the centre, the place where

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1. I am here using icon in the sense used by Munn, as symbol expressive of the social relationships to which it refers. Using Mauss, Munn argues that icons can operate in this way "because they condense within themselves the structure of these relationships" (1970: 141).

2. The ironic graffiti after the 1987 stock market crash [What's the difference between a pigeon and a yuppie? A pigeon can still make a deposit on a porsche.] suggests some of the resentment generated by this increased inequality.

everything of importance is happening and also marks the "transformation of British conservatism" noted by Hall:

> The hard-faced, utilitarian, petty-bourgeois businessmen are now in charge, not the grouse-shooting, hunting and fishing classes (1987: 16).

This new conservatism was generated by and harnessed to a capitalism of trade, shop keeping and money making. The countryside had been left behind, ousted as a seat of power and largely removed from the direct and ongoing political contestation over Thatcherism.

In the debates about Thatcherism the predominant image of rural Britain was of an essentially unchanged place, in contrast to the massive upheavals in London, the inner cities and the old industrial centres of the north and midlands. Despite the occasions on which rural change was brought to public attention; as conservation issues arose, rural poverty or the plight of farmers trying to service bank loans through increasing production were publicised, when salmonella made eggs inedible, or the use of hormones in cows generated fears about the consumption of beef or issues of animal exploitation; these developments were easily suppressed by images of continuity in the countryside. Again this contrasted powerfully with the images of upheaval in urban living at the same time. The 'crisis' in the countryside which received considerable publicity during the nineteen eighties was only occasionally understood as yet another contestation within the terms of the struggle for Thatcherism within Britain. Indeed, publicity about rural 'crisis' often directed attention away from national political processes, towards Europe and the European Economic Community (EEC). This thesis argues that the rural must also be seen as a site of contestation over Thatcherism.

Television was a central institution in a politics where image making was as important as policy and planning in the contestation, via Thatcherism, for control and for legitimation. As such it was a site of struggle, a site on which power could be constituted (Hall 1987: 20) and also contested. Thatcher herself was very conscious of the importance of television. The Channel Four programme *The Thatcher Factor* (1989) demonstrated how she quite strategically and gradually altered her own image to articulate power with femininity and she explicitly used the television images of violence during the 1981 inner city riots and the miners' strike to exonerate her Government's policies and to legitimate the use of the forces of the state at these times. The importance of television as an arena of contestation of Thatcherism is demonstrated by its direct incorporation into the political process in ways which actually promoted confrontation between the Government and the BBC (cf Paterson 1987).[3] McNair notes that the opposition of the Government to critical comment in the news, documentaries and in drama and goes on to claim that:

> From Kate Adie filming the corpses of Libyan children killed by British-based US bombers, to the image of homosexuality presented by Colin on *EastEnders*, public service broadcasting undermines the moral assumptions of Thatcherism before a mass audience (1987: 35).

If this is so, then the contestation over Thatcherism in the media needs to be probed extensively. How did the debate enter television programmes, how was it presented and how evaluated? Television is more than a site of power, though it is that. It is a process of political struggle itself, though neither contestation or affirmation originate within television. It is important

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3. Films of the nineteen eighties such as *Sammy and Rosie get Laid, My Beautiful Launderette* and *Eat The Rich*, which were critical of the increasing inequality of British society and the forging of a new cult of greed to replace welfare state ideals, also aroused the ire of Mrs Thatcher and Norman Tebbit.

as *both* a site and process of contestation of meaning and through the articulation of these it has provided a crucial element of the struggles over Thatcherism. Its participation in politics involved a complex process of interaction with other social, economic and cultural domains and processes, which themselves were implicated in Thatcherism. As such, television participated in a formal and far reaching political change which sought to reorder the way in which a declining capitalist society works. Such was the politics of Thatcherism. Yet none of this serves as either an exploration or analysis of the particular ways in which television participated in political change, either to redefine, produce or reproduce the structures of inequality which underpin capitalist society or to contest the validity of these structures and the legitimacy of those whose power and authority is inextricably tied to them. This thesis shows that television combines forces of both legitimation and contestation in its process of political participation.

THE POLITICS OF TELEVISION

The most common way of probing how television has participated in politics has been through studies of news and current affairs programmes. Since news deals directly with ideas about politics, arguments about power already have an obvious place. Given its mediation of events through the visuals and commentaries, television news is *the* area which lends itself to debates about bias or distortion carrying effects, making television itself an agent of social power. Versions of a theory of ideology or dominant ideas/culture have been used to show how these programmes have contributed to the continuation of the status quo. The analysis of television news uses a combination of approaches; organisational, professional ideologies, selection and control; in order to explain how news programmes

do the work of reproducing society's relations of power in their reporting of events.

The news is a particular genre, with its own specific needs and processes and some studies, notably that of Philip Schlesinger for the BBC, highlight this aspect (1978). Schlesinger's is a production study, with a complex consideration of the actual processes of production informed by a detailed description of the historically developed structure of the BBC, especially in its relationship to the state and British society. It is one of the comparatively few studies of television which notes that the state, through ownership or control and regulation, has any part to play (see also Sparks 1986). This is a critical dimension for television, providing both an enabling framework and a major set of constraints for production and transmission. Even the commercial structure, within which analysts have identified advertising as affecting programme content, was established and is regulated by the state.

Schlesinger shows how the structure of the BBC determines the type of personnel in the news department and also constrains the processes of production which in turn generates certain ways of thinking about the world and the task of news presentation. The actual content of the news is conditioned by the "middle-classness" of the news gatherers and organisers, the morality and sense of itself of the BBC, and the notions of professionalism which are inculcated through the very process of production itself. Ideology in the news (he does not use 'bias') is the product of an interaction between an ideology in society (here understood as ideas like consensus and egalitarianism which he sees as changing) and a production structure with its own ideology.

Schlesinger uses organisation and process to add complexity to the basic understanding that television, especially its news production, is ideological and that it is in the very structures and processes of making

television news that wider ideologies are entrenched. The weakness of this detailed account is that ideology remains largely untheorised, so the relationship between television's construction of the world through its news presentation and the reproduction of the power relations within the status quo is largely taken for granted. This is a problem with many accounts which use a concept of ideology to characterise television and underpin their claims by using the news and current affairs on programmes as examples (Hood 1983, Hall 1982, Curran et al 1986, Cohen and Young 1973).

The use of the concept of ideology to explain the participation of television in social processes of power relies on an assumption that there is a 'reality', however defined, which is somehow separate from thinking or imagining (cf Williams 1986: 54-71) and that television's relationship to this reality always alters its appearance, producing something false, though different accounts credit journalists with different levels of consciousness in this procedure. In this view the news is always in some sense distorting, though this is not necessarily the sum total of the definition of ideological. For Hood (1983) and Westergaard (1982), ideology legitimates prevailing power relations. But the imprecision about social power, and therefore the ideological role of television news, lies in the concentration on what television journalists do, rather than investigating their output on the television screen in relation to the processes necessary for the production of the news. In the last decade or so the work of the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1982), has drawn precisely this relationship, relating it to specific social and political processes.

The Glasgow University Media Group's first publication, *Bad News* (1976), like many other accounts assumes that there is a 'reality' which is known. Against this 'reality', television's presentation of events deemed to be news can be shown to be limited or even distorted. Initiating the process, the notion of "the news" itself must be understood as a cultural artefact (1976: 1).

Initially, sensitive to the cultural construction of the news, the group specifically stated that they did not feel that accusations of bias were productive (1976: 19), but by the third book they had no such qualms and it is clear that this notion of bias fits directly into an assumption that television news and current affairs function as dominant ideology (1982: 6), as a direct adjunct to the class/power relations of society:

> To the extent that news controls such explanations, it is ideological: a way of seeing and understanding the world which favours some interests over others (1982: 3).

> Television news gives a partial view of the world: it offers an open door to the powerful and a closed door to the rest of us (1982: 16).

On the perennial question of how ruling class ideology actually gets into the television programme, the ideological function of television is generated by the people who make television news being of the same class, and culture, as those who hold power, so that their assumptions about the world are the same; itself a dubious claim.[4] Thus the view of the world presented in television's news and current affairs is that of the powerful rather than the powerless and the latter are further rendered dominated and unworthy by the conventions and language of television production; the operation of concepts of consensus[5] and newsworthiness and the hierarchies by which people are entitled to speak on television which privilege powerful, white males. In all of their studies the group shows how the very processes of television news production, in which are entrenched understandings

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4. Abercrombie et al (1980) also point out that there is no single set of values and beliefs among the ruling class.

5. The concept of 'consensus' as an element of television's professional ideology is also used by Hood (1983) and Hall (1978) to understand how television presents a divided, class society in a way which obscures this character. It must be noted that the concept relates to British culture in historically specific ways; part of the social democratic philosophy which came to dominate post-war Britain and therefore a value to which Thatcher stood opposed.

generated by and in turn upholding the dominant ideology, produce news and a view of the world which violates the claims of objectivity and balance which are also proclaimed to be basic tenets of television news journalism (1976: 268, 1982: 16). Like so many other accounts, the bedrock of this work is the understanding of the world as single reality, discernible through things like statistical accounts of industrial actions (1976: 202), against which distortion in the television (and other media) accounts can be established.

There are many valuable insights in the various studies of the Glasgow Media Group, and their method of locating the details of news output within the processes of production and the perceptions which journalists bring to their work gives a more heavily textured understanding of the particular view of the world which is generated in this process. These studies raise a question about the value of the concept of bias or distortion as the predominant attribute of television's world view. Not only does this concept dissolve the very real ambiguities and contradictions in the content of television, even the news, but bias can be constructed by selections made by the analysts (see the critique of *Bad News* by Martin Harrison 1987: 122-131). Further, as Connell (1986) has remarked, the concept of distortion or bias in the news as a major mechanism of television is one held by people of all political persuasions. He demonstrates that the concept has become a working myth in British culture, obscuring the "fact that our relations with one another are our products, just as much as our commodities" (1986: 89). As a myth it denies both the social and historical dimensions of existence (see Barthes 1972); it makes present social arrangements seem fixed, never to change. The concept of distortion implies a 'real' world which is neither constructed nor itself the product of the contestations of meaning in which television takes its place.

CONTESTED MEANING AND THE MINERS' STRIKE

Most of the theoretical ideas about media and power discussed in the last section have appeared in analytical works which strive to understand the relationship between Thatcherism's hold on British political and social life and the media, particularly television. The violence and struggles over the year long miners' strike in 1985 is a good case study.[6] The miners' strike was a major struggle in the Thatcher Government's strategy to restructure industrial relations in Britain; particularly, as the Government saw it, to 'curb' the powers of the trade unions and to enforce a 'free market' in labour (Hillard 1986: 356, 365). Within this formulation of how the economy works, egalitarianism was the enemy,[7] and the pursuit of industrial justice by organised labour in the name of egalitarianism had stultified competition, eroded productivity and prevented the restructuring of industry. The defeat of the miners was therefore a major victory for Thatcherism, as well as the Government itself.[8]

The previous section on the role of ideology in the explanations of the social significance of the news alerts us to a question about how the media's

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6. The Falklands War of 1982 is another important case in which media coverage has been portrayed as decisive in Thatcher's efforts to forge a consciousness which embraced the war and supported the Government's position. Hood argues that the coverage of the war directly called into question the journalists' professional ideology, their "doctrine of 'even-handedness'" as "the professional practice of the broadcasters came into conflict with the political will of the government" (1983: 123, 124). This is reminiscent of the content of the charges of 'bias' made by the Glasgow Media Group in relation to the media's handling of strikes.

7. Hillard quotes Leon Brittan, Home Secretary until the Westland Affair in 1986, from a speech he gave to the Bow Group in 1984:

> Britain is only slowly recovering from the effects of years of egalitarianism, ... the obsessive and unconditional pursuit of equality [which] lies behind most of our country's decline (1986: 365).

8. Though as Riddell notes, the "new mood of realism" won in struggles like the defeat of the miners and the print unions battles in Wapping may have less to do with restructuring in any long term way and more with the recession of the early Thatcher years (1985: 109).

role in the strike has been perceived. To what extent have analysts understood the media's role as the construction of the strike within some version of a dominant ideology? Nell Myers[9] sums up one prevailing understanding from the miners' perspective of the media's reporting of the strike:

> What women and men actually experienced during that year was not, for the most part, reported - with all its causes and ramification - press or broadcasting. Worse than that, mining families observed day by day the ways in which broadcasting and press actually lied about the very nature of the struggle in which they were engaged.
>
> Because their own experiences were also building a day-by-day framework of references and understanding, however, they knew the lies and distortions for what they were. No need to ask: 'What is real, what is the truth?' Their own circumstances gave them the answer (1986: 72).

Though Myers goes on to portray the media's coverage of the miners' strike as essentially hegemonic, which links the miners' strike to the many other sites of power on which the battle for and against Thatcherism's view of the world has been fought,[10] much of her comment is reminiscent of the dominant ideology thesis. Based on the 'ruling ideas' passage from *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels 1977),[11] the dominant ideology thesis

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9. Myers was the press officer to the National Union of Mineworkers at the time of the strike.

10. Indeed, several miners' leaders have identified a source of the failure of the strike in the inability of the miners to persuade the public that the strike was a response to the generalised threat to workers and communities all over Britain from Thatcherism (Carter 1985: 31, Francis 1985: 32, *Marxism Today* 1985: 26).

11. The piece is worth quoting in full:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time the class which is its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance (Marx and Engels 1977: 64).

draws a direct relationship between the ruling class and the ideas, the view of the world, dominant in society. At the same time, it separates material production from consciousness and its products (Williams 1986: 59-62).[12] This gives the media a crucial role in generating (and reproducing) a view of the world which is the ideal form of the production relations of society and suggests several parts to such an analysis of the media. The notion that the media is to be understood in terms of the dominant ideology focuses on the issue of ownership and the supposed consequent control of ideas in the media (Murdock and Golding 1982, Westergaard 1982), and sees a major mechanism of control being the necessity to attract advertisers, which encourages the simplest and most consensual view of the world.

Garnham (1986) has a reworked and particularly strident version of this kind of analysis. He deplores what he sees as the modern Marxists' concentration on the ideological aspects of the media and calls instead for a revival of a historical materialist approach. For him, television is 'the industrialization of culture' with the political consequences of the formation of monopolies and the 'commodification' of culture as capital gains control of all aspects of cultural production and reproduction (1986: 30, 31). Here is the focus of power and he sees this consolidation of the media as a major part of the continuing process of the development of capitalism. Though the question of ownership, including the tendency towards its concentration, *is* vitally important in the media industry, Garnham reveals the difficulties of a purely economic approach. Power in ownership seldom directly translates into power through the content of television programmes, though economic imperatives *are* influential. The complexity of cultural production derives only

12. Williams points out that it is the language of *The German Ideology* which suggests a separation which is at odds with Marx's actual " emphasis on consciousness as inseparable from conscious existence, and then on conscious existence as inseparable from material social processes" (1986: 59).

from the increasingly complex relations of ownership in Garnham's account, and his vehemence against the work on ideology and representation in journals like *Screen*, causes him to ignore the content of the culture industry's products, depending rather on the assumption of an automatic relationship between ruling class and ruling ideas within a simple base/superstructure model of society (cf Williams 1986: 76-82).

Myers' analysis fits the second strand of interpretation of the media encouraged by the dominant ideology thesis; the presentation of the world by the media in such a way as to support a ruling or dominant class view of it. This characterisation of ideology informs many uses of the concept in analysing the media, even when they do not associate themselves with the full dominant ideology thesis. Myers echoes the associations of mental production with "phantoms" and the "sublimation" of material life (Williams 1986: 59) when she quite explicitly uses a concept of inversion or distortion. The media presents a view of the world which obscures its real nature. It has the political function of supporting the ruling class view of the world and thus its rule. The press and broadcasters 'lie' about the miners' actions, 'distorting' the 'truth', the 'reality'.[13] As with the Glasgow Media Group, the media is characterised on the grounds of its 'bias', *against* the unions and *for* the employers and the Government.

There is a temptation to accept this analysis of a single event or set of events because the media *does* seem to do much of which it stands accused in reporting news events, particularly strikes. Often the explanations of employers, Crown Ministers and heads of state *are* privileged. Sparks

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13. Myers' account of the media's general behaviour during the dispute (she does acknowledge some friendly reporting from some sections of the media (1986: 73) is echoed by the comments of Alan Baker in a discussion by the miners' leaders reported in *Marxism Today* (1985). Baker added to a comment about the unequal access of miners, Government and Coal Board to the media by saying, "And the media very often portray lies which don't measure up to the experience of working people.." (*Marxism Today* 1985: 26).

reminds us that much of journalists' news material actually comes from the state, through press releases, formal interviews with personnel, informal "leaks", in ways which also clearly involve "news management" (1986: 79) to enhance government's image or make a particular construction of an event or situation. Further, constructions of the state as representative of the people, the nation rather than any individual or group, mean that state and government definitions of situations are generally those adopted by the media to construct a situation, without any recourse to conspiracy (1986: 81, 82). Similarly Bourdieu's analysis of power in social space (1985) stresses that situations such as the miners' strike are not confrontations between equal forces. The symbolic construction of the social world meant that Thatcher and the Government's viewpoint already had a tendency to legitimacy, coming as it did from "the mandated representative of the State" (1985: 732).[14] Bourdieu identifies one symbolic strategy, "through which agents seek to impose their vision of the divisions of the social world and their positions within it" (1985: 732) as being that of:

> *official nomination*, an act of symbolic imposition that has behind it all the strength of the collective, the consensus, the common sense, because it is performed by a delegated agent of the State, the holder of the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence (1985: 732).

As such, the media often fails to bring a full explanation of the issues to the attention of the public and keep it there, particularly for strikes which extend over a long period of time, such as the miners' strike.

In Bourdieu there is an explanation of the particularities of the media's reporting which extends far beyond the claims about 'bias' which imply that there is a single 'reality', rather than a contested one, with television and the

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14. For Hall, Connell and Curti (1981) a major contribution which the media make in the political field is to reproduce the centrality of parliamentary democracy and the State in the operation and definition of the political.

rest of the media operating within that contestation. In the miners' strike Thatcher and the Conservatives, as both Government and employer were also trying to *construct* the strike through the media (cf Clarke and Taylor 1980: 102). As the miners ran a campaign, so too did the Government. From 1979, Thatcher proved very adroit at using images and words within the media to construct her account of events and to make it hold. This is the significance of the great stress on violence made by Thatcher and her Government, something which the miners found themselves powerless to counter (*Marxism Today* 1984: 12). Thus the miners became "the enemies within" and as Myers reflects, the NUM was unable either to construct a more persuasive version of the strike or to defend itself against the construction of the Government (1986: 73, 74). Not only was the latter divisive, a blatant appeal to the whole nation against one part, but the metaphor unambiguously disenfranchised the miners as part of the nation and rendered them as (dangerous) Other. At the same time it carried an imperative for action, constructing the Government as warrior in the "national interest" (Sparks 1986: 81).

The miners' strike was part of Thatcherism's efforts to change the face of politics in Britain and as such was part of the very contestation about Thatcherism itself. At one level it put at stake quite different, competing, views of the world. Bourdieu's comments and those of the defeated miners, remind us of the inequality which is involved in such a struggle, an inequality which is played out in the media's coverage of the strike. The media was one (and only one) site of contestation in this political process, part of which was the efforts of both parties to make its construction of the strike dominant in the

media.[15] In this arena, the miners' position was taken by Myers, Thatcherism's was "the enemies within".

HEGEMONY, THATCHERISM AND THE MEDIA

The discussion of the miners' strike and the media suggests a different strategy for identifying the relations between power and the media within political processes focusing on Thatcherism. To characterise the media generally as distorting, biased and a tool of the ruling class misses the full complexity of television as culture, containing all the contradictions and complexities this implies and all the struggles endemic in society. The many plays, films and comedy series which have questioned Thatcherism, criticised the values inherent in it and deplored the intensification and reproduction of inequality in the name of progress and modernisation have to be ignored to make such an analysis of the politics of the media. The Government's complaints about the BBC every time the Corporation was seen to be criticising Thatcherism cannot be explained from within the narrow confines of ideology, dominant or otherwise. The emphasis on media bias leaves Thatcherism's critics, not just open to the charge that they do not comprehend Thatcher's politics in its full depth and complexity (Hall 1987: 20, 21), but that they also do not understand the way in which the media operates politically in the process of contestation over Thatcherism in contradictory ways.

The media, with television as one of its institutions, operated as part of the political contestation over Thatcherism. Thatcherism was more than a

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15. Though many post mortems of the strike agreed that the miners had not worked hard enough at this element of the strike, that they had not "got their message over" better on the media, an error which was particularly serious when compared with the success of the Government's efforts in containing the parameters of the construction of the strike for the media and through them, the public (*Marxism Today* 1985: 26, *Marxism Today* 1984: 12).

political programme to win and hold government (Hall 1987, 1983). As Hall says:

> ...Mrs Thatcher knows, as the Left does not, that there is no serious political project in Britain today which is not also about constructing a politics and an image of what *modernity* would be like for our people. And Thatcherism, in its regressive way, drawing on the past, looking backwards to former glories rather than forwards to a new epoch, has inaugurated the project of reactionary modernisation (1987: 19).

Thatcherism was a struggle to reconstruct Britain, not just structurally, economically, but in terms of the ways in which society was conceptualised by and constituted for the people themselves. It was a struggle about the most basic concepts of British society and its people; what it is, what it should be, how people constitute themselves, the relationship between individuals, between the individual and society, how people should live, what was morally desirable, what totally unacceptable, who should (and could) rule. Thatcherism involved more than the mere occupancy of the seat of government or even the economic restructuring of Britain; above all else it involved a struggle over how the social world was constituted for the British people. Thatcherism, Hall says:

> ...entered the political field in a historic content, not just for power, but for popular authority, for hegemony (1987: 17).

Part of Thatcherism's leadership role, the authorisation of its rule, thus involved a struggle to forge a new hegemony, a new taken for granted 'common sense' (Gramsci 1971) through which people understand, construct and participate in their world. It is this hegemony which provides consent for that leadership role (Bennett et al 1983: 191, Mouffe 1983: 220). For, as Hall (1987, 1983) points out, hegemony is not a structural feature of ruling class power; it has to be struggled over and won in an ongoing

political process. And won against resistance. Contestation was thus endemic in Thatcherism:

> ...Thatcherism aimed for a reversal in ordinary common sense. The 'common sense' of the English people had been constructed around the notion that the last war has erected a barrier between the bad old days of the 30s and now: the welfare state had come to stay; we'd never go back to using the criterion of the market as a measure of people's needs, the needs of society. There would always have to be some additional, incremental, institutional force - the state, representing the general interest of society - to bring to bear against, to modify, the market. I'm perfectly well aware that socialism was not inaugurated in 1945. I'm talking about the taken-for-granted, popular base of welfare social democracy, which formed the real, concrete ground on which any socialism worth the name had to be built. Thatcherism was a project to engage, to contest, *that* project, and, whenever possible, to dismantle it, and to put something *new* in its place (Hall 1987: 17).

The struggle for hegemony enters every social arena. Hall explains:

> The nature of power in the modern world is that it is *also* constructed in relation to political, moral, intellectual, cultural, ideological, sexual questions. The question of hegemony is always the question of a new cultural order (1987: 20, 21).

As part of culture then, the media was a site for the struggle over a new hegemony. Seabrook considers the role of the media and the efforts of Thatcherism to establish such a new hegemony. After examining the "ostensibly "non-political"" (1987: 16) parts of Britain's tabloid papers, Seabrook argues that it is here that a common sense is being forged which is powerfully effective "when it comes to be reinserted into official political discourse" (1987: 17). For him the predominant element of this common sense is the understanding that a social system should be judged in terms of the immediate material benefits which it delivers to the individual. He links this notion directly to the Conservative cause by noting the 'greed is good' message involved in a competition run by the *Sun* to see who made the

greatest profit from purchasing their council houses and in the implication of hypocrisy in an article about left Labour politicians living in very expensive houses (: 16). For Seabrook, the political message appears in precisely those areas of the press which are defined as non-political, entertainment.

Seabrook's findings suggest the value of exploring the media's participation in the political process by considering areas not usually used for such purposes; not the news or current affairs programmes, but those programmes of 'fiction' and entertainment outside of politics. The morality involved in such valuations of Thatcherism would seem to go to the heart of any hegemonic struggle. This thesis systematically pursues the possibility that fiction can serve as the basis of an analysis of television's political role by considering fictional process as part of the struggle over Thatcherism. Moreover, it explores a fictional form which, though popular, is poorly valued in British culture; that of the continuing serial or soap opera (see Hobson 1982, Ang 1985, Brunsdon 1981). The serial used is *Emmerdale Farm*, made by Yorkshire Television since 1972, and its rural location provides the opportunity to study the major changes and contestations of Thatcherism in an area which appears to least demonstrate them. Despite surface appearances, the rural too *is* a site (or sites) of power and consequently implicated in the political struggles over Thatcherism. The serial's rendering of various strains in Thatcherism in a rural context and through issues which were important in the countryside in the late nineteen eighties forms the basis of the thesis. If television, even in its fiction output, is indeed a site of struggle over Thatcherism, one would expect to be able to find in the ways in which the serial had developed and in the programmes of 1987, both the new attempted hegemony and the counter-hegemony which was being mobilised against it. The appearance of a relatively unchanging countryside becomes a central ingredient in this interrogation of Thatcherism from within a rurally based serial. This is a major thrust of the argument in this thesis

about the significance of the way in which this particular continu renders Britain of the nineteen eighties from within a rural setting.

If we think of hegemony as a political process whereby the habits of life of a population are rendered compatible with the reproduction of broad and intensifying social inequality, then a neat problem is posed for the study of television as part of this ongoing process. Many works, for example Goldman's perceptive study of *Mork and Mindy* (1982), focus on how even socially aware television serves to reproduce hegemony or dominant ideology (see also Gitlin 1983). In such a view, television's participation in political processes is assessed through this effect. The formula in which television's political importance is in its reproduction of hegemony (or ideology, dominant and otherwise) has a tendency to lay out hegemony in a static, structural very broad way.[16] Thus, it is 'middle class liberalism' (Goldman 1982: 375, 376) or "the mainstream of political thinking within our bourgeois democracy" (Hood 1983: 48) or "status quo" and "sacred British values" (Hall 1973: 87,88). This is not hegemony as Gramsci (1971) conceived it; as political processes about power and authority constantly needing to be struggled over; as the forging of a common sense, a taken-for-grantedness in which power relations and their legitimation are inscribed in people's everyday experience which is nevertheless also "necessarily fragmentary, contradictory" (Hall 1987: 20). Thought of like this, the formula that television serves to reproduce hegemony can be inverted and reshaped to suggest that it is hegemony that produces television.

By taking the idea that it is hegemony that produces television, this thesis uses the contestation over Thatcherism to demonstrate that the struggle for hegemony was constitutive of the serial, in which the elements of

16. Gitlin (1983), it must be said in this context, is one analyst who consistently relates the structure and success of styles of programmes and their desired messages to the prevailing cultural and political climate of American society.

this wider political process can be traced. There is a field of analytical exploration opened up by the inversion of the television reproduces hegemony theorem; the need to explore the complex interaction between production and reproduction of the hegemonic condition in people's everyday experience and in television's representation of that experience. Television is what happens when hegemony (and as we shall also see, counter-hegemony) is played out. Television can no longer be seen structurally, involving passive incorporation,[17] but rather it is a process of contestation. The process is not smooth, automatic or uncomplicated but full of tensions, contradictions and uncertainties. The process is one of struggle and contestation.

POLITICS, HEGEMONY AND FICTIONAL TELEVISION

Television and particularly continuing serials are usually characterised as 'popular culture' or 'mass' culture. Many analysts have deplored the use of the term, arguing that it both devalues television and at the same time ignores the ideological role which so called 'high culture' also plays (MacCabe 1986). Television, and particularly those parts considered most debased as cultural forms, can be reconceptualised once this term 'popular culture' is freed of value judgements associated with notions of

17. In recent years several analysts have stressed the need to overcome the notion of passive incorporation which has underpinned much of the work on the social power of television. Fuer has written about the possibility that audiences may make "diametrically opposed readings" (1984: 15) while Fiske (1987) argues that the area of audience 'reading' of texts is one of audience power and control, though always with limitations. Using a different method of discussion groups, Taylor and Mullan (1986) also support the ideas of multiple readings and argue that television is a creative, active part of culture, part of people's world which interacts with other areas of their lives. Using soap opera for their studies, both Hobson (1982) and Ang (1985) argue that viewers use *Crossroads* and *Dallas* to think about their own lives and, further, that they feel a sense of ownership for the programmes.

taste.[18] Rather, by focusing on 'the people' underpinnings of the concept (see MacCabe 1986), 'popular culture' can be understood as "one of the sites where forms of consciousness and identity are constituted" (Caughie 1986:162). This makes it an important site of power and thus a crucial arena in the hegemonic struggle over Thatcherism. For consciousness and identity are precisely forms through which 'common sense' and the everyday 'taken for granted' are shaped. Thus, television fictional forms, rather than being simply vehicles of conformism to some status quo, as in various versions of the (dominant) ideology thesis, may be conceptualised as sites of political struggle. As Hall says:

> Sometimes we can be constituted as a force against the power bloc: that is the historical opening in which it is possible to construct a culture which is genuinely popular. But, in our society, if we are not constituted like that, we will be constituted into its opposite: an effective populist force, saying 'Yes' to power. Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured (quoted by Caughie 1986:160).

This thesis proposes that in the arena of popular culture, of television, is revealed the contestation between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in the wider struggle to forge (and resist) a new hegemony around Thatcherism.

SOAP OPERA AS A SOURCE OF HEGEMONIC CONTESTATION

To describe events as "soap opera" has gone into the English language as mild criticism; certainly a statement that they cannot be taken

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18. Bourdieu has alerted us to the class based nature of difference, distinction, and particularly the concept of taste which has been a crucial element in the naturalisation of such difference (1985, 1986).

completely seriously.[19] The term often implies some kind of melodrama or excess, which accords with Fuer's (1984) analysis of the genre, particularly the prime-time soaps of the eighties. Soaps are consistently perceived as a female genre, by audiences[20] and by analysts (Conrad 1982: 66-87, Fiske 1987: 179-197, Modleski 1986, 1984, Fuer 1984, Brunsdon 1981, Geraghty 1983). Narratives focus on the family, particularly the emotional and relational realm which is perceived as a women's domain, one in which women are skilled in problem solving. The "de-centredness" of the plots, their lack of an individual hero/heroine on whom to centre the drama, is seen to parallel women's lives of caring for and forging their identity through others (Modleski 1984, cf Conrad 1982: 70), and the themes constantly raise the issue of the family as a unit, the narratives resisting the final breakup of the nuclear family (Modleski 1984). For many women, there is pleasure too in the centrality of female characters in soaps:

> Women characters are central to soap operas. They are not peripheral to the stories; they are not mysterious, enigmatic or threatening as they so often are in thrillers and crime series. They are the norm by which the programme is understood and every soap opera has at its heart women characters who are strong, independent, living their own lives, making their own decisions in a way which makes the men seem clumsy and inept. The women handle the complex web of relationships that make up a soap opera with a care and intensity which recognises the importance of close relationships and celebrates the undervalued skills of women in handling them (Geraghty 1984: 38).

That soaps are devalued has been seen as being derived precisely from their female associations (Brunsdon 1981). This has been the thrust of a great deal of work on the politics of representation in the last fifteen or so

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19. Even the doings of the British royal family have been described as "soap opera" by some commentators.

20. Taylor and Mullan however report that male members of their discussion groups did watch and become involved in soap operas (1986: 44, 45). Some even admitted to crying in response to some scenes.

years, which has argued that soap operas are highly political products (Modleski 1986, 1984; Mulvey 1986, Fuer 1984). Fiske however, argues that, although soaps *can* be read as affirmation of patriarchy, they also provide space to "interrogate the status quo" (1987: 181). They reveal the patriarchal structures in a "constant state of disruption" (1987:181) and positively value, thus legitimate, female knowledge. More, this knowledge is actually shown to be a source of power in the soap opera, compared with its usual devaluation (1987:182). Not only does this demonstrate the operation of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in gender relations as a site of power, but Fiske's comments raise a most important theoretical issue about television, that of power and representation.

The late seventies and eighties saw a development in the analysis of culture which turned away from conceptions of dominant ideology and delved into the interstices of content, seeking power in gender and other personalised relations (Kuhn 1984, Mulvey 1986, Modleski 1986). This approach raised the problem of representation itself in the analysis of television. Though still often wedded to some notion of ideology, the approach countered the ownership and control focus of some dominant ideology work, quite correctly pointing out the inadequacy of such approaches to the actual content of programmes at the level of meaning. Further, the approach called into question the perception of ideology in representation as distortion or even as just a reflection of some pre-constituted 'reality'.[21] Rather, representations themselves were seen as also

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21. Even some very sensitive and thorough studies, like that of the series *Hill Street Blues* by Gitlin (1983) have a tendency to use a reflection of 'reality' type of approach. Indeed, Gitlin's praise of *Hill Street Blues* focuses precisely on the makers' determination to achieve verisimilitude, assuming that through such attention to 'reality' a social critique can be achieved:

> *Hill Street* was also a show that knew race and class tear this society apart, that behaving decently under these conditions is an everyday trial, and that there are no blindingly obvious solutions for the accumulated miseries of the ghetto. The show's racial byplay honored the everyday street sense of race without sliding into race baiting (1983: 275).

constituting and positioning the viewer, raising the question of subjectivity.[22] Kuhn (1985, 1984), for example, locates the power of television in its positioning of the viewer, in its construction of a female spectator from within the text (cf Ellis 1980, Morley 1984, Donald 1980). From this perspective soap opera can be seen as reproducing gender roles in a total way. Given the inequality in these roles, this approach becomes a political analysis as it is concerned with the reproduction of the structures of inequality carried by individuals.

With the content of television programmes being seen as central to the issue of power in television, programmes themselves came to be understood as texts, the meaning of which could be discerned through a variety of approaches. In particular, structuralism and the realm of semiotics was brought to bear on the analysis of the specific ways in which television reproduced structures of power in different domains (Fiske and Hartley 1984). Thus it was the practice of linguistics with its focus on language as the foundation of social life through which power in television could be discovered. In this view, as power is already embedded in language, so too are power relations inscribed in the very processes of signification (Thompson 1984: 1-9), here the structures of meaning of television programmes. Semiotic analysis, based on the path breaking work of de

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In turn this generated an even deeper realism and an even deeper level of critique on the part of the programme:

> *Hill Street* speaks to a larger cultural sense, stretching across political positions, that the major government institutions - education, welfare, health - and the cities as a whole simply do not work. Like *M*A*S*H** and *Barney Miller*, it shows the state to be inept; the best that can be said for top authority is that, quaintly, it tries to keep order (1983: 314).

In this analysis, ultimately it is television conventions, shortage of time and routinisation which prevents the programme from presenting the alternative view of society which the show's 'realism' had aspired to achieve.

22. Subjectivity takes the issue of power into the text itself and draws on Althusser (1971) in its concerns with the content of the ideological realm and the centrality of 'interpellation' to the operation of ideology for the individual.

Saussure and the studies of myth of Barthes,[23] uses decoding techniques developed in linguistics to uncover the meaning in which power is embedded (Berger 1987, Eco 1972). Although such analysis proceeds upon the basis of the discreteness of the text, conclusions about the nature and significance of this power (and indeed the very purpose for making the study) mostly depend on some posited relationship between the programme and 'the world', though the nature of this world varies. Fiske and Hartley have a clear statement of the most usual assumptions about this relationship. Quoting Gerbner they say:

> The symbolic world is often very different from the "real" world...The power and significance of symbolic functions rests in the *differences* (1984: 23).

and then conclude themselves:

> The world of television is clearly different from our real social world, but just as clearly related to it in some way. We might clarify this relationship by saying that television does not represent the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symbolically, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface (1984: 24).

This then provides the political agenda for semiotic and structuralist analysis, to uncover by decoding the symbols, the structures of relationships in which are already inscribed inequalities (see also Eco 1972 and Berger 1987 on this). In such an analysis the "real social world", to use Fiske and Hartley's phrase, which is related to television's world of images in some way, exists

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23 Barthes has also extended his linguistic method beyond modern urban myths to the image, in photography (1971).

only in shadow; theorised largely in absence[24] (see also Swanson's critique of Kuhn 1986). The relationship between the two is thus assumed rather than demonstrated, using an analysis, a deconstruction, of the "manifest actuality" of society which is never as thoroughgoing as that provided for the television text. Yet surely the political significance of these approaches is precisely to understand how television *is* related to the ongoing and structured inequalities which can be demonstrated to exist in people's lives (Modleski 1986).

Television as culture is part of the ongoing struggles within the field of politics over those structured inequalities in a variety of domains of social existence. This focus on television indicates two things while at the same time returning us to the major thrust of the thesis, the question of how a television fiction, a soap opera, can participate in the hegemonic struggle about Thatcherism. First, how are the personal politics developed out of the issue of representation and then the processes of signification which construct people within ongoing inequalities, related to the broader political processes overtly focused on in programmes like the news and current affairs? This issue needs to be confronted if it is intended to explore media in the context of Hall's contention that Britain in the eighties experienced the proliferation of sites of power, all of which became arenas of contestation of Thatcherism (1987). Second, how are political struggles in one social and cultural domain of British society related to those in other domains and how does the struggle for (or against) hegemonic rule unite these different

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24. An example of this is Hurd's (1981) analysis of the British police drama series as a presentation of the police world. His structuralist analysis of this presentation focuses on the characters and the relationships between them to establish the construction of meaning in each series. In turn these meanings generate another level of meaning, one on which the ideological effect of the series is elaborated in terms of the relationship between the representation and the 'social reality' on which it is based (1981: 63). However, beyond being told that policemen find much to admire in the series and that the actual trial and gaoling part of policing are absent from these accounts, the "world of policing" as a social domain is only sketched for the reader. It is the television text which receives by far the most attention.

domains? As Frith said when rejecting the concepts of 'mass" and 'popular culture':

> I prefer the notion of 'capitalist culture' - culture defined, that is, not in terms of the production and consumption of commodities (though this is involved) but as the way in which people deal with /symbolise /articulate /share /resist the *experience* of capitalism (including, but not exclusively, the ideological experience of capitalism) (1986: 55).

Thatcherism offers a particular kind of experience of capitalism, which is not passively accepted by all members and institutions in society.

EMMERDALE FARM AND THE HEGEMONIC STRUGGLE OVER THATCHERISM

Many interpretations of television in modern capitalist society operate from an assumption that television (and other types of cultural production) has a crucial role to play in the reproduction of an unequal society and that its operation in terms of social power is precisely to be found in its effects on audiences. Whether it distorts reality, legitimates established power structures or reinforces and expresses values which themselves function to do these things, television nonetheless has the broad effect of helping to reproduce power relations in society. Such studies can be further divided into two very broad categories; those which focus on production, seeing in the organisation, structures and practices the mechanisms by which dominant ideas are perpetuated through the content of the programme and those which focus on the programmes produced, analysing the significance and meaning of ideas which are located in the processes of signification which constitute the product.

The first group of analyses are useful for their detail about how television programmes are made, for the understanding they provide of the

production constraints on the programme and how these affect the possible meaning of the message. They reveal how structures of inequality can be reproduced in ideal form by the very practices of television production, the operation of which empowers some people and reinforces the domination of others; favours some world views and marginalises others. This group of analyses do not cope well with the ambiguity and contradiction of the content of television, often reducing large parts of this to unimportance while focusing on a relatively small part of television's output - the heavy attention to the news is no accident. Ambiguity and contradiction are important parts of television, ways in which the complexity of the world itself becomes part of television's representation of society and social relationships. A television programme must always be an abstraction, a construction which removes all extraneous detail including only that which is necessary for its narrative purpose (cf Wright 1975, Davies 1978/9) but the attempt to reduce it to one specific function, no matter how sophisticated the argument, must always lose much of the texture, the detail through which people understand and themselves construct the world. Television is part of culture, which means that it too must be a site of contesting meaning as are other areas of culture; culturally and socially there can be no discontinuity between television and the rest of society.

The second group, broadly, approaches the problem of what television does from within the programme itself, seeking there the cultural and symbolic processes and structures through which the social world operates and working through the symbolic relationships within the programme to ascertain meaning (Fiske 1987, Fiske and Hartley 1984, Real 1989, Berger 1987, Hurd 1981, Cranny-Francis 1988). This approach allows for the possibility of contradictory discourses in any one programme and part of its concern is to show how these interact and also to show how ambiguity is produced within and between the various levels of meaning. What is less

clear in this kind of approach is the specificity of the television representation, how the television abstraction is built up, worked and reworked as a particular kind of cultural product produced by socially and culturally located personnel. There is often no sense of the programme as a product; no active agents operating within culture to reproduce their social and cultural structures though within certain limitations, no intentionality, no difference between the products within the same medium, only discourses and symbolic systems which are manifest in different arenas. Surely this is not the limit of the social and cultural significance of television?

Both these broad approaches tend to deal with the role of television in the processes of power in a very static way. Not only do they tend to imply that television is always involved in the relations of power in the same structural way, but they suggest that social power for television is always the same thing, regardless of the political processes and struggles which are being pursued in society at specific times. Thus power becomes the *essence* of television, at all times and in the same way. Then the specific explanations focus on how this is achieved, within the terms of the particular programme.

This thesis is concerned with the issue of power; of the interconnections between television as an institution of representation and a socially generated cultural product and the reproduction of modern capitalist (here British) society in all of its inequalities. It draws on much of the work already done on this problem. Production and dominant ideology studies reveal, for example, the need to understand what production personnel think they are doing and to locate the particular presentation in the programme, at least partially, in terms of their view of the world as individuals in television production, as people located quite specifically (non-arbitrarily) in the class structure and as Britons. The textual studies of television give a much sounder base for examining the actual content of any one programme or set of programmes, especially the contradictions and ambiguities which are part

of the meanings inscribed in the programmes by processes of signification. Such an approach needs to be taken in tandem with the insights of production based studies in order to appreciate the full significance of the processes which make a television programme. A combination of these analyses would enable us to produce a rigorous and sensitive study of *Emmerdale Farm*, particularly as a case study of the processes of representation within a single programme. Such a study would be alive to the way in which this representation of rural life is in part of constitutive of 'British rural life' (Donald 1980: 2). But is this enough?

How is it possible to comprehend this example of representation as a political process, simply from within the terms of the programme itself, however rigorously pursued? Issues of what television leaves out, of the significance of how groups or social relationships are constituted through representation, how television images work to perpetuate particular ideas and practices, how they utilise particular discourses and relations and the political work which this does in an unequal, but changing, society, all assume a relationship between what television does and a world outside of television, of which television is a part. Once again we are back in the territory of the dominant ideology theorists, the semioticians and the naive commentators on television; but with a difference. What this thesis does which diverges from the approaches thus far discussed, is to explore how television can have different implications for social power at different times and in different social formations. Indeed there are different power processes within the production of a single programme like *Emmerdale Farm* which affect its content, and these processes may be different or have different significance within different configurations of the political field. The thesis frames this broad question in terms of the contestation in Britain in the nineteen eighties over Thatcherism and the struggle to establish hegemonic rule by forging a new kind of 'common sense' for (and by) the people.

Television is then linked to the social world by its participation as a site of contestation in this major political struggle which in turn unites many other sites of power in British society.

Theoretically, this has several implications which must be raised before the thesis can turn to the specific study of *Emmerdale Farm*. The project still locates the theorisation of television within representation and this means that the dominant notion of representation must be confronted (Donald 1980, Davies 1978/9), and a *theory* of representation devised (Hall 1978):

> The materialist theory of ideology has considerably advanced our understanding of the nature of the economic and socio-historical determinations *on* ideas - but it lacks an adequate theory of representation, without which the specificity of the ideological region cannot be constituted (Hall 1978: 28).

This is precisely what this thesis is striving to do: to use such a theory in order to further an understanding of television's operation in the politics of representation in the era of Thatcherism.

Representation is problematic, as Hall's comments suggest, and as a political focus has produced different schools of thought. Cousins and Hussain (1986) point out that essentially the many problems of representations concern issues and questions about "the point of juncture between social structure and human agency" (1986: 159). Further, in representations, it is the unconscious in human experience which focuses our analysis, regardless of the particular problem of representation involved. The dominant mode of representation in British television, that of Realism, which is embedded in an empiricist or objectivist notion of knowledge to render representation as presentation (Davies 1978/9), provokes political questions about the truth of the representation or about how "what is represented is related to the representation" (Cousins and Hussain 1986:

160). Baudrillard (1983a and b) has reacted to precisely this empiricism and the possibility of representation itself. In his theory of the destruction of the social and the replacement of representation with endless simulation, Baudrillard dismantles the relationship at the centre of representation, that between human agency and social structure. Yet it is precisely in the area of politics and social power that such a theory is unsatisfactory. As Modleski points out, people experience oppression in the social world, their lives are constituted within relations of power (1986: 52). This is not altered, or elucidated by the insistence that representation is dead, destroyed by the masses' refusal of all meaning (1983 a).

Ideology is of course one solution to the problem of the politics of representation. Through his concept of interpellation, Althusser strove to go beyond any base/superstructure model of ideology, though still encumbered by the notion of determination by the economic "in the last instance" (1971, cf Ricoeur 1986: 107). His subject; constituted in ideology or the imaginary relations or representations which obscure his/her real relations to the conditions of existence; is problematised by the persisting idea of error and the empiricism which this implies. This is the crux of Ricoeur's (1986) problem with Althusser and his objection takes us straight into back representation. Ricoeur insists that any relation to the conditions of existence must be constituted in representation, and as such is mediated through symbols (1986: 144, 145). Using Geertz (1973), Ricoeur points out that human beings are constituted within symbolic systems, in representations (1986: 258) which can therefore not be attributed to a superstructure, since they are already in the infrastructure (cf Godelier 1982). This symbolic constitution of the human being and the social world is why, although I find

Foucault's resistance to the use of "ideology" compelling,[25] his insistence that power cannot be separated from knowledge for me implies the central concern of representation in the analysis of power and politics. The discourses which constitute subjectivity, the dividing practices and the forms of resistance in which the individual is formed for Foucault as a subject, are themselves all constituted within processes of representation, within particular cultural constructions.

James Donald's (1980) comments in his final editorial for *Screen Education* are pertinent to the way representation is here being conceptualised, particularly as they overcome some of the major objections to a conception of signification in representation which precedes its effects (Cousins and Hussain 1986: 170, cf Daniel 1984: 16-19):

> 'Representation' isn't a free-floating semiotic mechanism: it is one of the principal means through which the cultural and political configurations of a social formation are historically constructed (Donald 1980: 1).

This is also the substance of Ricoeur's (1986) critique of distortion theories of ideology and Geertz's (1973) repudiation of real/ideal dichotomies. As such representation itself must be seen as an arena of struggle and contestation. Within this arena Donald notes a serious limitation generated by the short comings of the dominant concept of representation in both analysis and British common sense (1980: 2). Using the gains of feminist work on representation as constructing the category 'woman', he points out that representation which posits what is represented as existing 'in reality', independent of image or representation, has focused theoretical attention on the representation's 'function as knowledge' and diverted it away from the

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25. Foucault simply does not ask the question of the relationship between human agency and social structure in terms of ideology (Foucault 1984: 60, 61).

politics of representation. Both dimensions of the social world are needed (1980: 2). To render the problem in the terms of the alternative theory of signification, the signified, "is quite clearly the product of the process of signification. It has no existence prior to or independently of the signifier - or, more accurately, the complex signifying practice" (1980: 3). This alternative does not provide a solution. Donald suggests that theories of signification are theoretically problematic since they lack a dimension necessary for a thoroughgoing political critique of the power implications of how the "processes and institutions of representation" work in society.

He proposes that the concept of representation be retained but itself be "treated as a political problem, as a concept itself operating within a historical regime of sense" (1980: 4). Still thinking of the political dimension of representation within terms of ideology, he says that what is needed is an approach which "poses the question of ideology in terms of how an historically specific reservoir of images and representations comes to be constituted at any particular time and of why some instances rather than others surface" (1980: 4). One could add that an analysis of the *significance* of some instances surfacing and being maintained, rather than others, must also be part of such an approach. This approach is a political one which understands representation in terms of what it does, how it is to be explored as part of historically located processes of power, rather than in terms of how it is, its essence and structure, now and for ever. When one applies this to television and the task of this thesis, there is generated a concern to understand how the "reservoir of images and representations" comes into operation in the struggle over Thatcherism so that some instances become front-line performers in the hands of various combatants, altering with their dominance and the work that they are being required to do. This approach unites both the production and text based studies of television and at the same time explores the ways in which meanings develop historically and

how meanings within the television text overlap with those constituted outside of television.

Further, power is not to be understood in the effects of television, but rather as itself a process, here a process of representation. Referring to Marx, Donald suggests a reformulation of representation which locates it in the political field, not as some mirroring or reflection, but in terms of interacting processes:

> Some such reformulation may make it possible to rescue 'representation' from an empiricist epistemology and conceptualise it instead as the point - and the *mechanism* - of articulation between practices of signification and other discursive categories and social practices (1980: 4).

Such a theory of the politics of representation must take up the challenge of perceiving television as an abstraction at the same time that it is part of lived culture, relating it to other social processes and ways of constructing the same world. It is useful to remember Hall's discussion of Bourdieu in "The Hinterland of Science: Ideology and the Sociology of Knowledge" (1978) in which he notes Bourdieu's point that it is *because* the symbolic structures in culture operate as they do (for Bourdieu in terms of sets of oppositions) that they are available to express relations in various fields, particularly class relations, and thus to "do the work of power and domination" (Hall 1978: 29).[26] One therefore needs to be able to explore the relationship between these analytically separate though interrelated fields, the symbolic and political.

Bourdieu's argument establishes that in order to understand power and domination in representation, it is not enough to concentrate on

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26. Ricoeur makes something of the same point and develops it when he criticises the base/superstructure model of society of some Marxists. He says that it is only *because* systems of signification are at least partially constitutive of human relations that ideology can function as distortion in the way these analysts assume (1986: 144).

symbolic relations, that it is the relations *between* the fields of politics, constituted as power relations, and the symbolic systems which need to be studied. Such a project, coupled with the insights of Donald, locates the point of the analysis of power very much in the production of television programmes as they formulate overlapping, fragmentary and even contradictory views of the world. Further it sees the generation of the content of the programmes as a politically significant transformation *from* the socially constructed world rather than using the content to posit power effects *onto* the audience. This provides a method by which the importance of power in representation is assumed to be located *in the production process* (itself a conditioning element), in the relationship between the representations, the signification systems, through which the social world is both constituted and interpreted, and the transformation of these in the television representation. Thus representation within television as an institution is both a process and a relationship. And in Donald's words, any one production like *Emmerdale Farm* is the point and the mechanism of articulation between practices of signification and other social practices, such that there is a transformation between the constitution of the rural in the serial and in the Yorkshire Dales. The politics of this transformation articulates with the political processes of Thatcherism and its contestation; this context affecting the constitution of the representations and the relationships and processes of power which are embedded in these representations and which are all responsive to the participation of television in the struggle for hegemony.

The next chapter takes the first step in exploring the politics of representation in Thatcher's Britain through the case-study of *Emmerdale Farm*. The analysis of *Emmerdale Farm* as both a point and a mechanism of articulation for various images and representations, discourses, social practices and signification processes within a specific historical period means that the actual production processes, themselves historically located,

need to be described and explored in some detail. This provides the basis through which to discover how other social practices and forms of representation are brought into articulation with each other in production. At the same time, the chapter uncovers how the politics of the serial's production interacts with power relations outside of television practice and is transformed by the specifics of the production of television programmes and the culture of *Emmerdale Farm* production itself.

CHAPTER TWO

REPRESENTATION AND POWER IN THE PRODUCTION OF *EMMERDALE FARM*

INTRODUCTION

Emmerdale Farm, the serial made by Yorkshire Television about the Yorkshire Dales, is the point of articulation between various social, and therefore cultural, multi-dimensional, politically significant processes of representation. There are two significant points at which these social processes, images, meanings, discourses and other representations are articulated for a cultural product like *Emmerdale Farm*. One is in the reception of the serial, as members of the audience interact with the text to construct meaning from the interaction between their own, historically developed positions and the text itself (Swanson 1986: 22, Fiske 1987: Chapter 4). The other major point at which this articulation operates is the serial's own production processes, which in Donald's terms also provide a 'mechanism' within the meta-process of representation (1980: 4). Though technically constrained, these processes are themselves also cultural. Further, they can be understood as interrogations of other social processes, which are incorporated and modified as each element of the process is both grounded in its own (and its social agents') social history and at the same time re-creates or re-presents both process and society (Bourdieu 1985).

Of such complicated and multi-layered interactions is representation made, its political significance stemming from the relationships *between* social constructions which are integral parts of the process of television production. This chapter explores the production process of *Emmerdale Farm* as one dimension of representation, as both a point and a mechanism

of articulation which constructs the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. It is concerned with two things. First, the conceptual *bases* on which the relationships between constructions in representation are formed. Secondly, and providing part of the significance of the former, the ways in which the organisation and culture of the serial can be understood as grounded in the wider social and cultural structures within which personnel live and are themselves constituted. The production process is thus a highly political one, which means that it is necessary to explore and understand the points within production in which the articulation with other social constructions and representations are made, the decision making processes and assumptions which contribute to these moments and the significance of the constraints of production.

Accordingly, the chapter begins with a detailed description of the production process of *Emmerdale Farm* and, on the basis of this, explores the meaning and significance of some of the assumptions made by personnel within this process. This exploration reveals the ways in which these assumptions result from and in turn constitute a structure of power relations which affects the content of *Emmerdale Farm* and thus the kinds of images, understandings, processes and representations which come to generate that content. This structure of power relations must also be understood against the structures of power and domination in the wider British society.

EMMERDALE FARM: AN OUTLINE[1]

Emmerdale Farm is a twice weekly drama serial made by Yorkshire Television, which in the late nineteen eighties was transmitted nationally in Britain for all but two weeks of every year at Christmas and New Year. It has been produced since October 1972 when the January decision to remove restrictions on the hours of broadcasting by the Government (Alvarado and Stewart 1985: 43) prompted Yorkshire Television to produce a drama to be transmitted during the newly possible weekday afternoon hours (*Daily Mirror* 1.7.72). *Emmerdale Farm* is a continuing serial, what in common parlance and the press is often called a 'soap opera', though being very aware of the generally poor reputation of soap opera, its producers (and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA)[2]) tend to insist on the former designation. In 1987 the serial was transmitted at 7 o'clock[3] on Tuesdays and Thursdays and therefore appeared in the time slot which is perceived by IBA policy,

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1. Television production, as any other social process, is historically located and the specific details of its procedures and conventions therefore change through time. Since the data for this thesis was gathered from a period between December 1986 and February 1988, the past tense is used to modify Anthropology's conventional use of the continuous present where events specific to 1987 are pertinent to the analysis of the political significance of the production of *Emmerdale Farm*.

2. "The IBA is the public body authorised by Parliament to organise and supervise the Independent Broadcasting system. It selects and appoints the programme companies, supervises the programming, controls the amount and content of advertising, and transmits all the services" (Croston 1984: 6).

   This provided the legal and structural framework for the industry prior to Thatcherite reform announced in the Government's White Paper, *Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality* in 1988. For IBA discussion on this, see IBA Annual Report 1988-89: 4-9.

3. In 1988 it was brought forward by the network to fill the 6.30 p.m. slot left free by the demise of Central's soap opera, *Crossroads*.

schedulers, advertisers[4] and audience alike to be for family viewing (Croston 1983: 19, Paterson 1980).[5]

Set in the Yorkshire Dales, the serial helps Yorkshire Television to fulfil the IBA demand for regional content.[6] Indeed the setting itself was seen as a most positive feature when the serial was being planned. The then Programme Controller of Yorkshire Television apparently explained that part of the rationale for a rurally located serial was to show the beautiful Yorkshire scenery and so contradict the usual grey, industrial towns image of the county. By 1987 *Emmerdale Farm* was nationally an important part of Yorkshire Television, although its audiences had fallen slightly to between 9 and 11 million from its 13 and 14 million of 1985.[7] In the enormous publicity surrounding Yorkshire Television's 1986 preparations to come onto the stock market, *Emmerdale Farm* was used often as a point of identification for the company as well as a selling point because of its success.[8]

In 1987 *Emmerdale Farm* was conceptualised by its personnel as a rural family saga; the story of the Sugden family, small farmers in a beautiful unnamed dale in Yorkshire. The family farm is within walking distance of a village called Beckindale and the nearest town is Hotten, a town of

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4. Independent Television, including the IBA as its controlling body, is funded by the sale of advertising time. *Emmerdale Farm* is preceded and followed by a block of advertisements and the transmitted programme is divided into two parts by a further block. In 1987 the space was bought by advertisers of family oriented products as diverse as cars, food products, household cleaners and package holidays.

5. Letters of complaint to the serial's producer confirm that the perception that *Emmerdale Farm* is made for family viewing is also held by the audience. Such complaints (there are not many given the millions who watch the serial) focus on uses of language and sex which are considered to be inappropriate when children are viewing.

6. This requirement was itself in response to the demands of the Broadcasting Act under which Independent Television operated (Croston 1983: 15).

7. It highest audience was 15.4 million in September 1985, pushing *Coronation Street* into second place.

8. *Mail on Sunday* reported that nearly 20,000 of the 126,000 valid applications for shares came from Yorkshire people (the company was 51 times oversubscribed) and chose to represent these people as fans of *Emmerdale Farm* while describing the company as the "maker of the muck-and-wellies soap" (31 August, 1986: 3).

considerable size with extensive shopping facilities and the local auction mart. The village is usually presented as being about an hour and a half's drive from Leeds, certainly beyond the commuter belt for the difficult upland terrain of the dales. This associates it with a remoteness which has insulated it against the kinds of changes which have come to many villages of Britain as they become commuter villages for urban people. Not that there are no incomers to Beckindale; far from it. The community of small farmers of which the Sugdens and their extended family are the major representatives is supplemented by the management and workers of NY Estates, the dale's agribusiness concern, a publican from Bridlington (many years ago), his partner, a retired mill owner from Bradford, the vicar who hails from the South and a variety of other characters who appear from time to time.

Emmerdale Farm is understood as having been in the Sugden family for generations. Indeed the souvenir booklet for the 15th anniversary of the serial claimed that they had lived there for one thousand years! Thus continuity of the farm and family is a major tenet in the serial's depiction of the farm and the farm family in the countryside. The farm has expanded from a very small hill farm to somewhere between 500 and 800 acres, a very good size for a dales farm and four times the size of the farm used to film the serial. The family partnership which runs the farm is more soap opera than likely in its conception. The very first programme began with the funeral of Jacob Sugden, owner of Emmerdale Farm, and by all accounts a somewhat unsatisfactory man ("a bad lad" the actor playing his widow said). Jacob's widow, Annie, was from the beginning a dominant force in the serial. A very strong woman, she stands as the moral guardian for the whole family, indeed the village, a role institutionalised in her responsibilities as church

warden.[9] Annie has two sons. The eldest, Jack was in 1987 a widower with two sons, Jackie (in early 1988 he married Kathy Bates) and toddler Robert. Their mother was killed in a car crash (after an argument between the actress and the producers). Jack used to be the adventurous son ("interesting" was how some personnel put it), running off to Rome and abandoning the farm to write novels and live a jet-set life. He is now a settled farmer, though still serves as the conscience of this farming community, especially in his opposition to modern technology and intensive farming methods. Joe, the younger son who stayed at home to run the farm, tired of the restrictedness of the family farm in the late 1970s, joined NY Estates, the Lincoln-based agribusiness concern in the dale, had management training in France (a period of two years which coincided with the actor's absence from the serial) and is now the regional manager for NY. Joe is still a partner in Emmerdale and very aware of the business needs of modern farming, something which constantly places him at logger-heads with Jack.

Jack is a main force in the running of Emmerdale Farm, the other person of importance being Matt Skilbeck, the husband of Annie's daughter Peggy who died, as did their twin sons. Matt is also, through this relationship, a partner and has since married Dolly (from Darlington) and has a young son Sam who began school in 1987. At the end of 1987 Matt inherited a small farm adjoining Emmerdale land and the dilemma was, what will he do with it? At that point there were eight people who lived off this upland farm. In fact nine were involved, since the co-owner of the pub, Henry Wilks a retired mill owner from Bradford, also had a share, having bought into the partnership in the early days of the serial (and soon after his arrival in the

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9. Here one is reminded of Lovell's comment that the drama in soap opera demands the independence of the 'strong middle-aged women' so much a part of the genre (1981: 50). Widowhood bestowed precisely this independence on Annie Sugden, and the narratives in the early years further valorised her in this role by forcing her to struggle to keep the farm and the family together.

district) to save the farm from bankruptcy. Henry entered the serial at a time in the early 1970s when expansion and business-orientation in British farming were the key words, and his money enabled Emmerdale to develop as farmers were doing all over the country.

In 1987 Emmerdale Farm was a mixed dales farm with a dairy herd, sheep, calves, geese, chickens, turkeys and some arable production. It has the combination of top and bottom land most desirable in the dales and the barn adjoining the farmhouse had been converted to house the Skilbeck family in separate quarters from Annie, Jack, Jackie and Robert.[10] The farm as an enterprise has experienced many changes since 1972, mirroring the kinds of developments in British agriculture as a whole. Through Jack's more radical character the serial has also explored the extensive methods which have opposed intensification in British farming, though in 1987 Emmerdale operated with the more middle-of-the-road procedures most common in the Yorkshire dales.

The village of Beckindale is the other major part of the equation of farm, village and environs which is the community on which the serial is based (Geraghty 1981: 18). The actual shape and full extent of the village are left unclear, flexible. As one member of the production office phrased it, "There are probably as many Beckindale's as there are viewers", acknowledging the important contribution of imagination in constituting the village. Despite this flexibility, there are several established features of the village, elements which are both essential within any conceptualisation of an English village and important locations for drama. Beckindale's main features are the pub, the shop, the main street, the church and the vicarage. Of secondary importance are the village hall, the school and the recreation areas. The pub in particular, both interior and

10. Interestingly, this same kind of conversion was done for the farm which serves as a location for the serial, which lead one director to comment on "life imitating art".

exterior, is a major site for village action and with the church may be used to symbolise the whole community.[11] The pub is owned by Amos Brearly, so long ago from Bridlington that no-one remembers any more, and Henry Wilks.

In 1987, within the environs of Beckindale, the most significant other element was NY Estates, overseen by Joe Sugden as Regional Manager, and run as Home Farm by Alan Turner, an incomer and a Southerner. NY is part of a multinational; huge, intensively farmed, with many tenants and is the largest employer in the dale. In 1987 it also owned the auction mart in Hotten which was managed by Jack Sugden's step-daughter, Sandie (also the auctioneer), and as befitted an estate, provided trout fishing and pheasant shooting. It enables a most important contrast which at this time drove the logic of the serial's presentation of the rural in Britain in the late twentieth century; that between agribusiness and the family farm. This contrast will arise often in this account of the politics of representation in *Emmerdale Farm*.

These are the main elements of the serial and this outline provides the background to the exploration of the production context of *Emmerdale Farm*. The next section considers the production personnel of *Emmerdale Farm*, what they do, the meaning of the programme for them and the ways in which they relate it to other aspects of their lives and society. Processes and forms of professional practice provide a point (or points) of articulation between the serial's content and the rest of British society such that political and cultural processes outside of television production may be utilised or even contested in that practice. This is one important dimension in the consideration of television as an arena of

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11. This use of place to suggest community and serve the interweaving of stories reminds us of Geraghty's identification of the decision to exclude a communal meeting place as a problem for *Brookside* (1983). She argues that because of the absence of a "common ground":

> One gets a sense of lives being lived in parallel rather than being shared, and moments when the families are brought together are moments of crisis and unease (1983: 138).

hegemonic struggle in the Britain of the nineteen eighties and it requires a detailed exploration of the production context of the serial.

THE PRODUCTION PROCESS OF *EMMERDALE FARM*:

Emmerdale Farm is part of the drama output of Yorkshire Television which is one of the 'big five' independent television companies in Britain, the network companies which consistently provide approximately half of all programmes transmitted (Croston 1982: 18). As many television analysts have pointed out, the making of television programmes is a commercial enterprise, big business (Murdock and Golding 1982: 37, Hood 1983: 71, Buscombe 1980: 6, Garnham 1986: 25-30). Television programmes are made to deliver audiences for advertisers and the 'prime-time' slot in which *Emmerdale Farm* appeared in 1987 is particularly crucial for this aim. Indeed, so critical is this time that in 1985 *Emmerdale Farm* had been moved to 7 o'clock on Tuesdays and Thursdays to combat the gathering of audiences by the new BBC serial *EastEnders* and so keep the consumers watching the multi-product advertising which surrounds the programme (*Sun* 9.3.85: 13). Though the producer claimed to be relatively unconcerned with ratings in 1987, there remains some thinking in the industry that it is important to catch audiences early in the evening to retain them for the rest of the schedule, which necessitated mass audiences for *Emmerdale Farm*.

It has been argued that the need to capture audiences for advertisers has an effect on the programmes themselves.[12] Westergaard, for example, partly attributes what he sees as television's presentation of a particularly

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12. Curran notes that this is something which the IBA rejects (1986:309) and each year in their journal *Television and Radio*, the IBA explain that advertising and programming are quite separate, the prohibition against any form of sponsoring in the Broadcasting Act necessitating and ensuring this separation.

narrow view of the world lacking in complexity, ambiguity and contradiction to the pull of market forces, the need to draw *mass* audiences (1982: 105). Curran focuses more on the forms of programming and programme organisation as a response to the need to "produce stable, reliable and predictable audiences" (1986: 326). He concludes:

> The effect of this pressure for large audiences is for priority to be given to programmes that are of universal appeal - notably soap operas, situation comedies, the main news bulletin and variety programmes (1986: 326).

More innovative and controversial programming is transmitted outside of peak time viewing hours, Curran argues. There is thus a predominant conservatism in programming and scheduling which other writers have used to explain the increasing number of series and serials on British television (Buscombe 1980: 7). Serials in particular, are an ongoing programming commitment which can be built into the offerings which any company makes to the network (Croston 1981: 24) and so help simplify the Programme Controller's task of deciding what programmes must be made each year. Their long-running nature is an essential part of this ongoing commitment. This feature of continuity though has a tendency to solidify the form of the serial into formula, something which sets the serial apart from the other drama output of Yorkshire Television despite the fact that it comes under the general department and organisation of Drama, with an Executive Producer within that department.

THE PRODUCTION PERSONNEL OF *EMMERDALE FARM*

Within the entire structure of Yorkshire Television, the personnel of *Emmerdale Farm* are employees, workers who are members of various

professional unions and whose fates within the company are decided by those in the company hierarchy above them.[13] There is also an internal hierarchy which operates among all personnel who work on the programme, giving greater say and control to some members. This internal hierarchy overlaps the Yorkshire Television wide one, but to some extent has features of its own which are significant in the production process of *Emmerdale Farm*.

Murdock and Golding note an important division between ownership and production in television (1982: 20). Though the two remain tied, production provides control which is transmitted through the hierarchy of *Emmerdale Farm*'s production. The production is headed by the producer, although the serial's operation within the wider Drama Department means that the Controller of Drama and the Executive Producer are senior to him (there has only been one woman producer of the serial).[14] On a day-to-day basis, it is the producer of *Emmerdale Farm* who has control. Despite the collective nature of the television product, *he* sets the programme's policy and decides on its development (cf Newcomb and Alley 1983). He keeps the programme to schedule, so is ultimately responsible for a very large scale operation. If we continue to understand power in terms of structured relationships of inequality, then the producer's relations with most other personnel involve power because of his control. This is a control institutionalised by the wider hierarchy of Yorkshire Television itself and one which is perhaps most evident in his role as financial overseer. He controls

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13. Within the wider context of a Thatcherist economy, the concept of productivity has had a huge impact on restructuring measures in the company and has become an important part of the context in which *all* members of the company work.

14. The Controller of Drama and Executive Producer of *Emmerdale Farm* indeed stand as direct employer to the producer, and through their choice impart an overall tone to the serial and its production. Further, where the serial tackles any controversial issues, the Executive Producer is at least notified in the story formulation stage.

the direct cost budget of 2 million pounds[15] which is allocated to the serial's annual production.[16] Since many of the costs of the production are fixed and ongoing, his main area of manoeuvrability is in the hiring of actors, most of whom are very aware that their continued employment, even the number of programmes in which they appear,[17] is at the discretion of the producer. He stands as direct employer to them. Indeed, the same is true to an extent for other contract workers, whose style of working must fit in with that of *Emmerdale Farm* if they are to continue to be hired.

This element of the relationship between the producer and personnel provides part of what it means to work for the production, how it is experienced at the everyday level. Personnel are intensely interested in the intentions of particularly the producer, regarding the character whom they play, the progression of story-lines and plot relationships which affect them and indeed the way in which the producer wants the whole serial to develop. Gossip involves speculation, pleasurable or otherwise, about these kinds of things as rumours are reported and personnel who have managed to see the producer at social gatherings, meetings or lunches at Yorkshire Television recount their conversations about future developments. The older, more permanent members of the cast are felt to have easier access to the producer, so much so that when a story about agricultural recession was being developed, the actors playing the various workers apparently asked one of the well established actors to find out what was going to happen. In the eyes of some of the lesser, regular characters, the longer-serving

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15. The 1987 producer estimated that the 'below line costs', those of plant, studios and all other overhead costs of production, would also be about 2 million pounds.

16. The producer's financial control is in turn monitored and assessed through YTV's Accounts Department and he in 1987 met with a cost assistant once a fortnight.

17. The actors' contracts provide for a minimum number of programmes in which they must appear, but the producer has the right to decide how many others they will be contracted for.

members have more clout, though the operation of this through relationships with the producer means that it can break down.

The producer's final control over content of the serial is directly implicated in the relationships and concerns described above. His content control in both the short and the long term is recognised by all personnel in a multitude of ways. It is institutionalised in the very processes of generating the programme, in his role as initiator of story-lines and overseer of the whole production. Then too, the producer sets the policy, the philosophy of the programme. Thus, a previous producer held that what he called the continuing serial's "mosaic form" was unsuitable for carrying narratives about social issues. This idea became a common-sense for all personnel, part of the culture of *Emmerdale Farm* production which was maintained even after he left the production. Different producers make their mark on the tone of the serial; their preferences and ideas about drama guide its content and direction.

The control which underpins the producer's relationships of power with his personnel is also inscribed in the everyday practices of making the programme as it affects every department of production. A few examples from the production processes in 1987 suggest the full depth of this control, even in quite small details. In one case, at the story-line development stage, it was the producer who decided that a character who had had a shooting accident should survive, a decision which had ramifications for the rest of the story and the characters involved. At other times, it has been the producer who has introduced new characters, along with ideas for their appropriate kinds of situation and development. It was he who issued a strong directive to all production personnel that working dogs should never again appear on leads after this happened in one programme and he demanded changes in a scene which had the anti-chemicals Jack spraying thistles, partly for character consistency, partly because the programme would be going out in

June which was too soon to poison thistles. In another area of production, it was the producer to whom wardrobe personnel went when an actor was demanding costumes which were far too expensive and he issued directives to solve the problem.

At script conferences where the director and his immediate technical staff discuss problematic scripts with the script editor, getting straight what is happening and asking for clarification on the interpretation of scenes, matters raised may be referred back to the producer for his opinion or the producer's own interpretation of the meaning of scenes or themes is given in answer to queries. At one such conference over a script in which Jack Sugden was gaoled for contempt of court, the editor told the director that the producer had stressed that this was not a story about Jack in prison, but rather the reactions of the people back in Beckindale. Thus, even when the scripts have been handed over to the director for execution, the producer does not relinquish control. In the hierarchy of production personnel, the immediacy of the relationship between producer and script editors means that the latter carry much of his control. Their relationship with him authorises their position in overseeing the execution of the scripts. He is present in every aspect of production, if not physically or in the persons of his script and story editors, then in the possibility that his adjudication or decision making is needed and his ultimate control will be wielded should it become necessary. His control is the source of his power as well as the expression of it as it is inscribed in the multitude of practices which make up the production process.

The making of the serial can be seen as a continuum made up of a multitude of repeated, and overlapping, production cycles which are constituted from a variety of specialist tasks. Within this, various personnel's experience of the programme is oriented by their particular task and the relations of power in which this locates them. This experience generates

different constructions of *Emmerdale Farm* as a particular product and as a process within the wider television industry. These different constructions are illuminating for what they reveal about the ways in which the making of *Emmerdale Farm* provides an arena in which all personnel can interrogate the society in which they live. Indeed, these constructions reveal that the production of the serial *demands* such interrogations. Reflection is inscribed in the very practices and relationships of the production process and is one of the elements of production which differentiates personnel. All personnel have some perception of the necessary relationship between the presentation of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* and their own social world but there are differences in the conceptualisation of this relationship and the degrees to which it is applied at various points of production. Such differences are part of the power relations of the production process. What follows is a brief account of one production cycle which will facilitate both a discussion of the relationship between power and content in the serial and the ways in which power relations in production are underpinned by structures of inequality in the wider British society.

THE PRODUCTION CYCLE

PRE-PRODUCTION (1)

Emmerdale Farm is permanently represented by a small group of personnel whose positions persist, although the incumbents change regularly. Indeed, there is a current of feeling that people must not stay too long (not more than four years, one past producer said) on the serial, for they "grow stale". This group, the production office, comprises the producer, one story and two script editors and it is they who generate the interlocking,

ongoing storylines and themes of *Emmerdale Farm*. This works at two levels; very long term narratives and shorter, more immediate ones.

The storyline is initially conceived in very broad sweeps in two broad interacting areas, that of the characters and farming. Schematic outlines of narratives are suggested as both formally in meetings and informally the group discusses what could happen to the various characters, what relationships might happen; will there be love affairs, marriage, pregnancy, a new job, unemployment? The discussions are always framed within the terms of who the character is and what the limits of the character are considered to be. In 1987 for example, there was a great deal of discussion about a relationship for Joe Sugden. The divorced Joe has periodically had serious relationships so this was part of how he is conceptualised as well as a good story. A female vet, Ruth, was introduced with the idea of developing a relationship complicated by her professional life and a prior relationship with another man. The production office wanted first to build the character of a strong professional woman, so the relationship developed against a story about animal cruelty associated with the Auction Mart at Hotten. They discussed the various possibilities for how the relationship with Joe might be affected as they came to introduce Ruth's fiance, Liam, some of which came to pass, others not. The development was originally predicated on Liam being a charmer, but the episodes in which he was introduced established him differently, so the original long-range story projections had to be re-assessed. The situation was still complicated when I finished monitoring the serial, partly because of this dissatisfaction with how the characterisations were working. The actor who plays Joe himself did not want Joe to settle down, so clearly hoped that ideas about the relationship breaking down would ultimately frame the story. Establishing of story-line around character is both a long-range and an ongoing thing, something which the production office discusses constantly, together, with the actors and with writers.

The introduction of Ruth combined the character based story projections with the other broad area for stories, farming. The structure of each block depends upon at least one farming story being included. For producers both past and current, it was farming stories which established the rural character of *Emmerdale Farm* (see Chapter Four). In one block where the farming story was missing, the producer turned an existing story about a group of young men harassing the new vet because she was female into a farming story in which she confronted a carrier who had been illegally transporting animals to market.

Ideas for farming stories come from a wide variety of sources. The production takes weekly farming magazines and personnel follow reports of what is happening in the dales and in farming generally in other media. In 1987 one of the script editors attended a national conference held on land use in rural areas where he gathered information on upland farming which was used in the ongoing story about agricultural recession. In addition the serial has a group of advisers who help overcome the lack of personal knowledge of dales farming of most personnel.[18] The information officer for the north-east region of the National Farmers Union (NFU) (the Yorkshire Dales is included in this region) is available for consultation about ideas for stories and for information about specific stories. Similarly the serial personnel consult a veterinary practice and an auctioneer in Wharfedale and contacts in many other branches of the agricultural industry have been built up over time. Then too, the Wharfedale farmer whose farm is the location for

18. At my initial meetings with production office personnel, this lack of personal knowledge was cited as a problem and when in January the producer left his position, he commented that with his going, there would be no person in the production office with immediate knowledge of farming. He had worked on a mixed farm in Devon for several years. One member of the cast did though farm a small holding in West Yorkshire.

recording *Emmerdale Farm* has an ongoing role, as even things like his putting in a sheep shed[19] are turned into stories for Matt or Jack.

In farming stories Emmerdale Farm is the main focus and forward projections about whether it will be expanding or getting into trouble are in part affected by what is happening to the characters involved and partly by what is happening in farming at the time. Another major theme for discussion by the production office in 1987 was the projected marriage of Kathy Bates and Jackie Merrick, Jack's older son. This was to happen but within the character part of story devising, the production office did "not want things to happen too pat", to quote a script editor. So another man was also introduced and it was not until the end of the year that the two became engaged. Then the problem was to be where they could live, how the farm would be affected. At the same time, the producer was thinking about following up on the farm expansion story of 1987, by working through the theme of diversification, something which was happening with much publicity in the dales, indeed in farming all over Britain at the time. Not all the ideas will be turned into stories or ongoing themes. Some are superseded by others as different needs or limitations (as in the case of Ruth, the vet) arise. The serial may respond to something currently happening in the countryside which will involve rearranging or refocusing a relationship they planned to develop. The need to get story outlines to the script writers six months ahead of transmission often prevents responding to topical issues as they arise in the manner of current affairs programmes.

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19. During the nineteen eighties, dales farmers were starting to erect sheep sheds to winter their sheep. These provided shelter for ewes in lamb and much improved conditions for lambing, but for most of the eighties was a farming practice much contested in the dales. Arguments raged about whether shelters were suitable for sheep who need high pastures to thrive and whether in fact the survival rate for lambs was improved to an extent making sheds worthwhile. As such, the issue was a very topical one for *Emmerdale Farm* to tackle.

In 1987 the programmes were recorded six weeks before transmission in blocks of six or eight weeks which provided one structure for the conceptualisation and writing of the ongoing stories. The serial had a string of regular writers, some of them long-standing contributors. In addition, in 1987 the producer[20] and story editor regularly wrote scripts and towards the end of the year, the two script editors wrote their first scripts for the serial. The writer works from a general outline of each block, at the first meeting with the story editor and the script editor in charge of the block being told the story lines which will form the basis of his or her set of episodes. He or she is given a lot of background about the story so far, especially the episodes which immediately precede the block. Discussion at this meeting is dominated by the editors and initiates the multi-dimensional discourse through which production of a programme block is enacted. Here personnel flesh out ideas, working on all areas of the programme and balancing farm with pub and other locations, the relationship between these regular locations forming the skeletal form, or formula, of the narrative.

In balancing locations personnel strove to juxtapose drama and comedy, *Emmerdale Farm* being noted for the amount of comedy it incorporated compared with other continuing serials (see Geraghty 1981: 14). Some personnel described the serial as a "light- hearted look at farming", and many times script editors and even directors sought to highlight what they called "the gag" through which many scenes made their impact. They understood this "light-hearted look" against an orthodoxy of social realism in *urban* based continuing serials which they perceived as focusing on social issues to the detriment of character development.

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20. This producer had first been a writer for the serial and progressed through the position of highly regarded script editor to the producer's role.

There were strong ideas about the appropriateness of the different areas as carriers of the two forms, drama and comedy. Comedy was mostly focused on the pub and NY Estates, seldom the farm which was seen as the location of the dramatic narrative. A past producer explained this, as always, in terms of character. He said that certain characters served as carriers of the narrative and others commented on that narrative and even defused it. Drama is the province of the former and the latter function is the arena of humour. The carriers of the narrative cannot be either commentators or humorous as well, he said.

For this producer the necessary separation of, and balance between, drama and comedy was a feature of the way in which the serial's format was constructed and the standard way in which the narrative unfolded, though he added that it was also a function of the actors' playing of their characters. The characters become too entrenched, too set, he said and this limitation was often the artists'. Then writers conceptualised characters' actions within this framework, creating and perpetuating between them what he called "a tradition". Indeed, working within this tradition *is* important for the writers, one of whom told me that the thing he most disliked doing was writing a new and therefore unknown character. The tradition becomes central to the generation of scripts for the continuing serial, one kind of limitation on them which has a tendency to produce formula. Thus when the above producer tried to introduce a serious story at the pub and a humorous one for the farm, his efforts were defeated by the way in which actors, writers, directors and public understood the serial within terms of a certain formula, its tradition. This producer returned in 1987 to direct one block of programmes and he too was intensely aware of the possibilities for "the gag" in scenes in the pub and NY Estates Home Farm office, in the latter even adding one into a scene, as he explained, "to defuse yet another dump scene", referring to the

long running narrative about the dumping of nuclear waste near Beckindale (see Chapters Six and Seven).

The story conference for the writer of a block, the story editor and the script editor allocated to the block thus generates a discourse about the scripts to be written which is already contained within certain formulaic understandings about the programme and what makes it work. There are other kinds of constraints on particular blocks which are made clear to the writer at this stage; what has happened before, what is to follow immediately, the direction in which the production office intends to develop characters and relationships and also practical considerations like which actors will be available for recording.

Though the scripts are written by specialist writers, the members of the production office closest to the producer (the story and script editors) are in positions which enable them to stamp their mark on the serial in an ongoing way. Indeed to an extent this is necessary in order to maintain consistency across story lines and characterisations which are written by a variety of writers and executed by a variety of directors. Thus in everyday routines, the editors take charge of the discourse through which the episodes (and the serial) take form. The writers work to the editors, at this initial stage trying to tease out their ideas and preferences for the episodes to be written. At no stage are they autonomous artists (Buscombe 1980). The constraints on them are far too great. Although they can have considerable input at the story conference, making suggestions, exploring what the editors mean by certain ideas, they receive instructions from the editors and are obliged, by the terms of their contracts, to make any changes demanded of them by the editors. Sometimes, if time is short, they must even accept their scripts being re-written for them. The editorial control which the editors have, setting the parameters within which the writers must work and creating the conditions for the scripts' acceptance, locks writers into a relation which is empowered

by the producer and an understanding of hierarchy which passes some of his control to his most immediate colleagues, the editors.[21]

This control by the editors continues through the next stages of script production as the writers produce outline treatments of their blocks, based on the script conference discussions. These are submitted for the approval of the editor and already alterations may have to be made because of developments in other aspects of production. At this stage the writer indicates some of his or her thinking about the story development and the characterisation. For example, the writer who began the nuclear dump narrative went to great pains in his outline to detail how he intended to use small things going wrong on the farm to indicate metaphorically something amiss in the wider community. He also established the points at which he would need to do specialist research in order to 'authenticate' his development of the narrative. This notion of 'authenticity' will be explored in the next chapter. At this point it is to be understood in the commonsense way of the writers; that the narrative is also a *reflection* (rather than a representation) of a known part of Britain, the dales, necessitating at least an empirical validity in the presentation of major elements of dales social life.

Episodic scripts are based on these outline treatments and any research which has been considered necessary. Despite the fact that *Emmerdale Farm* scripts are generated out of the same characters and an overall storyline, different writers put their own imprint on the scripts, based on their own concerns and their favourite elements in the programme. They have different philosophies of *Emmerdale Farm* based on different

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21. As writer, only the producer himself was not subject to these controls. In one set of episodes which he wrote, the producer made an arbitrary decision that a man who had been shot would not die, which meant that those who wrote the scripts after his were faced with the task of coping with this new eventuality. This was described as "a perk" of being the producer.

conceptions of what continuing serials are and what they are able to do[22]. Equally they have different degrees of knowledge about the dales, the countryside and farming. Since this is a central part of the serial, most will use contacts they have built up over the years to gather information for their script blocks and to get feed-back on past programmes. For example two of the writers have farming families in the dales or moors area of Yorkshire to whom they always take script outlines for comment and discussion. Their research at this level was hailed as great "accuracy" by the cast when it came to rehearsing the episodes, an interpretation of "authenticity" which is also dominant in communications from the public. Indeed, writers are intensely aware of not leaving themselves open to public criticism by presenting something "wrongly". Thus they research elements as diverse as the leasing of milk quotas, the meaning of ancient feudal rights in land and how court injunctions are served, all in the name of "authenticity". That correctness of detail is regarded as "the writer's job" as one basis of authenticity was clear on an outside recording day when it became known that the actor involved had had to alter a lot of dialogue for auctioning milk quotas because, according to the Milk Marketing Board, it was "completely wrong". Various technical personnel blamed the writer and were irritated that such errors resulted in wrong images and dialogue.

The scripts, and therefore what *Emmerdale Farm* is, its fusion of characters, situations, relationships and commentaries as they take form and are developed in narrative, gain concreteness within an ongoing discourse which relates writer to the production office.

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22. These philosophies can be quite complex and detailed, indicating considerable thought about both the genre and the specifics of *Emmerdale Farm* within this. An example of such a philosophy is to be found in one writer's article on soap opera in the *Guardian* (Robson 26.9.87: 13).

PRE-PRODUCTION (2)

The next stage of production is based on the completed scripts which is why *their* construction is so central to the whole process. The scripts inscribe *Emmerdale Farm* in a very literary mode, transforming writers' and producers' second hand knowledge of dales lived experience into written words. The next stage translates these words into sound and vision, performance and technology. This is a cooperative effort which requires considerable skill, and one director felt that many writers, even members of the production office, lacked the ability to see their scripts in visual terms because of their literary mode of thinking. For him, this could produce very "wordy" or as some actors put it, "writery" scripts which were difficult to render into visual terms.[23]

The translation of scripts into programmes is done under the director allocated to the block of episodes. At this stage responsibility passes from producers (this is often used as a generic term to include producer, story editor and script editors) and writers to the technical facilitators. Again the production had a string of directors, each with his or her own style and interpretation of *Emmerdale Farm* as a specific continuing serial. Through the operation of a hierarchy based on specialisation of the tasks of production, control is transmitted from the producers to the director, though the script editor remains as arbiter for the block and permanent link with the producer. In 1987 informal contact remained however, since the offices of all personnel were in the same corridor, presenting opportunities for chat and

23. This director's understanding of the centrality of the visual to television is at odds with Ellis' suggestion that it is sound which is the crux of the television representation (1984). I was told though, that there are directors who would agree with Ellis. The significance of television as process would appear to be highly contested among personnel immersed in its production. Indeed, such contestation actually becomes part of the process of production as the personnel contest the many elements of the programme in order to gain precedence for their particular view.

consultations. Though I argue that the technical stage represents a significant discontinuity in the cyclic production process, I do not want to imply that the two stages involve totally different personnel who have no contact with each other. The most significant manifestation of the discontinuity is an attitude towards the serial and the execution of the scripts, rather than a total organisational split, though the former can serve as an idiom for some degree of the latter.

The director heads a team of technical facilitators which is highly specialised, with each skilled function rigorously defined and separated from all others by various union agreements. A small group of technicians, the Production Assistant, Unit and Stage Managers, all with their specialist jobs, are the primary group which works under him from the beginning, co-ordinating the efforts of other specialists. In the beginning the director is seeking to make an interpretation of the scripts. He does this by trying to understand what they call the "meaning" of the various scenes, here referring to the intentions of the writers (and through them the producers). At a script conference with the editor in charge of his block, for example, one director put forward his own understanding of what was being said by the writer and asked for clarification in many instances in terms of the point of this scene within the whole, the narrative work it was being required to do. He also asked what characters "were thinking" at this point, what had happened before to prompt a particular response of anger or irritation, how some farming or other procedure took place in order to make sense of a piece of dialogue or action or whether this scene was meant to be funny.

Interpretation does not happen entirely within the terms of the text. The director interrogates it through two different kinds of experience of his or her own. The first of these is technical; what is possible, what effect will be generated by a particular stage direction in the script? For example, one director complained about what he considered to be the "silly stage

direction" of expecting an actor to telegraph, without words that the gas stove had been left on, an effect he felt was impossible to achieve. Directors will also analyse scripts via their own experience of the world. The translation of words into sound and vision via technique provides a point of interrogation of the world for the director and the primary unit. In the same meeting the director was adamant about changing one scene because he said that Sandie would never open Phil's letters, a judgement made on the basis of the Sandie character and his own understanding of the behaviour of people who are like her. The interpretive process is thus a complicated interaction of technical, experiential and *Emmerdale Farm* specific processes. In itself it is a process within production as a mechanism of representation which articulates processes inside television production with constructions of the wider social world.

The director's interpretation is causative of how he decides to set up the recording, the balance he strives to achieve, which scenes he decides are the crux of what is being said in both this episode and the story of which it is part, and which need playing as such. How he uses the sets, the camera shots he establishes to carry the narrative, the particular sound effects he decides are necessary; all this and more depends on the interpretation he makes of the scripts. The interpretation becomes another set of parameters, not just for him, but through his control, for other technical personnel. It is largely his final vision of each episode which is executed. The actual recording of the programmes is also circumscribed within Yorkshire Television procedure, designed to co-ordinate the efforts of a large team of people. This encourages the highly conventionalised processes of television production.

This initial stage also marks the beginning of distancing the team of technical facilitators from the production office and forging a group with the actors which has the director at its head and which will endure for the

duration of the production cycle. This distancing happens partly in oppositional terms, though contact between the two, production office and technical team is never severed. The opposition between the two though is facilitated by the collapsing of the separate roles and personnel in the production office into the generic "producers". Even as scripts are being read by the director's immediate group, notes are made to refer points to the "producers", and any inadequacies in the scripts will be laid at their collective door. This fault finding has a particularly distancing effect when its basis is an inadequate understanding of some technical need of television production.

In the many conversations about script details which happened throughout the working day, analyses of the quality of the scripts and themes were couched in terms of the personal abilities and features of "the producers". Gossip was used to explain a particular element in the narrative or to identify the significance of a strain in the story which had become predominant. Here the considerable knowledge which personnel had of each other was combined with an identification between writer and story. Individuals *were* named, but most negative comments were directed at the generic "producers". Personal gossip became a mild form of subversion; the power relationships between the two groups were undeniable but legitimation became the issue when *suitability* to hold power was questioned. Gossip carrying judgements about the quality of work in the production office continued in every task throughout the production cycle, as a major way in which the skilled technical facilitators forged themselves into a group under the director. Indeed one way in which the technicians experienced the production cycle was in judging the work of the production office through the prism of their own skill.

With scripts fully elaborated in terms of action, sound, lighting, cameras, sets, props and all the plethora of detail necessary to render them

entertaining and convincing to an audience, the next stage is recording.[24] This occurred six weeks before transmission.

OUTSIDE BROADCAST RECORDING (OBS)[25]

OBs make possible the greater than 50% location action which has always been a point of pride for *Emmerdale Farm*. In one block of eight programmes OBs accounted for twelve days out of the five weeks of recording. For this block the locations used were the farm and village which are always part of a programme, another bigger farm which was used to portray part of NY Estates, a house near Leeds, Roundhay Hospital in Leeds, Leeds Town Hall and the airport.

The farm has become a second base for the production, so much so that part of one building is used exclusively by them. The farmer, Arthur Bell[26] or his son, Trevor, are always on hand to provide extra tools or animals and to show the cast how to carry out a particular task. They also keep the herd in for milking scenes or pen whatever animals are needed for recording. To an extent, the production works around the farming routines of the farm.

There are no prior rehearsals for OB recording for *Emmerdale Farm*. Time does not allow for it. Rather the director takes the cast through the

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24. The description which follows is specific to the fieldwork period, since the production of *Emmerdale Farm* has now been concentrated in a single location on the outskirts of Leeds.

25. Outside Broadcast Recording uses the videotape technology of the television studio for events and location work which cannot be staged in the studio. At YTV the technique was originally used to record outside events like football matches and public ceremonies. When *Emmerdale Farm* first began its location work was done on film, but the speed of tape (scenes are substantially edited as they are recorded) encouraged the switch to OBs after approximately one year.

26. This is the pseudonym given to the farmer in all publicity and press releases in order to conceal his identity and that of his farm. Despite this, various tours include the farm location on their schedules.

scene a few times, making clear what he wants, and then the scene is recorded. A major problem for OBs is the weather, not only for the interference in the recording schedule it may produce, but also for continuity problems. Rain, snow or quality of light may give a scene features which are hard to match in others adjoining it.

A scene may be shot several times before the director is satisfied with it and other departments like sound or cameras may also demand new takes. Such demands are usually made in the name of "professionalism", part of a work ethic through which technicians assert their skill and their competence to know how to achieve the effect necessary within production. Schlesinger notes that the importance of this ethic is in its assertion of autonomy (1978: 108) and the establishment of absolute but subjectively evaluated criteria within the specialist field such that ultimately the professional is his or her "own audience" (1978: 134).

Professionalism as it operates in the production process of *Emmerdale Farm* serves to grant a degree of autonomy to each of the technical departments and the competence on which it is based can bring the technicians into conflict with the director. Thus, in one OB on the farm, when the sound recordist demanded a new take because one of the actors had not been quite "onto" the microphone, which meant his words were a little less than sharp, the director denied the request because, "It sounded very real to me", referring to the fact that the actor was placed towards the back of the shot and would sound less clear in such conditions normally. Here there was a clash *within* professionalism between two different contents of competence and expectation in two different technical fields. The clash expresses a further tension between the constant striving for realism in the continuing serial, often understood as "authenticity" (one aspect of this being that the "real" is not perfect), and the perfection of quality which is achievable, and desirable, by technicians. As the one in control and he

whose interpretation was being executed, the director's professional requirements held sway. This is one of the many areas of negotiation over the execution of the scripts and engagements between the director and technicians within professional behaviour contribute to the end product as it is transmitted. Recording, like pre-production, is a collective effort, with the director co-ordinating. There are many points at which problems may need to be negotiated and so have their effect on the whole.

Despite all the problems, location work, especially the farming, is considered essential for *Emmerdale Farm*, simply because it is a rurally located serial. The producers have always felt that people expect to see outdoor scenes with animals and farm and village life in such a serial.[27] Thus, though it is time consuming and certainly affords far less control by the director than the studio situation, OBs continue to form a significant part of recording. Working with animals is a major expression of the farming component of the story-lines, which is why the addition of Ruth the vet into the cast was felt to be a strong thing to do. Her inclusion meant that there was another regular narrative strain which would automatically take the serial onto the farm and into farming generally. Animal based stories mean that the veterinarian advisers are also regularly required on OBs, ensuring the health of animals used in recording or showing the actor playing Ruth how to carry out a veterinary procedure. This is always time-consuming, but as one director said, the scene must get the procedure right, at the very least to avoid complaints from the public, for whom authenticity is often a basis of

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27. There is some confirmation of this in the letters which members of the audience send to *Emmerdale Farm*. Further, a letter to the *TV Times* about the Scottish continuing serial *Take The High Road*, complained about the lack of animals in the serial and compared it unfavourably with *Emmerdale Farm* on this score:

> *Emmerdale Farm* always shows some animals running around. Empty fields just don't make sense to we countryfolk (5-11.12.87: 93).

judgement about the serial.[28] Animals are seen as so important to the authenticity of the depiction of farm life that they are often used to add colour or point to a scene, especially if the director feels that there is not enough happening in the episodes, that they are a bit wordy with not enough action to hold interest. Thus, even a director who was well aware of the need to avoid romanticising the view of the farm 'salted' his farmyard scenes with chickens running around because he felt they were fairly dull "wordy" scenes with not much farming interest in them.

The director's earlier comment about a scene sounding "very real" indicates the centrality of authenticity in recording. Here is sought a direct relationship between the characters of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* and the world of human perceptions, consistently described as the "real world". To the director and his team, looking and sounding "real" are as important as ensuring that the narrative is carried effectively. This very subjective realm is brought into the domain of professionalism through the operation of certain conventions in the production process. Thus a major concern for OBs is continuity; ensuring that the final programme will flow with nothing to call into question its correct sequencing and this temporal dimension of its authenticity. This is a particular problem because not only are OB scenes interspersed between studio ones, but OB scenes for the same story day are not shot at the same time. Continuity and credibility in terms of whether people would be able to get to other places or do certain things in the time given in the script become issues from the very beginning. These are at the heart of what one producer called the "apparent reality"

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28. Members of the audience do write to complain of inaccuracy to both the production office and to specialist magazines like *TV Times*. In 1987 these letters covered items like the wrong insignia for a particular named army regiment, the catching of moles and snow lying on the ground around the farm but being absent on the tops. They also took the programme to task for another category of getting things 'wrong'. This had a moral dimension and included the smuggling of a salami into Britain from Italy, one character looking under the bonnet of a car while smoking a cigarette and Alan Turner not wearing a riding hat while horse riding.

which identifies the continuing serial and which is created in its production process. *Emmerdale Farm* employs many devices to prevent mistakes which would be destructive of the illusion being created. Each scene of the script is headed by a time which is often established through the clocks of the sets. This means that for each scene, actors can locate the action in terms of the routines of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. Wardrobe can work out appropriate costumes using understandings of the routines appropriate for each character as well as the particular story line. Details are logged in the notebooks kept for the programme and instant photographs taken for a record. This ensures that Jack does not leave the milking parlour in a green shirt and walk in at the farm door in a blue one. Each department takes similar measures, as does the Production Assistant. Continuity is also crucial in studio recording.

STUDIO RECORDING

REHEARSALS

In many ways the most significant part of studio recording for representation is the rehearsals which precede the actual recording. In rehearsals, actors and technical personnel work the scripts visually to shape them according to the guidance of the director. The work done at rehearsals is both an interrogation of the experiental world in which personnel live and a construction of the separate fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. At the level of the "said" (Geertz 1973: 19) however, these interrogations and constructions occur in the guise of blocking the scenes, negotiating and character motivation, reconciling the various demands of actors and other technicians, and perhaps altering any dialogue which is ineffective or proves difficult to deliver. As such, it is often the unspoken assumptions which are

inscribed in the discussions and negotiations which are of greatest interest to the analyst of rehearsals.

Rehearsals are run by the Stage Manager. They are a central mechanism in the forging of a technical team groupness which is identifiable in opposition to the production office. In 1987 there was even a spatial element involved, as The Green Room and rehearsal room were the focal point, the meeting place, the place identified at YTV *as* "Emmerdale". In the Green Room were displayed the most recent press clippings about the serial. Here actors opened their mail and discussed audience responses to the programme as well as holding post mortems about the episodes currently being transmitted.[29] The common interests and concerns of the team helped to unite them as a group (albeit a group with the usual personal dislikes and preferences) at some distance from the production office "upstairs" or "up there" (literally, since three floors separated the two locations).

In the rehearsals I witnessed, the team of actors, the Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Unit Manager and Production Assistant, under the control of the director, worked together to give shape and visually conveyed meaning to the written scripts. The director already knew what cameras he would use and where they would be placed and together he and the actors, with the help of the Stage and Unit Managers, blocked and gradually refined the scenes to build the episodes. There was, especially at first, a light, even joking atmosphere in which co-operation and commitment to the whole was forged in an uncomplicated way. An example of some of the rehearsal work done on one scene from one episode will be helpful for the following discussion of the significance of the way in which meaning is generated in

29. One actor conveyed the ways in which actors in the serial become involved in each other's lives by saying that they were like "a family". Certainly the cast of a continuing serial may be compared with a repertory company.

the rehearsal stage of the production process of the serial. Rehearsals themselves construct a political space in which understandings about the world are both generated and utilised in relation to *Emmerdale Farm* to produce a coherent fictional world which is related through representation to other social processes and worlds. They become a way of knowing the world.

The example comes from an episode in the nuclear dump story in which a press conference was held on the moor in response to Jack Sugden being gaoled for pulling down the fence protecting the dump site. At the conference, Alan Turner had treacherously claimed that Jack's action was unlawful, irresponsible and unsupported by the community. In the scene in question, Amos Brearly was trying to write an article for the *Hotten Courier*, the local paper for which he is a correspondent.

At rehearsal, the dialogue proved unclear as to the train of reasoning by which Amos came to his decision about what to write, though it was *meant* to be prompted by Henry's comments. Once the two actors expressed their concern, they talked through the meaning and shape of the scene with the director, trying to provide a suitable logic which would enable them to establish the motive and intention of each and an interaction between them which could push the narrative in a specific direction. Underpinning this discussion were the two characterisations of Henry and Amos and the very long relationship between them. Amos has always been a scrupulously correct reporter, adhering strictly to the ideals of balance and objectivity in news journalism, while Henry is capable of taking the view that the means are justified by the ends.

In the first reading, the actors played the scene as if the suggestion to redress the perceived wrong by reporting the conference in an anti-Turner way was accidently prompted by something Henry said. For the next reading the director asked for a different playing as if Henry was quite deliberately

suggesting this approach. This required rewriting a line, but still it felt "wrong". They discussed what *was* wrong and how the scene fitted into the episode, raised the possibility of Amos quite deliberately deciding to distort what happened, but were still dissatisfied. Then the actor playing Henry thought that the pace of the scene could be wrong because Henry was in his armchair dozing off. He felt that as it was a village issue, rather than something inconsequential Henry would be alert and sitting at the table. To help create the feeling and increase the pace by fitting the scene into the daily routine of the pub, the director added the mugs of tea which the pair have at four thirty to the scene. Henry was to bring them in as Amos worked, "trying to help out". With the lines restored, the scene was played so that Amos was ahead of Henry, leading him to the position that this pro-Jack and anti-Turner kind of reporting was what was required, but without saying this in so many words. All were finally pleased when this was tried, and the actor who plays Henry concluded, "It turned out to be a nice little scene after all. I didn't think so when I read it."

The example shows how, although the director's interpretation of the scene is the starting point, the end product is a co-operative and negotiated one as the actor's own interpretations, immersed in their knowledge of their characters, also influence the final playing. From the very first rehearsal, the constructions of the actors and the director of both the fictional world which is *Emmerdale Farm* and the world of their own lived experience were used as the basis of the negotiations in which the scene was developed. Interpretations and constructions of scenes are thus authorised through the interaction of two different kinds of knowledge; internal and external. The use made of these two kinds of knowledge must be considered separately as each interact with the technical team members' own sense of professionalism differently.

In the above scene, an important dimension of both the meaning of the scene and the discussion (and rehearsal) through which the director and the actors tried to bring sense to the reading, was the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* itself. Spatially, temporally and experientially underpinning the scene was what Beckindale is. Amos and Henry have lived together in the pub almost from the beginning and work together behind the bar. Amos is a man of enthusiasms while Henry is a man of business, so that Henry tends to play "straight man" to Amos which is precisely what happened in the scene. All of this history stands behind just this one scene, enshrined in the introduction of the four thirty mugs of tea, the usual routine. The lines were interpreted and the scene constructed within this history and the various suggested playings were partly assessed in terms of whether they made sense "for Amos". That is, whether there was consistency of characterisation, something which always refers backwards to Amos' past behaviour.

Rehearsals therefore, are not just learning moves and lines for six or eight programmes; they are also occasions which, operating *though* the history of the serial, celebrate and affirm the existence of a fictional world which *is Emmerdale Farm*. They construct it as a reality to be appealed to in the rehearsal process to query a line, situation or particular interpretation of writer or director. At this point, the *internal* consistency of the serial is what is crucial for the construction of the fictional world (Maitre 1983: 29). Maitre argues that an essential aspect of the imagined fictional world which is created for public consumption is the plausibility which underpins its intelligibility for the audience (1983: 28,29). Internally, this plausibility and intelligibility is partially provided in terms of the fictional world's internal coherence. The history of the serial, that is the history of the fictional world constructed by *Emmerdale Farm*, is one expression of the coherence and totality of that world, here consistency through *time*, something which Maitre

argues is a central feature which transforms mere imagining into the construction of a fictional world. In terms of the history of *Emmerdale Farm* as a fictional world, the writers do make "mistakes" which are not always picked up by the relatively short serving script editors. Indeed, the editors do not even always recognise co-incidences between stories past and present. For example, it was not until the end of 1987 that an editor realised that the Joe/Ruth relationship almost completely reproduced Joe's relationship with his ex-wife Christine.[30] These mistakes and the significance of history for plausibility provided an ongoing commentary of opposition to the production office members and their writers by the actors as part of the technical team and any other technical workers who had been at YTV long enough to know a lot about the past of *Emmerdale Farm.*

The actors know the full history of their and other characters; in a sense standing as the custodians of their own characters.[31] They may ask for a rewording of dialogue on the grounds that their character "would not speak like that" or the writer has picked up their own speech patterns and attributed them to the character (something which happens so often for some characters that the actors are resigned to it). Or they may ask to strike dialogue simply because what it says is wrong in terms of past events. For example dialogue in one scene implied that Joe had not yet married, so had to be altered. Other technical workers will similarly refer to the past to contribute their objections to scenes. Rehearsals engage a collective

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30. Both women were of a higher class than Joe, both were the daughters of large land owners (Christine's father being local and Ruth's from the Yorkshire Wolds), both were used to the very best of everything which caused problems in the relationship. Even in temperament, the two women are not dissimilar, and certainly both gave Joe a fairly hard time in his courting.

31. Tulloch and Moran make this same point for the actors in the Australian serial *A Country Practice* and give examples where the producer had returned scripts to the writer to be rewritten because of the objection by actors that lines were not appropriate for their characters (1986: 61). In *Emmerdale Farm* such alterations tend to be made in rehearsals, in serious cases after consultation with the script editor or producer.

memory to interact with the technical and professional needs of the specific scenes being constructed.

The histories appealed to are themselves compilations of constructions made by each and every member of the production, so that in rehearsals all personnel enact their own versions of the history of *Emmerdale Farm*. In constructing a fictional world as a reality through history, each of the personnel tends to locate him or herself within a particular, privileged reading of what *Emmerdale Farm* is. Histories make particular interpretations of characters central and most of the cast tend to speak of or construct the other characters in relation to their own. The longer serving members of the cast and technical team have been able to construct far more detailed histories of the serial's world so have far more confidence in asserting that something is wrong in the rehearsal situation. The construction of a history through which to operate is empowering, though it favours the longer serving members and tends to separate actors from each other. It provides actors in particular with the means to contest the scripts or readings of the scripts which have been authorised by the production office and is a way in which *their* readings can be authorised to provide a space of resistance.

The second kind of knowledge which authorises the interpretations which are fundamental to the negotiations over the playing of a scene activates personnel's experiences, both first and second hand, in a world outside of the serial. Here, two kinds of interrogation processes would seem to occur simultaneously. The constructedness of the social world is obscured as "reality" and at the same time is laid bare in an exploration of how the culture works.

Rehearsals highlight the obscuring of constructedness of the social world (and of the relationship between this and the fictional world) when actors and technical personnel constantly refer to that world as an

unambiguously knowable realm to authorise their interpretations. Such a construction of the social world underpins much of the negotiations involved in blocking scenes. It is manifest in and authorises comments as simple as "people don't really do things like that" to the decision by one director to cast the well-known actor Roshan Seth as the NY Estates accountant in an episode, because he had "noticed that every other accountant in London these days is Indian or Pakistani". Such input may draw on direct experience as in these examples or indirectly, on research. It may include other representations as other, particularly media, images are evoked to explain the interpretation being made. Some of the farming scenes are also authorised by general, usually uncontested, typifications[32] or an interaction between typification and images constructed through research. Farm kitchen scenes for example draw on notions that farm women do their own baking, that they are scrupulously tidy and always busy. These kinds of assumptions become the routines of the farm, and are used to cloak the dialogue in the kitchen in a rural milieu which is understood as somehow related to what dales farmers do. In all of these examples of how the action and meaning of the scenes are negotiated, both direct and indirect experience are naturalised by being presented as a kind of common-sense, as "how things are" rather than constructed. This gives rehearsals a political content in Hall's sense; as social and cultural processes which support and reproduce particular forms of domination, here by making them seem natural.

In its activation of knowledge of the social world, *Emmerdale Farm* rehearsals can also be understood in terms of Schechner's concept of restored behaviour (1982). Schechner defines restored behaviour as:

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32. At this stage I am using an undifferentiated category of typification, though very aware of the need to distinguish between uses and degrees of typification (Perkins 1979). Subsequent chapters will explore these distinctions.

> ...living behaviours treated as a film editor treats strips of film. These strips can be rearranged, reconstructed: they are independent of the causal systems (psychological, social, technological) that brought them into existence: they achieve a life of their own (1982: 39).

Schechner argues that it is in performance that such behaviour occurs. Performance is based on the assumption that "some sort of behaviour exists separately from performance" which becomes the material on which rehearsals operate. Conventions of performance facilitate the restoration of this behaviour. As restored behaviour, rehearsals are also "collective reflexivity" (Schechner1982: 39,40), performance constituting itself out of the interrogation of social processes as well as technical ones. Rehearsals were thus political in a different way. They became moments when, through becoming Others at the same time as themselves (Schnechner 1982: 75), personnel argued reflexively about their world; when they clashed on what particular cultural symbols signified, on gender issues or the construction of class. In this area I am particularly interested in processes significant within Thatcherism. The incorporation of experience into the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* in rehearsals, as an interrogation of the social world of personnel, is itself a mechanism both for the forging of hegemony and its contestation. The kinds of questions about motivation, the nature of the individual and relations between people through which social and political processes were interrogated and brought into the serial in rehearsal, precisely concerned the domain of hegemony and counter-hegemony under Thatcherism.

That such an interrogation process can directly confront the world of Thatcherism, even in fiction, was seen at the end of May 1987, when NIREX announced the end to the investigations into the shallow dumping of nuclear waste on the first day of rehearsals for a story block which included the fight against such dumping in Beckindale. This incident was interesting in that

overtly set the technical team in opposition to the production office, activating the basis of the power relationship between the two. Technical personnel, including the actors were most concerned as they discussed possible ramification, listened to a news broadcast for more information and tried to discuss the matter with individuals in the production office. They were told that it did not matter, that as drama not documentary the serial need not respond to the announcement.[33] What was significant was the way in which the technical team was far more concerned with an authenticity which spoke to the conception of a reflection of a known social "reality", a conception which was repudiated, in the name of drama, by the production office. This split will be dealt with later in this chapter and the political consequences of the concept of authenticity in the next.

This process of contestation between the two groups over the NIREX incident also enabled many personnel to use the interaction between *Emmerdale Farm* and the social world to analyse that social world. The discussions about the significance of the announcement and how the serial should and could respond raged all that day and their content was highly political, particularly in terms of the Thatcher Government's policies. Some labelled the move "a blatantly political" one, responding to the imminent elections. Interestingly, when it was suggested inserting lines to this effect, all agreed that it could not be done because it was "politicking", the overt and party based conduct of which is not allowed under the Broadcasting Act.[34] Concern for the show prompted discussions about the use of nuclear power and issues of conservation and the Government, all personnel being intensely aware of the political nature of the problem. Chernobyl featured

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33. The producer did though later decide to begin to wind up the story.

34. Early in the year the producer had been concerned that the major dump story would fall during the elections and had prepared himself for the possibility that the story might have had to be altered or taken off in such an eventuality.

strongly in the discussion and most were very concerned about *any* use of nuclear dumping, or reactors for that matter. Rehearsals then, provide points of contestation for personnel, moments when the social and political constructedness of the world is made plain. In utilising direct and indirect experience to interrogate the social world in ways which both naturalise and deconstruct it, personnel participate in processes of contestation and consent in making the programme. The production process enables both hegemony and resistance to it. Later chapters will demonstrate whether hegemony or counter hegemony dominated in the serial in 1987.

The most significant full rehearsal before going into the studio is the Producer's Run. This reveals the central position of the Producer and is a major manifestation of the relationships of power in which he stands to all members of the production. His presence dominates the performance. The actors are usually keyed up, something which one actor attributed to a feeling that they were performing for an outsider, "someone who is entirely critical, rather than with us". Another actor's explanation was that the producer was no longer *"in"* this particular block; he had moved on and was now thinking about the next scripts and stories. The implication was that he was that bit less involved, so less sympathetic. The Producer's Run cannot begin without the Producer, who usually arrives with an entourage of editors, whose work is also up for criticism. The Run is also the point of confrontation between the two parts of the production process. Although the whole momentum of the production demands the director make his own interpretation of the scripts and the actors their roles, the power relationship between the two parts of the production process privileges the interpretation of the production office and at this stage the producer could question the work done. In practice this does not happen and the producer's notes are given to the director (privately) after the run through usually concern only minor detail. The Producer's Run though confirms the power and control of

the producer and is in part constitutive of the hierarchical relations between the producer and the rest of the group.

RECORDING

Studio recording works from "camera scripts"[35] and is far more formal than rehearsals as the technicians have now taken over almost completely. Actors are separated from each other, awaiting their calls in their dressing rooms. Studio procedure encompasses the whole. The studio is organised with several regular sets in different spaces, and to save time all the scenes in each set are done at the same time, even though they will be interspersed throughout the whole eight episodes. This again makes continuity critical. The scenes are first rehearsed for the cameras, sound and lighting technicians, most of whom have not seen the scene before. Takes are kept to a minimum but again the whole process is time consuming as each department of specialist technicians must be satisfied with the product from his/her perspective. It is only out of such painstaking care and attention to detail that a rounded, good quality and believable episode of soap opera is constructed.

POST-PRODUCTION WORK:

Once all of the scenes exist on tape, though out of sequence, they have to be edited together into a whole episode. This is done by videotape technicians working to the instructions of the director, who uses the notes which have been taken during production by the PA. Here unsuccessful

35. That is, scripts which are marked up with camera directions for specific segments of dialogue.

shots are cut and edits are made according to the need and preferred timing of the director. The end product then needs to be balanced for sound and any extra dubbed sound effects. The director may also use sound to lift or alter the mood in the programme.

The programmes are now finished products, ready for transmission, which is usually only a matter of days away, already in the transmission schedules, and with publicity about the serial circulated even to the extent of stories appearing in the media press to anticipate them. Constructions of *Emmerdale Farm* in the various media are ongoing and important ways in which the life of the fictional world is rendered a "reality" for the audience (Paterson 1981: 62).

This is one cycle of the production of a block of *Emmerdale Farm* episodes, and it and its accompanying double-stranded cycle[36] would be repeated immediately. Indeed its repetition would already be in train, with new production unit headed by another director already setting up their location and studio work and the actors having their scripts, long before this transmission time described above was reached. Thus the actors experience production in terms of cycles as far as blocks are concerned, but also as continuums since they never stop learning lines or preparing for recording of one form or the other.

DISCONTINUITY IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

The above account demonstrates several points of division in the production process which are related to interacting power and technical structures. These divisions and discontinuities are generated by factors both

36. "Double stranding" meant that at any one time two six week blocks of programmes were being made, so that while one lot of episodes were out on OBs, another was in studio production.

internal and external to television, at the same time illuminating these factors and the part they play in the content of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*.

As the actors experience the programme as cycles within a continuum, so do the personnel in the production office. For them the continuum encompasses the cycle. In this they differ from the director and the technicians allocated to the block for whom the serial is experienced only as cycles of production. For a period the sole concern of this second group is their particular block and the different orientation which *this* involvement with *Emmerdale Farm* provides produces different attitudes to the content of the programmes.

Each technician understands the block through his or her own specialist concerns; the lighting director noting the time of day and month of year to judge the lighting effect necessary, design using seasonal flowers to establish the time of year or the right degree of untidiness in the kitchen to signal that Annie is away from home. Actors even confessed to reading scripts first for their parts and then as totalities. These particular concerns bring a specificity to each of person's understanding of the narrative structure of the whole block and indeed the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. At the same time all personnel's specific contributions to the playing out of narratives within a fictional Yorkshire dales world are limited by the perception that there must be *some* relationship between the fictional dales world which they create and the social world in which they live, particularly the Yorkshire dales as a named area of Britain. What this relationship is alters across the production process.

> Its the real reality that I'm talking about, the minutiae, rather than whether the postman comes in a van or not (Series originator and script writer for many years).

> I worry about the pub too. We should ask ourselves about its realness and strive more to get it right (Story editor).

> ...country people, including vets, don't dress up - they even have quite restricted social lives, in the dress up sense (Wardrobe).

At some stage during my fieldwork period, most personnel appealed to some concept of "reality" to characterise the above relationship. Members of the technical team *always* constructed the dales of *Emmerdale Farm* with reference to "what happens in the dales". It was part of the construction of *Emmerdale Farm* by the production office group too, but their concerns rendered it differently; more ambiguous. The differences between the two groups reveal different ways of constructing the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. Indeed, this seems to operate structurally within the production process to produce ongoing tensions between the two groups.

There is great ambiguity in the way that the production office personnel understand this relationship between different constructions of the dales. In the past when he was a script editor, the 1987 producer had been adamant that the serial must change things like the postman delivering mail on his bike in order to accord more closely with what was happening in the dales. Yet, as the example of the NIREX story reveals, the production office, under his control, was also happy to waive this level of verisimilitude for the sake of the story. Here is revealed an ongoing tension *within* the production office itself; one which helped constitute the power relations and was fostered by the particular attitudes of the producer. At various times in the year he was adamant that the serial should not try to "reflect reality",

chastised the technical team for showing a working dog on a lead and insisted that a rural serial must take up the current concerns of the countryside. In the ongoing discourse of production which encompasses these single events, the very content of the concept of "reality" was itself being interrogated as the individuals concerned struggled to establish the level of engagement and authentication which they deemed necessary to a continuing serial. This interrogation was one element in the relations of power in the production process but it also provided a political space in which to explore the world of Thatcher's Britain as the NIREX example shows.

This struggle generally meant that, for something like farming, the production office was more concerned with broad trends, with the general rather than the specific. There are many exceptions, but stories were usually conceived in broad sweeps with themes generated out of information about the rural from the variety of authoritative sources named above. In turn these sources served to verify the accuracy of these stories, for the technical team as well as members of the public.

The team of technical facilitators operated with a far less ambiguous understanding of the relationship between the dales they are visually and aurally constructing and what they expressed as "reality". Though they were telling a story, they did so within the conventions of Realism (see next chapter) so sought verisimilitude in terms of their attention to detail. For them, the perceptual experience of farming which influenced and helped shape *their* construction of dales farming was not so much whether family farmers in England were suffering from falling profits or the intensification of farming has damaged the environment, but rather would the tractor's wheels get dirty higher than two feet up if it got bogged in the mud, what does a calf with scour look like or would Dolly wear shoes or wellingtons when she takes dinner out to the men shearing in the pens? For the actors it was concerns

about how auctioneers actually run an auction, how does a vet examine a bull, how do farmers handle a sheep for clipping or dipping or would Jack hold the cow's tail thus while Jackie is injecting it? Contact with Arthur Bell or the many people in agriculture whose services were used for recording encouraged this impulse to "get things right". Things like how Joe Sugden can be an NY Regional Manager when he spends all of his time at Home Farm worried members of the technical team and became part of the ongoing conversations about the serial in which they both affirmed the correctness of their position and criticised others, especially those in control in the production office. The production office personnel were well aware of this tension. One producer complained that out on location the technical team "tend to assume that we are wrong about farming detail" and that technicians had at times "corrected" procedures in the script which turned out to have been right as scripted.

The technical team strove to create a dales which related in some immediate way to the dales as a named area of Britain, just as the production office was concerned that the stories reflected something of what was happening in English farming, albeit in a dales location. This difference in outlook and concern, which stressed different attributes of the relationship between dales farming and the presentation of the same could lead to difficulties in each stage of production and we have seen how it may produce conflict between the two groups, each of which has a responsibility for the content of *Emmerdale Farm*.

The producer was the final arbiter. It was he (and therefore the story editor associated with and authorised by him) who could override the technical team's concerns with getting detail right. Correct detail *was* sacrificed and the need for "realism" denied at certain times. The concept which mediates the production office personnel's seemingly contradictory positions on "realism" was that of "drama". That it is drama locks *Emmerdale*

Farm into the realm of fiction in its common-sense meaning[37] and provides it with a rationale which opposes it to documentary, the responsibility of which is to provide some kind of a "true" reflection of a perceived "reality". The meaning of "drama" and how it affects the content and significance of *Emmerdale Farm* will be discussed in the next chapter. At this point it should just be noted how this kind of reasoning itself raises the issue of a "reality", which can be interpreted in different ways. Further, it becomes one way in which television production as a mechanism of representation articulates different cultural constructions and social processes outside of television within the text.

'CREATIVITY' AND 'AUTHORSHIP' AS SOURCES OF DIVISION IN PRODUCTION

There is another split based on employment status which provided a different relationship between the various personnel and the programme and hence articulated with personnel's different understandings of the serial and its fictional world in a different kind of way. Though the huge group of technicians who actually execute the scripts are permanent employees of Yorkshire Television, the producer, story editor, script editors and writers were all on contracts of varying lengths. Within this production office group, though the the producer was in a sense the employer, personnel were united by the temporariness of their employment. There was thus a split between the group responsible for the generative or 'creative' content of *Emmerdale Farm* and the technicians who made it, in terms of their

37. As compared with the meaning used by Geertz which is employed in later parts of this thesis, that of fictions as "in the sense that they are "something made," "something fashioned" - the original meaning of *fiction* - not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments (1973: 15). The common sense use encompassed by "drama" is more influenced by the latter set of concepts.

permanence of employment and commitment to the serial (cf Newcomb and Alley 1983: 34-38).[38] Only the former worked solely on *Emmerdale Farm*; the latter were rostered onto it, having come from perhaps a comedy or a quiz show and maybe next going onto a children's programme.[39]

There is one important exception (there are several) which further suggests that the split between permanent and contract staff on *Emmerdale Farm* also utilised a common-sense concept of 'creativity'. That is the director (cf Ravage 1978). Staff directors used to do *Emmerdale Farm*, but for a number of years it had been the norm to have contract directors. This is the convention within Drama as a whole at YTV, and it is based on a prejudice that free-lance directors are the best and most talented (cf Alvarado and Stewart 1985: 68,69). The best drama directors, the thinking goes, are out in the market, getting directing jobs on the strength of their work. This conception is based on a 'competition in a free market' metaphor in which skill and creativity become the scarce commodities exchanged, since it is these values which are seen as most desirable for Drama production.

In the conviction that creativity is allied to the individualism seen located in the free-lance rather than the staff worker is echoed the commitment to entrepreneurialism which underlies so much of what television does in Britain.[40] Thus generally, those personnel whose work is deemed to be based on the work of the imagination known as 'creativity' as

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38. This commitment is precisely what one Programme Controller identified as the advantage of employing freelance people (Alvarado and Stewart 1985:69).

39. Alvarado and Stewart (1985) also note the significance of the freelance/permanent staff split in the setting up of the Euston Films production, *The Sweeney* (:54, 73). For them the issue was the politics of setting up a production using freelance television workers.

40. For a discussion of the way in which the nineteen seventies saw a battle over casualisation within the television technician's union (ACTT) between free-lance and company workers in which these kinds of perceptions of individualism, skill and commitment as part of the freelance ethic formed an important part of the struggle and so became entrenched in the thinking of the industry, see Alvarado and Stewart's account of Euston Films (1985: 54).

much as on technical mastery, are free-lance or contract workers. Further the work situation of *Emmerdale Farm* is textured through 'creativity' in other ways. Further exploration of this point requires some unpacking of the concept of 'creativity'.

Within the visual presentation of a fictional world, this concept embraces a variety of processes, but it can be broadly characterised as referring to generative, imaginative acts through which that world is constructed and in which its people are made to act and interact. The imagined world of *Emmerdale Farm* is actually created, brought into being, through narrative, which one producer actually described in terms of the imagination involved in 'creativity' when he recounted how the story of the nuclear dump opposition was being developed. Having come up with the initial idea, itself a creative act based on a qualitative leap from what the producer called "some news comment or other", the production office personnel then proceeded through a series of "What if...?" type questions which focused on how each of the characters would act under the circumstances, how *their* actions would affect other characters and how in turn this would generate further action. Thus the story was "created" and was further developed by subsequent creative inputs from other personnel. Production personnel were not just creating a particular story but they were also perpetuating the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm.* Indeed, in giving this world form, they could be said to be *re-creating* it in each block of programmes. Though all are complicit in this process of creation and re-creation, it is the production office personnel and director whose control and authority is directly related to it.

Within the production process, the concept of 'creativity' operates at an unspoken level to produce the possibility for tension between the specialist technicians and those whose work is in the creative, more expressive areas of television. This is not a split, as particularly the work of

re-creation depends on the fine detail which is provided by each and every technician. But where members of the technical team feel that creativity is not matched by technical knowledge about making television programmes, and getting the job done in the severe time limitations constraining production,[41] it can produce disapproval. Technicians do not look favourably on creatively focused personnel who do not understand the limitations of technique, who spend too long on the expressive aspects of a scene and so jeopardise the shooting schedule, those who "waste time" or "muck them about". This opposition between creativity and knowledge comes into operation when say, a writer has included some fanciful turn of phrase or inappropriate piece of stage direction. Criticism by the technical team on the basis of this opposition becomes a source of self affirmation within a highly hierarchical and specialised work group.

There is also a quality of authorship in the concept of 'creativity' as it applies to the production of the serial. This is important since it is precisely authorship which some analysts challenge as applicable to a medium in which the end product is the result of team work, particularly where it involves considerable amounts of formula writing as in the continuing serial (Buscombe 1980: 12, cf Murdock 1978: 20). This debate on authorship is an important one, both for the questions it raises about the processes and relations of representation and for a consideration of how *Emmerdale Farm* participates in the political discourses on Thatcherism and Britain of the nineteen eighties. Then too, it crucially impinges on the power dimension of the serial's production relations. The stamping of a tone or the generation of a philosophy of *Emmerdale Farm* which is part of the producer's job and which is sustained by the overseeing work of his production office, can be

41. Time limitations seem to be a common feature of all British continuing serials (Dyer et al, 1981, Hobson 1982), compared with the much greater amounts of time available to other forms of drama (Milligan and Nelson 1986).

understood in terms associated with authorship, or at least an authorial "point of view" (Lanser 1981). As Lanser points out, within literature, language about social situations also carries an attitude to them as it assumes an attitude to its addressee. In this interaction is constituted an authorial voice, but for Lanser, this is immersed in the social, in what she calls ideology (1981: 18). In television, this authorial voice is greatly diffused by the collaborative quality of the final product, but the negotiations under the control of the producer allow some retention of it. For Lanser (as for this thesis), what is important is the way in which the representation is shaped so that the audience may see some things and not others. This contrasts with the more common-sense understandings of authorship in the discourse of *Emmerdale Farm* production, understandings that the characters and stories are the creations of particular individuals comprehending the world.

The concept of authorship draws attention to a most important political dimension of *Emmerdale Farm*, indeed all television. Consider the following comments of the producer in reply to viewers' letters:

> There is nothing new about the programme touching upon elements of rural life which are not at all attractive and may well be described as distressing....It is not the purpose of the programme to seek these things out, but they are a part of farming and village life, and from time to time we deal with them....(3.4.87)

> We have tried to deal with the subject matter of this story, which is in the end about personal loss and faith in God rather than specifically about Judaism and/or Christianity...(27.11.87)

> ...it is about passion and jealousy and frustration and hurt, about young love going wrong, about ordinary young people who haven't found it easy to articulate their feelings for each other - even to themselves...(17.11.87)

These kinds of comments are replicated by writers, directors and actors, always focused by character and narrative. They reveal a dominant element of the discourse of the serial's production; that television production personnel feel they know the social world in considerable depth and breadth and are able to translate this knowledge into universally comprehensible narratives for television drama.[42] In feeling that they know the world in some way, they are really no different from other members of society - most people talk about politicians, world events, happenings in their town, gender or generational relations, violence and crime in ways which assert that 'they know' what is involved. Often reliant on an empiricism based on stories of single incidents, this 'knowing' is highly political. It is their *construction* of the world, based on their own experiences, their class position, age and gender as well as where they live and what kind of person they are but this very constructedness is obscured. It is thus for television. The difference is that television personnel are able to use *their* understandings about the world in the popular drama they produce for mass audiences (cf Westergaard 1982: 106). Their constructions of the world are privileged through the authorial voice, yet naturalised and universalised by the denial of this constructedness in the operation of a common-sense notion of author.

The letters reveal how the content of *Emmerdale Farm*, at least as it is discussed by producers, editors, writers and directors, is understood to be related to 'how things are' rather than being particular kinds of constructions of the social world. Though the producer in these letters assumes that viewers will make different interpretations of the situations and relationships shown, what is negotiable falls within a fairly small range of opinion which

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42. Schlesinger makes something of the same point for the news media when he establishes that journalists tend to use themselves, or at most those closely connected to them, to give them feedback about the appropriateness of their particular interpretations of various events (1978: 134).

accepts the status quo. Further, social relations are reduced to psychologically based notions of humanness, of essential individuals, which become both the source of stories and the means through which they are developed and resolved. Thus, to return to the letters, Jackie's past of rejection and uncertainty as Jack's unclaimed son made him both immature and possessive, thus jeopardising his relationship with Kathy. The rabbi's loss of faith too, was caused by his grief and sense of dislocation on the death of his wife. In these circumstances only interpretation is possible and the way is cleared for the view that there are talented individuals who are able to see 'the truth' better than others. It is on this premise that the ideas of 'authorship' and 'creativity' are established and legitimated as they generate narratives which are at a variety of levels commentaries on what *they* 'see' as happening in society.

CONCLUSION

PERSONNEL AND POWER RELATIONS IN PRODUCTION

The concepts of authorship and creativity therefore underpin views of the world whose constructedness, whose class nature is obscured and so form the basis of a denial of the class location of television personnel's privileged perception of society. As Bourdieu points out that notions of taste in Western society are uncoupled from class in culture (1986), so too do the ideas of authorship and creativity which naturalise the very process of making television allow television personnel to conceptualise *their* tastes, preferences and perceptions as value-free and therefore without implication for the perpetuation of an unequal society. The producer, story and script editors, writers and the director (the particularly 'creative' members of the production group) are often owners of sometimes considerable cultural

capital (Bourdieu 1986). Several members in 1987 had tertiary education. They were people knowledgeable in literature and in the arts who were comfortable with words and ideas and with translating their perceptions of the world into literary forms. Indeed, their very perceptions and constructions of the world were influenced by this level of experience through words and ideas. Often dialogue in the serial in 1987 included literary allusions which it was assumed the audiences would probably miss and were certainly not how dales people spoke, yet these were part of how these personnel constructed the world and so became part of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*.

Emmerdale Farm, as a fictional world first of all constructed through words in the form of scripts, applies and extends the literary/arts mode of apprehending the world based in language facility which is itself evidence of the cultural capital of these television personnel (Bourdieu 1986: 387, 409). Producing the serial becomes another part of their world for them, a mode of apprehending Thatcher's Britain of the nineteen eighties which is in turn constitutive of it (Bourdieu 1986: 467) as it allows them to comment upon and recreate particular constructions of society. As such, the process of making television programmes is another aspect of privilege for people who are already privileged through their ownership of cultural capital. Though generally not members of the dominant class through economic capital, these television personnel are empowered by their possession of cultural capital which both authorises them (Bourdieu 1986: 409) and provides them with the tools to produce privileged, meaningful constructions of the world for a mass audience.

The production process of *Emmerdale Farm* as a mechanism of representation generates and is generated by a power structure. At one level this structure provides a set of constraints on the content of the fictional world being constructed, particularly as a basis for the relationships between

images, social practices and discourses which constitute representation. At the same time it creates numerous spaces for the *contestation* of meaning in *Emmerdale Farm*, both meanings internal to the serial's own fictional world and those provided by the differently conceived relationships between this imagined world and external world which is understood as "reality". Overall this constitutes a political space in which hegemony and counter-hegemony, acceptance and contestation, reflection and reflexivity may all interact.

The next chapter considers production of the serial from the perspective of a deeper investigation of the conventions of television which tend to utilise and produce other kinds of meanings, no less political, across the production process. These conventions and at the same time the meanings generated by them, are as constitutive of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* as any technique of production.

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CHAPTER THREE

TELEVISION AS CULTURE: TELEVISION CONVENTIONS AND MEANING IN THE PRODUCTION OF *EMMERDALE FARM*:

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two discussed how television production constitutes representation politically at the level of power relations and their impact on the content of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. The process of making television must also be understood within the systems of meaning which constitute society. Such systems are themselves crucial aspects of the political field, since they constitute identity, how the world is, within relations of domination (Ricoeur 1986: 259). They are therefore concerned in processes of legitimation and representation. Both the confirmation and the contestation of Thatcherism in the political field in Britain utilised systems of meaning which were themselves both reproduced, and also altered, in the process.

Television is itself part of culture. Here culture is understood as "the complex unity of practices and institutions that produce sense" (Donald 1980: 1). This definition is enhanced by a notion of the "webs of significance" to use Geertz's term (1973: 5), which are fundamental to the ordering of culture as meaning. Donald captures the sense of this when he stresses that the social world is always "experienced, organised and expressed through linguistic and other semiotic representations" (1973: 5). If television is understood as part of such culture in which these representations

themselves may provide rules for constituting and using power (Ricoeur 1986: 259), this suggests the symbolism of television's own practices as another important process and relationship in the meta-process of representation. It thus affirms the political significance of television as an institution which produces and disseminates representations.

There can be no absolute discontinuity between systems of meaning within television processes and those operating outside of the confines of making a programme, though the specific culture and organisation of television production are mediating factors which can transform systems of signification which are constitutive of the wider society. The television programme is both made by culture and makes it and the very conventions used in production are initiators in the production of meaning. This chapter continues to explore the production context of *Emmerdale Farm*, now focusing on the conventions of television production as producers of meaning which first overlap with systems of signification outside of television processes. Second, these conventions promote particular understandings about the relationship between different constructions of the social world. For *Emmerdale Farm*, the most relevant are the construction of the Yorkshire Dales through the experience of those who live there and the aesthetic and convention dominated one of the serial.

THE CULTURE OF TELEVISION PRODUCTION

The meaning of any act of communication is cultural, not something generated by the sender. The latter is always first and foremost a socially constructed being using and reproducing the meanings of his/her society (Kress 1988: 12). This is the substance of much of the debate over

authorship, in which analysts have sought to locate texts socially rather than through individual initiators (Caughie 1981, Belsey 1980, Lanser 1981). Though it is specifically located individuals with sufficient levels of cultural capital who are most likely to be the professional producers of such meaning in society (Bourdieu 1986), we must also appreciate that they operate within meanings which are social and cultural rather than individual and personal. Kress describes the interaction between class and society meanings as:

> The meanings are produced and consumed by individuals who are already socially and culturally formed, and who draw on the meanings of their culture and social group (1988: 4).

From the perspective of discourse theory, Catherine Belsey makes this point even more clearly and in doing so attacks the notion of the talented and perceptive individual author able to apprehend truthfully 'the reality' of the world and transmit it to the reader/audience. She says:

> There is no unmediated experience of the world...knowledge is only possible through the categories and laws of the symbolic order...Far from expressing a unique perception of the world, authors produce meaning out of the available system of differences, and texts are intelligible in so far as they participate in it (1980: 45).

Television programmes as cultural products can only draw on culture as symbolic system. Lanser (1981) too, though her field is also literature, stresses this point in a way which is generalisable to the making of the television product:

> It is not only the linguistic conventions which control the writing and reading of a text but the cultural norms as well. A text does not define a world from "raw material"; it is bound to carry meanings from social reality. In Fowler's words, "structures 'in the text' imply patterns of

relationships, and systems of knowledge, in the community which has produced the text and its readers" (1981: 61).

At the same time, as they explore and reproduce culture, television programmes are partially constitutive of the symbolic system with all of its contradictions and inconsistencies (Belsey 1980: 45). It is this which makes television a crucial site in the struggle for hegemony within Thatcherism which characterised the political field in Britain in the nineteen eighties.

The concern of this thesis is meaning and the politics of representation, particularly as it brings together television, in the specific form of *Emmerdale Farm*, and the political processes of Thatcherism. In later chapters we will see how discourses and symbolic understandings of the rural in British cultural and social life framed the way in which *Emmerdale Farm* interpreted particular issues in the British countryside in 1987. This is one dimension of the location of the production of television programmes in the symbolic order which is British culture.

There is an equally significant dimension in the very conventions and professional categories of television making itself. Though they operate in a specific production context, these conventions and professional categories also must be located in "systems of knowledge" constituting the social world. If television is a site of power, constructing and contesting meanings relevant to ongoing relations of domination and inequality, then we need to understand the contributions which its own practices and principles make to those meanings. This chapter argues that conventions of television production are more than tools enabling meaning to be located in the content of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. Working concepts and the different professional practices of personnel are themselves signifiers,

producers of meaning with implications for the operation of television within relations of power (cf Hurd 1981). As Kress comments:

> Meanings are made in and by institutions, in their everyday practices, in the way they mythologise about themselves, and in their constant interaction with other institutions (1988: 110).

Other writers (Gardner and Sheppard 1984: 34, Schlesinger 1978: 104, Hall 1982: 345[1]) have pointed out how convention governed television production is, a feature which constructs important, even rigid, parameters for the processes of making television and the possible meanings produced in programmes. In *her* discussion of genre, Ann Cranny-Francis (1988) shows how efforts to challenge dominant and conservative discourses can be subverted by the very conventions which writers and producers use, indeed must use, in order to enable the audience to identify and 'read' the particular genre (1988: 166, cf Gardner and Sheppard 1984: 34)).

The importance of understanding television conventions as themselves producers of meaning is a significant element of the social power of television for Geoffrey Hurd in his discussion of British television police drama (1981: 55). In a study which would have been strengthened by a consideration of how his significant concepts operate within the production process, Hurd considers how notions of 'objectivity', 'authenticity' and 'realism' are themselves signifiers, carriers of meaning, which help to construct the presentation of the police world in drama (1981: 55).

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1. Hall also notes how conventional principles like those of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality' link broadcasting to the British political sphere by "reproducing the forms of parliamentary democracy and democratic debate (1982: 345).

In Chapter Two we saw the centrality of concepts like "authenticity" to both the practices of production in *Emmerdale Farm* and to the power relations which are central to the production process. Now such concepts, which were rather described and treated as "tools of the trade" in the last chapter, must be explored as producers of meaning. Central here is the recognition that such concepts are not neutral, but rather constraints on production and meaning and conventions which are further linked to genre, itself not value free. This next section explores the centrality of certain categories in the production of meaning in the process of making *Emmerdale Farm* and also the way in which the articulation of this aspect of production and the wider symbolic system of British society is another political space for television production. Unlike Hurd's study which is unable to analyse this articulation, the location of this exploration in the production practices of the *Emmerdale Farm* production personnel enables the identification of the dimensions of a space in which television production elaborates many of the contradictions and inconsistencies in British cultural construction, not just through the use of particular conventions, but in their contestation as well.

EMMERDALE FARM AS 'ENTERTAINMENT' AND 'DRAMA'

Hurd's study of the British police drama concentrates on 'realism' as a convention which locates television production historically and connects it with other forms of cultural production (see also Fiske 1987: Chapter 2, Williams 1977). Williams considers Realism as a form, but Hurd is is correct to emphasise its importance as a critical and working concept both for producers and audience in British society. We have already seen the

centrality of the idea of 'reality' in the production of *Emmerdale Farm* and will now find it linked to 'realism' in ways which drive the process of production in quite specific directions. These two concepts though are preceded by and interlinked with two other conceptual dichotomies in production. They are information/entertainment and its derivative, documentary/drama. Finally, the category of 'drama' itself is divided into 'serious' and 'popular' dramatic forms. Articulated through understandings about 'creativity' and 'authorship', all of these concepts are producers of meaning in the production of *Emmerdale Farm* and act as intermediaries between the production process and the symbolic order.

The 'information'/'entertainment' distinction is part of the 'common-sense' of the television industry.[2] It is inscribed, as is all 'common-sense' (Belsey 1980: 4) in the very language used in the industry, even in the demands made by the IBA on independent television companies. The IBA distinguishes between programmes which represent 'serious or informative output' and those 'of a 'mass' (high rating) 'entertainment' kind' (Brunt 1972: 11). This distinction within television production must be seen in association with the public/private dichotomy which operates in British society to locate power relations, through information, in the public arena and to render

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2. *Television and Radio*, the annual journal of the IBA consistently uses the division between information and entertainment in order to describe the various kinds of programmes made by the independent companies. This division must be understood in the context of the conditions of the Broadcasting Act, which specifies that both kinds of programmes must be included (along with education) in the output of the companies granted franchises (Croston 1983:18).

   In this context it is also interesting to note in *The Listener* (12.10.89), that the advertisement for the current affairs magazine programme *First Tuesday* draws attention to the fact that it is produced by the same company that makes *Emmerdale Farm*, seeking to mobilise a popular audience for a 'serious' programme. Note that this encapsulates the relationship between the two categories information and entertainment as discussed above.

'entertainment' or 'leisure' private and therefore peripheral. Politicised by its *obscuring* of power and meaning, 'entertainment' contains a frivolity and lack of rationality which erroneously imply that it is not as significant (if at all) in the transmission and production of information (cf Cranny-Francis 1988: 175). This is related to the fact that such works do not need consistency to be intelligible, nor do they tend to produce the same kind of interrogation of what Maitre calls the "actual world" in order to render the fictional world intelligible (1983: 37). It is no accident that most studies of the production and reproduction of social knowledge in television focus on news or current affairs rather than fiction. Postman's (1987) critique of television as the new political discourse of American society hinges precisely on his perception that television has trivialised the political process by rendering it entertainment. For him the boundary within the opposition has been violated. The connection between the 'entertainment'/'information' dichotomy and the socially constructed opposition between public and private as a way of constituting the world, can be reinforced and extended by Kress's idea that there are power implications in the distinction between speech and writing:

> While speech is closer to solidarity, writing is closer to power. Our culture has long oriented itself along the values of writing in its public situation and declarations, while at the same time maintaining romanticised images of the values of speech for the domains of the private (1988: 97).

While not wishing to carry the parallel too far, it is striking that the presentation of 'information' through television is usually carried, authorised and legitimated by the use of formal language much closer to the written form than the easy, colloquial 'real speech' of the television serial or the light

entertainment programme.[3] Indeed, in the production process of *Emmerdale Farm*, written dialogue may be criticised at rehearsals for being "writery" or "preachy", both of which are felt to be impossible either to deliver easily or to "make real". 'Entertainment' in its associations with the private, co-opts the personal and the emotional, countering the public/information axis with its basis in the rational, the social and the political. This point will be taken up in the next section on drama, since as Kress says, it has power implications which are closely connected also with conceptions of 'reality' (1988: 98) and of 'creativity'. The significant point at this time is to note that the distinction between entertainment and information underpins television genre, conventional practices and the relationship between these in ways which are not value-free.

Emmerdale Farm personnel also operate within a conceptual dichotomy between 'documentary' and 'drama'. These broad categories of 'documentary' and 'drama' are refinements of the 'information'/'entertainment' dichotomy. They are not without sub-categories, but generally speaking are distinguished not just by their conventions but also by the presumption of different relationships with what is understood 'real'. Information about the "real world" is generally perceived to be the province of documentaries and news programmes which are therefore seen as 'factual' or reflective in opposition to a common-sense understanding of "fiction". This function underpins the importance given to 'objectivity', 'balance', impartiality' and 'neutrality' as major conventions in these kinds of

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3. It is also interesting that the division between speech and writing as ways of carrying the narrative of *Emmerdale Farm* also broadly characterises that between the dominant modes of expression utilised by the technical team and the production office, with greater power in production relations correlating with the group which is writing focused.

programmes[4], since these concepts are crucially implicated in the very concept of 'information' in the wider social order. In turn the perception that these intermediaries, now rendered as values, construct the programmes defined as documentary, makes these programmes suitable vehicles for the transmission of information. Drama operates as the opposite of all of this, so that it is in part "fiction",[5] involves emotions, explores people's private worlds and is made to entertain. Through the central operation of the concept of 'creativity' drama is proposed as personal and marked by the individuals who are responsible for it in ways which are considered entirely unacceptable for news readers and journalists (Buscombe 1980: 10). 'Creativity' accredits drama as 'objectivity' and 'impartiality' legitimate documentary.

The dominant concept for people in the *Emmerdale Farm* production office is 'entertainment' but 'drama' is the major working concept in the discourses which shape the ongoing process of making the programme. The concept affects every part of the process, its inscribed meanings producing the parameters of the programme and generating both the ambiguities which texture the programme and some of the means of resolving them. *Emmerdale Farm* is 'drama' of a form which is conceived of as popular (the

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4. These values are actually stipulated as necessary parameters of news and documentary presentations, under the Broadcasting Act (Croston 1983: 18, 19, 20). The IBA reports:

> News coverage must be fair and free from bias, and balanced in order that no viewpoint other than a concern with the facts colours its presentation (1983: 20).

5. One of the editors made use of the term "fantasy" to stress this fictional identity of *Emmerdale Farm* at a time when he was feeling frustrated by the expectations of many that the serial should relate in some direct way to life in the Yorkshire Dales.

word "light" may be used) rather than 'serious'.[6] Here the personnel have enshrined the high culture/low culture which has been inscribed in the thinking of the television industry in Britain from its earliest days (MacCabe 1986: 1-10). This is the source of much criticism and scepticism about continuing serials or soaps, even in the tabloid papers which spend so much time and column space on television serials; their characters and narratives (*Daily Mail* 10.1.76, 4.9.80; *Morning Star* 26.1.85: 6; *Sunday Times* 18.12.83:43; *Mail on Sunday* 6.11.83). The characterising of *Emmerdale Farm* as popular drama recentres the concept of 'entertainment' as the prime motivation of the serial (reinforced by suppositions about the tastes and abilities generated by the social class base of the audience[7]) and becomes one part of the ongoing debate about the relationship between a soap opera like *Emmerdale Farm* and a supposed 'real world'.

For the makers of *Emmerdale Farm* itself, 'drama' in the context of the continuing serial has a qualitative and judgemental component in their use of a notion of '*good* drama' and associated with this, a 'good story', to determine how to proceed. *Emmerdale Farm* is understood as "dramatic fiction", a concept once again using a common-sense notion of fiction which at times stresses the "unfactual" nature of the stories, at others ""as if" thought experiments" (Geertz 1973: 15). In the description of parts of the nuclear dump story in Chapter Two there were examples of each of these characterisations; the first in the production team's stress on *Emmerdale Farm* as drama not needing to respond to the announcement to abandon

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6. For an outline of what is considered to be 'serious drama' in the industry, see Millington and Nelson (1986: 11, 12).

7. BARB ratings figures consistently reveal that the greatest proportion of the audience for *Emmerdale Farm* comes from social classes C2, D and E.

shallow dumping and the second in the producer's explanation that the story was developed via a series of "What if?" type questions.

'Dramatic fiction' is a form of entertainment which the producer in 1987 saw as being essentially about human beings and their interactions; what the Controller of Drama at YTV once called "strong human story-lines" (Croston 1984: 103). He identified drama with the narrative,[8] an identification which often lead personnel to slide between the concepts of "good drama" and "good story". He went on to say that "All the best stories are about how people feel about their lives. They are about love and pain and anger". Drama must explore people's lives in ways which privilege the emotions through which they experience what happens to them. This focuses stories on the problems which people encounter. Further, these problems tend to develop to fill dramatic time and space, a feature which results from the way in which narratives only include the significant (Maitre 1983, Wright 1975, Davies 1978/79). This means that stories are worked through at a level of intensity which again highlights the emotional. It is this emotional heightening of experience which constitutes drama while at the same time allowing the programme to explore interrelationships between people. In *Emmerdale Farm* therefore there was a strong tendency for 'good drama' to be about crisis or conflict. One manifestation of this was the production wisdom that once the excitement of getting to the altar is over, marriage is "boring" in the continuing serial. Happy marriages lack the tension and conflict necessary in drama.

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8. This understanding would appear to be institutionalised in the industry. The 1984 *Television and Radio* stressed that "The essence of good drama is an interesting story, well told" (Croston 1983: 20).

Also present in the production process are other assumptions about drama, one of which is an idea about the height of the drama appropriate for different characters. Thus the editors saw Jack Sugden as a likely vehicle for high drama based on what one called "the complexity of contradiction" while Matt Skilbeck's "good, dramatic" stories had to be altogether "gentler", and based on problems within the family rather than grand issues. Conceptions about the appropriateness of drama and comedy for the different locations also grew out of this understanding about characters.

"Good drama" and the "good story" are multi-dimensional and contextually derived. As a common-sense, they were used in the production process and in explanations for the making of particular decisions about narrative and character in ways which required no further explanation. "Good stories" for *Emmerdale Farm* were as varied as the erection of a sheep shed because the audience like to see them 'doing something', a cow dying because it enabled them to contrast rural attitudes to death with urban ones, and Alan Turner revealing his pretension and ignorance when some wine labels were washed off of their bottles because this enabled them to attack certain ideas and institutions of "conservative politics".

For those personnel of *Emmerdale Farm* who generated the story lines, 'good drama' in their serial appeared to have two different sources. The first locus was character, at all times a central motif in all personnels' thinking about the serial. The second was the serial's rural location. Farming became a gloss for the wider countryside. These two not only established the dimensions of 'good drama' but also limited the serial's content.

In pre-production, character was central to the way in which narratives was created and worked through. On the significance of character for making "good drama", one script writer stressed that 'good drama' "is always about

the personal" and went on to say, "The audience must care about the people." An interesting aside which confirms this is the fact that the production office said they introduced the Alan Turner character as a bad man, but became attached to him, gradually making him "nicer" so that people would care more. The actor explained his own playing of the character as being affected by wanting to be liked. On this basis, 'good drama' involves the audience so that they have opinions about, and reactions to, what happens and the people created. Hours are spent debating the essences of the various characters, their motivations and possible developments. This is predicated on an understanding that the characters will somehow "come to life" so that people can feel that they "know" them (something which is said by audiences time and time again).[9] They believe that if the character works then good drama can be generated even out of the trivial, and certainly without any dependence on location; "even on a bare stage" said the producer.

It is this focus on character which gives 'emotion' and personal relationships paramount importance in the programmes. Here drama is about universal human experience (the producer's "love, pain and anger"). Once again the producer's replies to audience letters are illustrative of the way in which character, emotion and relationship come together to provide much of the driving force of the drama for the personnel of *Emmerdale Farm*:

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9. Certainly the characters live for the personnel. Particularly actors may even build up lives for them which never become part of the action. In the discourse of production the characters are spoken of as existing people (the same thing happens in the press) and, even where actors have used parts of themselves to forge their characters, they insist on the separation of the two in discussion, rebuking any accidental referring to them by their character's name.

> Where you see a lesson in vandalism I see a powerful image of a young man who is considerably distressed and, for reasons we don't yet know, in considerable fear (19.2.87).
>
> The story is about a girl who gives up her job and chooses unemployment rather than work in conditions she cannot bear (20.5.87).
>
> Any subject which involves strong emotions may strike a disturbing chord with an audience at some point - that is the nature of drama. EMMERDALE deals with a great range of moods and emotions, many of them far from serious and far from disturbing (23.3.87).
>
> The intention was to find a way to express the powerful emotions which exist between Jackie and Kathy, to let her see how much she had hurt him, what a mess their lives were without each other - and to bring their young love back together (17.11.87).

There is a *moral* dimension in this, which extends the caring about the characters into the audience's own perceptions of social relations and British society:

> The scene is indeed <u>also</u> about lack of consideration, irresponsibility, a failure to ask moral questions and this point is made several times. This is surely not unfamiliar territory to any family with adolescent children or young adults (24.8.87).

This centrality of emotion, and therefore of drama, is seen by many as the essence of soap opera (Hobson 1982; Ang 1985, Brunsdon 1981) and this is often used to identify it as a female genre (Brunsdon 1981). In an article by Kate Wharton in *Mail on Sunday* entitled "The Ten Emotions Which Compel us to Watch Dallas", Dorothy Hobson, author of *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera* (1982), suggests that people watch soap opera because their emotions are engaged by the ways in which problems are worked out. In one way then the drama of character with its allied relationships, emotion

and morality negates the other, countryside. At other times the two are interdependent.

As the examples of the sheep shed and the cow dying show, the siting of the serial in the countryside, or farming, *is* significant in particular ways to the drama. For the producer this meant that *Emmerdale Farm* could use grand dramas like birth and death in everyday ways which are not easy for urban soaps. For him, some of the emotions which are essential to a dramatic exploration of people's lives could be "usefully set against the countryside, a setting which is more obviously to do with life and death". He also felt that the location brought with it some responsibilities, since the audience expected them to take up the issues of the countryside.

The production office always said that the treatment of rural issues must follow the motivations and interrelations of the characters of the serial. One example will suffice. In 1987, *Emmerdale Farm* took up the issues of rural recession and the environment. Production office personnel explained that they were treating the problems in "personal rather than global terms", looking at the personal consequences for all of the characters rather than laying out all of the sociological dimensions of the problem. On the subject of the environment, the producer's replies to an audience letter is revealing:

> The programme itself takes no position on the issues involved and we don't feel that our audience generally dislikes the presence of contemporary issues in the programme - so long as they are an appropriate part of the texture of village and farming life and are not simply imposed contrary to character and the spirit of the programme (30.4.87).

So the dictates of good drama suggest a particular treatment of countryside issues, though the notion of a good story provides considerable flexibility.

The dump episodes were not village focused, though on many occasions the whole village turned out to meetings and blockades. Instead the incident was presented through the characters of Jackie, Matt and Jack with each phase being textured by the natures of these three characters. Jackie's youthful enthusiasm brought him to blows with the construction team; Matt's knowledge of the countryside enabled him to lead a protest on the basis of violated oestover rights;[10] and Jack's radicalism put him in gaol when he broke a court injunction. Each of the stories, and the dramatic exploration of protest over the establishment of a nuclear dump in the dale, were characteristic of individual characters and indeed became part of the ongoing creation of each character. Generally, it seems that the operation of character rendered British countryside issues specifically *Emmerdale* ones and removed them from the public and political realm of British society.

There are many consequences of this constellation of ideas which are part of the concept of 'good drama' as it affects *Emmerdale Farm*. To extend the idea, the conflation of 'good drama', 'good story', 'entertainment', 'popular culture' with the emphasis on 'the personal', emotions and relationships reproduces the public/private dichotomy. The nuclear dump story was directly located in a Thatcher government offensive against the strong coal miners union, in which the Government sought some replacement of coal power by nuclear fuels, so also producing the politically contentious issues of safety of production and the problem of waste disposal. Recognising the sensitivity of the latter issue, rural sites were chosen for potential dump sites because the countryside was generally less populated. This made nuclear waste disposal a possible issue for a rural continuing

10. This is the ancient, feudal commons right for some people to cut bracken.

serial. *Emmerdale Farm*'s treatment focused on personal relationships and emotions which emphasised the realm of the private. What happened seemed to be related to the basic, personal and essential natures of the individual characters which obscured the social and political actions which made waste dumping such a potent issue.

The embeddedness of the personal in drama focuses on individual essences, psychological make-up and serves both to naturalise and universalise human relations. Kathy and Jackie's problems are those of *any* teenagers, anywhere, any time, while the specificities are generated by Jackie's possessiveness, his need for love and his immaturity. In other domains, as in the case of the nuclear dump, it renders political and economic issues (public and general problems) personal and so takes them out of the realm of the social and historical; again there is offered the possibility of naturalising these relations and so obscuring their political dimension. Indeed, issues with an obviously political dimension are quite deliberately de-politicised in communications with the public,[11] by stressing that the story focuses on apolitical character and interaction. In all this, concepts and conventions of television to intersect with society's symbolic order to produce meanings far beyond the intentions of the personnel.

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11. Chapter Six shows how in letters to the public by the producer, a depoliticised concept of "community" was used to render the nuclear dump issue personal and apolitical, a broad concern of the countryside, rather than a highly political one which involved Thatcher government policies.

THE PROBLEM OF 'REALITY' IN DRAMA PRODUCTION

It was apparent in the analysis of the production process in Chapter Two that the concept of 'reality' was both constitutive of, and elaborated within, a production discourse in ways which are highly political. One of the consequences was to reinforce the tendency to naturalisation embedded in the notions of 'drama' and 'creativity'. The concept also generates contestation as personnel first define the relevant level of 'reality' and then negotiate some agreement about its application in a particular situation. Even as its relevance is being denied, the debate over 'reality' creates spaces in which the political implications of fictionalisation are raised. As there is a tension between the legitimating concepts of the news and the actual practices of news production, a study of *Emmerdale Farm* reveals a tension between the convention that the serial is "drama not documentary", therefore not needing to tie itself directly to 'reality', and the operation of 'authenticity' to construct a believable fictional world on which the drama can focus. How 'authenticity' works to promote processes which both reveal and obscure the constructedness of the social world is the subject of the rest of this chapter.

The account of the production process revealed considerably more ambiguity about the relevance of 'the reality' of the Yorkshire Dales to the serial among production office personnel than the technical facilitators. The relationship between 'drama' and 'reality' has not always been perceived by the production office as contradictory. The philosophy of *Emmerdale Farm* has developed and changed over time. It is made up of the inputs from the past live on in it. An important part of the production process is the way in

which personnel, especially those in the production office but also the director, writers, actors and designers, continually recreate in discourse what *Emmerdale Farm* is. In the serial's earliest years the concept of 'reality' would appear to have had a high profile in the philosophy and legitimation of the programme. The initial Executive Producer explained the underpinnings of the serial in terms of both appealing to people's romantic notions about the countryside while being based on his ideas of a more 'realistic' portrayal of what happens in rural England:

> This is the country as it really is. Most of us live in towns and crave for the country - but we have illusions which may be shattered in this series (*Daily Express* 7.10.72).

And in 1982 the then producer was quoted as saying:

> Our aim is authenticity. I live in a real village quite like Emmerdale and the locals give me a lot of help (*Daily Star* 11.6.82).

So at this stage authenticity was openly valued, despite the fact that the serial included quite arcane portrayals of dales country life.[12] Indeed, during his time as script editor, the 1987 producer had apparently fought for the removal of such portrayals, because that was not what "really happened

12. The originator of the serial created ancient rites and festivals for the people of Beckindale as part of his attempt to construct a deliberate idealised rural existence. One of these was the crowning of a king and queen at the last cereal cut of the season, a rite which was deemed to relate to ancient fertility rituals. These "customs" were phased out in the early nineteen eighties in the name of authenticity.

now" in village life.[13] Press releases and media articles have deliberately conflated the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* with the Yorkshire Dales of dalespeople's experience:

> Much of the programme is shot on location, and the authentic atmosphere of the Yorkshire Dales is always there (YTV Press release, 8.2.79).

> Working on Emmerdale if you didn't have a genuine fondness for the countryside would be a stultifying existence. Not that life down on the farm doesn't have its problems for the acting fraternity...You're filming a scene when the sound of a real life tractor gets too loud to be ignored, or a cow decides to compete for centre stage (*Express and Star* 6.9.85: 14).

By 1987 a new wisdom had developed. The content of what was considered 'good drama' had changed. Instead of mirroring a perceived 'reality', now 'authenticity' was consciously pursued through the relations and emotions which underpin surface appearance. Though displace, it is important to consider how the original interpretation of 'authenticity' in the serial remains embedded in production. On one hand the old notion reinforces the naturalising impact of the dramatic rendering of the social world in personal terms by treating the social world as a given. On the other, it operates as an imperative which forces personnel to interrogate the social world to arrive at some negotiated conclusion about meaning. Authenticity channels production as a way of knowing the world.

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13. As well as the demise of ancient rites which had been part of the programme, the reign of the previous producer and script editors had also seen things like the replacement of the postman's bicycle with the vans which are used in the dales. These kinds of changes met with great anger from the serial's originator for whom such anachronisms were part of the philosophy of *Emmerdale Farm* as originally conceived. This will be dealt with in the next chapter.

That 'drama' cannot be explained in terms of 'the real' was a strand of argument which seemed to be least ambiguous when *Emmerdale Farm* was discussed in the context of other British soap operas and their perceived attempts to reflect reality through "social issues". In the nineteen eighties, an effort was made to rehabilitate soap opera by the introduction of "social issues" like abortion, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, lesbianism and problems of the handicapped, usually in the name of making them more socially relevant and 'realistic' (*Television Weekly* 30.11.84: 12,13; *Evening Mail* 5.11.85; *Daily Mail* 4.9.80; see also Tulloch and Moran 1986). *Brookside*'s Phil Redmond actually defined what he tried to do in terms of showing the 'real world' (*TV Times* 5-11.9.87: 10-12). In the public debate over social issues in soap opera, *Emmerdale Farm* opposed the use of "social issues" to generate drama, the 1985 producer saying that this would mean soaps became "preachy" (*Evening Mail* 5.11.85). Production personnel in 1987 scorned the "social issues" focus, claiming that it constrained the real centre of drama, character, and in doing so, not only produced bad but also *unrealistic* drama, since this was not how things happen in the world.

The inherent ambivalence of this view was interestingly mirrored in the serial's new (1988) producer's apparent acceptance of the orthodoxy about the negative value of social issues. In a press statement he said, "I certainly haven't any plans to urbanise it and fill Emmerdale Farm with social problems". Underlining this was an implicit notion of 'reality'. His anti-social issues stand was based on a perception that such things are urban, not rural based anyway (*Emmerdale Farm* press release, 3.11.87). This is important, since it reveals that social issues *per se* are not by any means the only way in which the concept of 'reality' intrudes into the 'drama' of *Emmerdale Farm.*

The ambiguity here articulates with the way in which the countryside has been used in *Emmerdale Farm* precisely to do some of what Redmond has done for *Brookside*, that is, to make the serial "operate within the concerns of the world" (as the serial's originator said). This explains why personnel who were strongly against 'social issues' soap opera could stress the need to deal with the problems of the modern countryside.

The ambiguity just revealed is confirmed by so many aspects of production. At the same time that production office personnel were protesting to the actors, the writers and the public that *Emmerdale* was a drama not a documentary so they did not need to get the exchange of milk quotas or the sale of NY Estates exactly "right", they went to some trouble to research the debates about surpluses, selling a farm, the protests at Fulbeck against nuclear waste dumping or the serving of a court order, all of which were part of the recession and dump stories. Here the services of both regular and occasional advisers came into play, the NFU adviser explaining that he had many phone calls about the sale and lease of milk quotas when that story was being devised.

The rural location of the serial seems particularly compelling in this regard, since it featured most in the explanations personnel gave for worrying about "what really is happening" despite the serial's drama status. Thus production personnel drew a strong contrast between what they called the urban and rural serials. They felt that the rural setting necessitated constant consideration of countryside issues which now concerned the public. Many new stories were conceived and executed within constructions justified as "how it is in the countryside". Through drama, the serial tackled the problems of the rural recession, milk quotas and their impact on farmers, factory farming and the changing face of the English countryside. Indeed,

their efforts in this area were so extensive that, on the farming side their NFU adviser expressed himself as generally pleased with the "correctness" of the programme. It was interesting to note that this attitude of accountability because of the ruralness of the serial's location developed more strongly as 1987, with all of its publicity about rural issues progressed. Further, its effects were differentially felt, so that towards the end of the year two of the editors who had seemed united on their stance that as drama *Emmerdale Farm* did not need to worry about what they called "what was really happening" earlier in the year, took opposite positions in an argument about just how much the serial *did* have to take into account the kinds of things they knew to be happening in the dales.[14] Different concepts of 'drama' and 'reality' generate tension for *Emmerdale Farm* production (cf Buscombe 1980: 10) and are played out in many different ways.

Authenticity has remained important for all personnel, though not without ambivalence. At times, almost against their will, members of the production office have found themselves pursuing it, if not through the despised social issues, then in other areas and at several ways which are articulated in the production process.

AUTHENTICITY, REALISM AND NATURALISM IN *EMMERDALE FARM*

The major form of drama today is that of Realism (Williams 1977, Fiske 1987: Chapter 2, Davies 1978/9). Though there are various types of realist

14. It is interesting to note that this argument also occurred at the time when a new producer, previously with *Brookside* which has the reputation for relevance and realism, had just taken over the production. The impact of this on the argument though is unclear, since there were many times during the year when seemingly contradictory positions on the question of authenticity were taken by both of these editors.

drama, Williams identifies three major characteristics of Realism; social extension of the characters, from a focus on gods or only the upper classes to non-dominant classes; contemporary settings which relate to these classes; and the secularising of the action, the working through of the dramatic issues in human rather than metaphysical terms (1977: 63, 64). British soap opera fits these criteria well with its working or middle class communities, its everyday action and its emphasis on emotions and human relationships. It is instructive to extend this point with a quote from Marion Jordan on the soap opera as a piece of social realism:

> Briefly the genre of Social Realism demands that life should be presented in the form of a narrative of personal events, each with a beginning, a middle and an end, important to the central characters concerned but affecting others in only minor ways; that though these events are ostensibly about *social* problems they should have as one of their central concerns the settling of people in life; that the resolution of these events should always be in terms of the effect of personal interventions (1981b: 28).

Encapsulated here is the very definition of 'good drama' among *Emmerdale Farm* personnel! The elements of social realism have become so embedded in the discourses of production that they have achieved a taken for granted status. As Fiske points out, the 'ideological' significance of social realism coincides with some elements of the concepts of 'drama' and 'entertainment':

> Realism, in this view, is a reactionary mode of representation that promotes and naturalizes the dominant ideology. It works by making everything appear "realistic', and "realisticness" is the process by which ideology is made to appear the product of reality or nature, and not of a specific society and its culture (1987: 36).

This is precisely the realm of 'authenticity'.

Though Fiske identifies the possibility of contested meaning despite the naturalisation of Realism, this possibility lies with the audience. This study has already found both consent and contestation within in the production processes of *Emmerdale Farm*. Williams points out that there is not just one kind of realism, even within a single programme (1977: 73). He draws a distinction between naturalism and a realism which attempts to reveal that which is 'below the surface'. This distinction helps tease out the various orders of authenticity which operate in television production. Implying different kinds of realism, each generate different, interacting, processes of interrogation of the social world. Authenticity *is* a convention which may force the serial into a 'reactionary mode of representation', particularly a naturalising one, but as its action promotes an ongoing dialogue about the nature of the world, it may also create spaces for analysis of that world as it renders it problematic.

In *Emmerdale Farm*, authenticity with its enacting discourses of 'reality', was both precipitated and enabled by the naturalism form which is a close ally of Realism (Williams 1977: 65) and common to much television drama, but particularly soap opera. Naturalism uses time and space in its practices and conventions to create the illusion that actual life is being recorded as objectively as possible, rather than being constructed in the production itself (Milligan and Nelson 1986: 11-21). Authenticity operates as its watch dog with various political effects.

From the creating of story-lines, to the director's setting up of the shooting of the episodes and the actors thinking through and playing of the scripts, each stage of *Emmerdale Farm* is grounded in naturalism. Lighting imitates the light which would be seen at a particular time of day, either in the farmyard or in the house, and according to the seasons. So too are the

flowers of Emmerdale's garden changed to establish July or March. Camera angles are generally those of possible eye-lines of participating characters, so that the audience appears to be "looking on". Much of the negotiations about the content of each scene, particularly in rehearsal, was specifically about perceptions of 'reality' in order to get the presentation of dales life to appear like life, objective. These negotiations themselves were activated by first order authenticity which enables the naturalism within which the serial's production occurs.

As Milligan and Nelson point out in their study of *Boys from the Black Stuff*, naturalism is important for actors:

> Most British actors are schooled either formally or informally in an approach to performance which, through a psychologically-oriented internal development of the role, aims to make the character's behaviour appear as life-like as possible (1986: 19).

Character established in everyday life through the conventions and practices of naturalism is central to the illusion of objectivity. It is important that the characters are understood as 'real', and therefore deserving of the audience's concern.[15] The serial's 'reality' is made up of the 'realities' of the regular characters, who have lives of their own which are sketched in more or less detail depending on the professional approach of the actors who play them. Thus rehearsals involved debate about and attention to an infinite number of details which, for the actor and indeed everyone on the production, make Jack, Joe, Sandie and Annie 'real' both to the audience and the actors. Motivation for an actor's playing of a scene is often grounded

15. One spectator at the serial's recording in Otley expressed her great enjoyment of *Emmerdale Farm* in precisely these terms when she said, "It turns fantasy into reality. They're a real family and you can't help caring about what happens to them."

in this kind of detail. From this kind of rounding out comes an authenticity *within* the serial's fictional world and the possibility that the audience can feel that they 'know' the character.[16]

Inattention to the details of the serial's internal 'reality' can destroy the construction of a fictional world which is known to its regular viewers, not just for the audience, but for those personnel who are striving to construct it as well. Thus Matt cutting the fence around the nuclear dump site and attacking Alan Turner for his lack of commitment to Beckindale (both of these actions were written for Jack), would have been considered 'wrong' and would have seriously altered who Matt is, in turn disrupting the integrity of the fictional world. Coherence and consistency are the underpinnings of this aspect of authenticity and can create meanings within characterisation which were never intended, but which become part of the way in which *Emmerdale Farm*

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16. This dimension of "knowing" is reinforced by the way in which continuing serial characters are treated as "real" in the many articles which appear in the press. Articles entitled "'Why Our Baby Is So Very, Very Special!' (*Woman's Own* 16.1.88: 8,9) about the new baby expected by Sue and Ali, characters in *EastEnders*, or which muse about the possibility of Prince William marrying a character from the same serial in the year 2012 (*Woman's Own* 20.6.87: 18,19) give life to the continuing serial characters outside of the fictional world. A deliberate confusion between actor and character is conventional in such reports, as can be seen from the following extract from an article which heralded the engagement between Jackie Merrick and Kathy Bates in *Emmerdale Farm*:

> 'And not before time,' declares Ian Sharrock [the actor playing Jackie] about Jackie's proposal. Sharrock, himself a married man for the past two-and-a-half years and the father of 21-month-old Melanie, explains: 'Jackie has been having a very hard time these past few weeks. He and Kathy have been apart for two months now and he has obviously been suffering.....
>
> Malandra Burrows [the actress playing Kathy] agrees with him. 'Kathy and Jackie have been going out together for some while.. he reason for the split between Kathy and Jackie is that Jackie has been rather too passive. I think that's the reason for a great many splits, really.'
>
> But now that is all over, there are some hurdles still to be cleared. At the age of 19, is Kathy ready for marriage (TV Times 129, 47, Nov. 1987: 4)?

as a fictional world relates to the world that the audience thinks it knows.[17] Coherence and consistency are part of naturalism in which it is assumed that both the physical and psychological make-up of a person is constant. At the same time they make the character 'not real, since they produce a greater consistency for the characters than most people would ever know.[18]

Generated by naturalism, references to a knowable *external* world occurred all of the time in the production process of *Emmerdale Farm.* Authenticity here was supplied by the actors, the director, writers, editors and indeed the technical personnel, each within their own professional realm. It was an authenticity which depended upon what Hurd calls "a constant negotiation between the fictional relationships of the programme and some implicit perception of 'real relations' " (1981: 56) - an *externally* derived authenticity or at least an apparent one. This involved particular perceptions about how the world is, which became a source of negotiated meaning within production. Personnel argued about how women are treated in society, how a person would react to particular happenings, whether this would be a realistic portrayal of this kind of a person, how this kind of a relationship would develop. Actors were central to this process, often drawing on their own experience to round out the characters or doing special research to supply the correct details for their characterisation. One actor apparently did a word processing course when the Home Farm office

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17. Audience members do write in to complain when they think that a character has gone beyond the bounds of what is appropriate to him or her. This is particularly so on moral issues, where characters are deemed to know better than to do all kinds of things.

18. This is a point not missed by the producer in 1987, when he complained that in *Emmerdale Farm*, characters were not allowed to change (except as it happened accidentally), that they never exhibited the contradictory positions which characterise human behaviour. His point was that he found this limiting and that the expectation of consistency was a force in all areas of production.

acquired word processors. The actor playing the vet spent time with a practising vet when she learned that she had won the role. This process must be seen as an exploration of their world by the personnel, while at the same time is also constitutive of that world, understood as 'reality' for them. This is no straight forward process of 'bearing' culture as in Weber's example of the literati (1951: Chapter Five). Rather, the actual production process with all of its points of contestation and negotiation of meaning also allows the personnel to explore their culture and society, albeit within certain parameters some of which are defined by the use of conventions in television as discussed in this chapter. It is precisely in these negotiations about 'reality', as also in the letters from the audience criticising the programme for its wrongness in a particular element of staging or narrative (again based on arguments about 'reality'), that people's political assumptions about society are being used, recreated and modified by the experience of negotiating meaning. Naturalism therefore provides an arena in which the social world is naturalised, taken for granted, and at the same time meaning is contested and constructedness highlighted.

TWO ORDERS OF AUTHENTICITY

Media scholars are fascinated by television and its meaning in the world today. One of the most sustained accounts is that of Jean Baudrillard (1983a and b) for whom television, the media, has replaced the social as the constitutive element of society. Now, instead of production and meaning which made representation possible, we have reproduction, duplication, which destroys meaning as it brings about the implosion of the social. Television is thus the perfect exemplar of Baudrillard's solution to the

problem of meaning through the construction of a grammar of signs by which the process of signification becomes self referring. Out of this comes the concept of simulation to describe a world in which signs derive their meaning solely from their relationship with other signs to the extent that the construction of meaning is contained within a great loop in which the effort is made only to simulate prior constructions of meaning. No outside referent is possible within this endless process of reproduction. Representation is dead and all signs are random and equivalent, derived as they are from each other in the process of simulation.

Though there is much in this account of television which is relevant, providing insight into some of the kinds of meaning produced within the production process of *Emmerdale Farm*, in this thesis I have set up an alternative solution to the problem of meaning in television using the concept of 'authenticity' in which meaning is explored within a production discourse about the appropriateness of what is presented. Part of this discourse concerns the meaning of what is presented outside of its television construction. Thus this discourse must be understood within terms of representation and the concept of authenticity enables us to separate out some of the interacting processes and symbols which are activated and consolidated in the discourse which shapes the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*.

'Authenticity' activates meaning as it confronts the political in the making of a television programme. In the process of authentication, the "original" is not lost in the various stages of television production as Baudrillard argues (Chen 1987: 78), but rather confronted and indeed constructed again and again as each group of television professionals uses the making of a television programme to interrogate their own social

constructions of the world. The social cannot be lost, any more than meaning can be (cf Chen 1987: 86). They can only change, be transformed, and what is needed is a way of exploring how meaning is made in the process of making a television programme, which is alive to the possibility of such transformation. The concept of simulation, as developed by Baudrillard seems singularly incapable of such exploration, just as, ironically, it remains ultimately and nostalgically within a dialogue between signs and a 'real', unable to escape from the very problem which Baudrillard claims simulation has transcended. His discussion of the Vietnam War as simulation, for example, not only claims to uncover the 'reality' of the war, but in doing so, renders simulation entirely epiphenomenal (1983b: 66-68).

Despite these objections, Baudrillard's insights are to some extent implicated in the process of authentication which forms the basis of the exploration of meaning and the political in *Emmerdale Farm* as representation. Authenticity is embedded in the process of making drama in at least two different articulating dimensions which can exist in a relation of tension to each other and interact with each other to form the basis of the believable world which underpins all drama, enabling it to explore other kinds of meanings and indeed make these part of the same representation.[19] The continuing serial, particularly, depends on some construction of authenticity, since it works through people feeling that in some way the characters they see on the screen are something like they feel themselves to be.

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19. This concept of two orders of authenticity calls to mind Hall's (1980) distinction between denotative and connotative meaning in the television message. There is some parallel between the operation of the orders of authenticity and Hall's argument that 'ideologies' can be shown analytically to intervene in discourse at both the denotative and connotative levels.

The first order of authenticity takes the social constructions which are implicated in the drama as objective, as knowable in some uncontentious, absolute way; indeed knowing which constructions are implicated in setting up the drama is part of this process. Maitre describes something like this order of authenticity when she speaks of "authentication from outside" the work done in order to establish plausibility (1983: 81). For her this process proceeds by constant cross-referencing between specific situations of the actual world and those of the fictional world". This kind of process was found in the production of *Emmerdale Farm*, especially for the technical team. This order encapsulates the assumption that rather than being socially constructed, the rural for instance in the case of *Emmerdale Farm* has an essential, knowable, transparent nature. It assumes the total separation of the rural and the urban and is activated through concepts like "the expert", "specialisation" and "knowledge" to achieve an authenticity which can carry or legitimate the meaning of the narrative. This is the level at which farmers, for example, mostly criticise the serial for inauthenticity, expressed as the serial's producers getting it "wrong", not showing dales farming "as it *really* is". This first order of authenticity is that to which YTV was referring when it made claims about the authenticity of *Emmerdale Farm*, often compared with other, urban, soaps of Britain, by virtue of its high proportion of outdoor location work. That it is always recorded "on a *real* farm" was particularly potent, here taking the authenticity of Emmerdale Farm's construction from the physical; the farm buildings, the hills and fields, the cows and sheep, even the rain. For all parties, personnel, YTV and audience, politically this order of authenticity is naturalising. It has a confirming tendency, constantly referring to "how things are", and having built into itself acceptance of this

'reality'. As a process which constructs the social world as 'reality', it can then be appealed to in order to authenticate the fictional world.

The second order of authenticity is related to the first. This order concerns the achievement of the right feel, the striving for what Foucault calls "the truth effect" (Foucault 1984: 60) which is based on people's assumptions about what the rural looks like, wider discourses about rural life. In his study, Geoffrey Hurd sees this ability of television "to make its reality convincing" as central and goes on to say:

> ...the effective individual of *The Sweeney* or the group-directed relationships of *Z Cars* must exist in a world which is structured at some level according to a consensual understanding of the exchange of power relationships within contemporary society (Hurd 1981: 64).

This order is often legitimated by the first as it uses symbol, metaphor, typification to tap the other discourses and meanings, Hall's "maps of meaning" (1980: 134) which constitute particular categories of the social world for the television audience and which "have the whole range of social meanings, practices, and usages, power and interest 'written in' to them" (1980: 134). Here, Baudrillard's notion of reproduction and duplication of the sign is perfectly relevant, as past constructions are recalled, recreated in either a process of typification or in the co-opting of past meanings into the 'new' product. This second order of authenticity, particularly as it involves the presentation of the rural, encompasses White's category of symbols which are "culturally self-authenticating devices" which refer less to a specific place than they "dictate a particular attitude governing a relationship between a lived reality and some area of problematical existence" (1978: 151). Such an explanation is likely to be more productive in exploring representations like

the farm kitchen always being tidy or the Sugdens automatically being good farmers than the usual negative concept of stereotype.

The location within politics of this order of authenticity occurs on a different level from the first, as it serves to constitute a symbolic world of the status quo, one which is dominantly white, heterosexual and male dominated, based on assumptions about the world which operate at something akin to a taken-for-granted level.[20] This tends to be the case, unless there is a conscious remedying of this status quo image in the interests of the first order authenticity, as in the quite deliberate construction of the community of *EastEnders* as one which also included blacks, other ethnic groups and gays. It is significant that it is the soap operas in Britain which, in the name of 'realism', pursue such compensating strategies. And further it is important that for *Emmerdale Farm* to include blacks or gays would be seen as inauthentic! There is constant interaction between the two orders of authenticity in *Emmerdale Farm*. Indeed, the negotiations about content of the serial at every stage of production were driven by precisely this interaction. Thus the first form was used to challenge the second in the story of the nuclear waste dump which was also an exploration of what constitutes a rural community. Various personnel explained that the aim here was to explode romantic ideas about rural communities always being strong, interdependent, helpful and united; indeed that they always *are* communities. Their rationale was that this was not how people 'really' live in the countryside (see Chapter Seven). This is Williams' realism, the seeking beneath the surface of social life for the relations which underpin it (1977).

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20. For further studies on this aspect of the way in which the world is represented on television, see "Whose Reality", the first section of Curran et al (eds) Bending Reality (1986).

Equally the second order of authentication may be affirmed in the very assumptions made in production itself; as when technical team members overrode the carefully researched detail based on the advice of the consultant vet because the farmer, Arthur Bell, disagreed with it. Here the idea that farmers are always good, experts about all areas of farming because they are the ones doing the job, overruled the first order authentication which generally dominated these personnel. Meaning and political significance were produced in the dialogue between the two different orders of authenticity.

CONCLUSION:

The purpose of focusing on the production process of *Emmerdale Farm* as a mechanism of representation is to identify the processes by which various symbolic systems are engaged, activated and brought into articulation with each other to produce the serial's meaningful fictional world. Part of this engagement and articulation also involves contestation and this too is part of that world. The two orders of authenticity reveal that the conventions of television production are one set of processes and meanings in the meta-process of representation in *Emmerdale Farm*.

The tension between drama as 'fiction' and the 'authenticity' (or 'authenticities') which was used to ground the serial's narrative in a world which people feel that they can know (something which is even more important for soap opera than one off plays) is not just a source of complexity. It is also enabling or extending, since it creates a space in which even this drama that its producers deny is political can take part in political processes, not just on the part of the audience, but also for the production

personnel within production. I see this as an alternative to taking the quite common view that it is the form, particularly of Realism itself, which is ideological (for example Fiske 1987), since this does not allow for the consideration of the different political significance of different versions of the form, the different intentions of the production personnel (see Williams 1977). The Channel Four serial *A Very British Coup* and the BBC comedy series *The Minder*, though both broadly realist drama in form, do not participate in the political process in the same way, despite the fact that many of the naturalism conventions of television which produce meanings discussed in this chapter, would have been common to the making of both (see Millington and Nelson 1985).

The space between drama as fiction and therefore false and drama as referring to some version of a contested 'reality' is an interesting, important and deeply textured one in which even the things which personnel do not conceptualise as relating to some perception of a 'reality', a 'how things are', can be highly politically motivated. Equally, those things for which they think they *must* draw some relation between *Emmerdale Farm*'s presentation and what they see as happening in the world outside of *Emmerdale Farm* have political implications. This is the space in which personnel define what *is* political as well as contesting how the world should be while exploring how they think it is. It is the space in which images constitutive of the political are produced and reproduced (Ricoeur 1986). In *Emmerdale Farm* the naturalisation produced by various conventions another dimension of this political space as the serial relates to Thatcherism and the politics of British society. It does not just obscure the constructedness of the social, but rather by rendering the social world in terms of the natural it opens up a *moral* space which is coterminous with the political. This enables, indeed

demands, questions about how people are, what they should be like, about their responsibility towards others, what is right and wrong, all within a social world which is constructed as a 'reality' even as its attributes are being contested. This is the space of hegemonic struggle.

The confluence of these moral and political spaces makes *Emmerdale Farm* most fertile ground for exploring Thatcherism, particularly the effort to secure hegemonic rule. The next chapter reveals another source for this moral space in *Emmerdale Farm*; its rural location as it relates to social and cultural processes. It begins from the perspective of genre, exploring the interacting processes and systems of signification involved in form, which contribute yet another dimension to the process of representation in *Emmerdale Farm*. In particular it considers the political significance of the construction of place, both within the serial and as it operates to interrogate British society.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN DOMESTIC AND RURAL PLACE IN *EMMERDALE FARM* AND THE DALES

INTRODUCTION

Previous chapters have detailed the production process of *Emmerdale Farm* as a mechanism of representation which itself involves the articulation of various processes and practices. The production process can be understood to limit the possible exegesis of British society which is available to *Emmerdale Farm* as a fictional presentation of part of that society. At the same time, the process was demonstrated to enable, indeed actively promote, the highly political production and contestation of meanings and understandings about the world.

This chapter further explores the process of production. It too, seeks to elaborate other discourses and practices which both constrain and enable the ability of *Emmerdale Farm* to interrogate the world of Thatcher's Britain through its construction of a coextensive fictional world. This is introduced by a frief discussion of soap opera as a genre, focused on *Emmerdale Farm* as one continuing serial among many made in Britain in the nineteen eighties. The exploration of the continuing serial as a form which has great significance, particularly in the field of gender politics, is modified for the purposes of this thesis through the recognition of *place* as an exigency of the genre as it has developed in Britain. British soap operas seem to be based on place, the establishment and elaboration of which draws particularly on regional difference. The construction of place facilitated the serial's operation within the

broad political processes of confirmation and contestation of Thatcherite policies in the late ninteen eighties. The dimensions of place as they establish a specific kind of fictional world for *Emmerdale Farm*, not only lock the serial's representation into wider processes of signification in British culture, but also have direct implications for the fictional presentation of Britain in the eighties. Place is revealed to be both limiting and enabling in the rendering of British society through the serial.

Emmerdale Farm is different because it is set in a rural location. There are two relevant social constructions of place; first that constructed by those living in the Yorkshire Dales, building what they see as a distinctly rural existence; secondly that constructed by the *Emmerdale Farm* production personnel to present a distinctly rural existence. This raises the question of the relationship between the two social constructions. This relationship enters into the production process as a mechanism of representation. To understand what happens in this process of representation requires a comparison of the two kinds of social construction. Establishing the dimensions of place in *Emmerdale Farm* gains from such a comparison. This foreshadows the method and form of exposition of the rest of the study, which will focus on issues in the rural area and their form of presentation in *Emmerdale Farm*.

THE SOAP OPERA GENRE AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE

Emmerdale Farm operates within a genre which, like the conventions of drama production, denies its constructedness. The analytical designation of the programme as a fiction, as opposed to the common-sense notions of fiction with which production personnel work, enables us to penetrate this constructedness

and its denial. Further, it enables the drawing out of one dimension of the relationship between the two social constructions of the rural.

Emmerdale Farm may be understood analytically as fiction, not in terms of the common-sense operating in production where "fiction" denoted something essentially unfactual, but in the sense of "something made or fashioned" (Geertz 1973: 15). Geertz draws a distinction in anthropological interpretation between the first-order constructions of their culture by social actors and the second or third order descriptions of these constructions and their consequent actions by the anthropologist. The interpretations, he says, will always be actor-oriented constructions, *fictions* (1973: 15). Both are therefore made, fictions, but:

> The conditions of their creation, and the point of it (to say nothing of the manner and the quality) differ (1973: 16).

Geertz' comments are particularly pertinent to the production, through television techniques, of a fictional world of the dales. They alert us to, not just the constructedness of the two orders of dales (that created in *Emmerdale Farm* and that which results from dalespeople living in the Yorkshire Dales) but to the need to establish the conditions and purposes of those constructions when considering how they interact with each other in representation. This will be the work of the rest of the thesis.

As one condition of construction for *Emmerdale Farm*, the soap opera genre contains some elements which operate to deny constructedness.[1] The centrality of place to the genre, in particular, involves this kind of denial. Place is

1. Cranny-Francis identifies other elements which expose constructedness (1988: 176,177).

a crucial feature of the construction of the "fictional" dales, but the relationship which it establishes *between* this construction of the dales and that socially reproduced by people living *in* the dales, obscures the manufactured status of both kinds of fiction. Genre thus joins 'authenticity', 'creativity', 'authorship', 'naturalism' and Realism' in production to deny constructedness of both *Emmerdale Farm* and dales experience. As Goldman notes for the production of *Mork and Mindy*, ultimately the programme not only ***obscures*** the social constructedness of "reality", but is itself part of what is mystified (1982: 375-380).[2]

Several writers have given useful, detailed explications of the continuing serial genre (Geraghty 1981: 9-26; Modleski 1984: 85-109; Hobson 1982: 26-35). They stress the limited cast of characters often with strong, female roles; multiple stranded stories which are interwoven, never reaching resolution within a single programme; the importance of the characters appearing to exist in a time which the audience perceives to be its own and the significance of a specific location, often understood through the notion of community, to which all action is tied. These formal features of the continuing serial are important, as are those attributes which generate the perception that soap opera is made mainly for women.[3]

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2. In comparison, Rachel Murrell shows how science is privileged and the social relations within which it is produced are obscured in the BBC's *Tomorrow's World* in a process which "dehistoricises" science and renders it universally benign through its location in the everyday (1987: 90-100).

3. Among the many elements which are used to develop this view, analysts cite soap opera's lack of a central subject within a focus on the family, multi-stranded story lines and lack of narrative resolution as well as the emphasis on emotion and the personal. For a variety of discussions along these lines see Modleski (1984), Hobson (1982), Ang (1985), Conrad (1986), Brunsdon (1981, 1986), Jordan (1981b). Brunsdon (1981) also notes that producers of soap opera deny that their programmes are mainly made for women, something which is borne out by my research.

As seen in the last chapter, the continuing serial must also be understood in terms of Realism (Jordan 1981b: 27,28). Its fictional world is that of everyday life, usually in the form of the family saga, though also creating some kind of a community (Geraghty 1981: 16). Settings are those of everyday life; insides of houses, pubs and shops (Jordan 1981b: 28). The narrative occurs in the present and the many regular characters are, in Williams' words, "socially extended" (1977: 63), often working class, never aristocratic, historical or mythical. Further, the narrative unfolds as personal events and resolutions are always in these terms (Jordan 1981b: 28). As Jordan says:

> ...the style should be such as to suggest an unmediated, unprejudiced and complete view of reality; to give, in summary, the impression that the reader, or viewer, has spent some time at the expense of the characters depicted (1981b: 28).

And she goes on:

> The essentially individualistic genre of Social Realism, with its stress on personal events, the finding of a partner, the ignoring of a world not immediately visible to its protagonists, happily accepts soap opera's requirements for a multiplicity of plots, a lack of dramatic resolution, a setting in the home, and a prominence of stereotyped women (1981b: 28).

Fitting so well into Realism, soap opera has many of the general consequences of the form which were demonstrated in the last chapter, particularly the individualising and personalising of social life which depoliticises it and denies its constructedness. The form also has consequences as it links each soap opera into wider social and political processes which are specific to its own unique, encompassing culture. Only at one level does soap opera "ignore a world not immediately visible to its protagonists". At another level it is suffused

with this world as the differences between British and American soap opera attest. Thus we must also begin to establish the specificities of *British* continuing serials as they operate as part of British culture with roles to play in British political processes.

In his article "Realism, Naturalism and Television Soap Opera", Longhurst locates environment as the important focus of the realist form (1987: 634). He notes Williams' argument that in naturalism generated by nineteenth century realism, the environment is immanent in the characters and their actions (1987: 636). He finds all three of Williams' types of realism, indicative, subjunctive and naturalism, in soap-opera and then develops the latter which, in its soap opera version involves "an exaggerated use of the room and a strong distinction between inside and outside in terms of space" (1987: 640). For him it is this 'soap-opera naturalism' which generates the 'ideological components' of the genre (1987: 634).

Longhurst argues that the significance of naturalism in soap opera is clear from the environments of action, the many private (usually living) rooms of houses, and the public places which function as private rooms. These serve to unite the community of insiders while excluding the undetailed outside, rest of the world. He locates three levels of environment; domestic living spaces, 'public' places and the place whose story the serial is telling, for us a Yorkshire Dales consisting of Emmerdale Farm and its environs. These levels are separated from the outside, which is drawn in more detail in some soap operas than others. This separation of inside and outside establishes an intense sense of place:

> These environments are not simply sets but represent the characters who live and work in them, summarizing their social positions and feelings for the viewer and the other characters. Characters who are not centred on

> one place tend to be problematic and are rather unsympathetically presented, as if wanting to move around signified a character defect. Character, place and meaning interact at many different points (1987: 645).

Finally, Longhurst turns to the way in which this construction of place promotes the resolution of issues in personal or community terms, corresponding to the situations created. Thus the soap opera form interacts with and reinforces the conventions of 'drama', 'authorship', and 'realism', as discussed in the last chapter. He asserts that the logic of narrative's structure, "is fundamentally affected by the meanings carried by spaces within the genre itself" (1987: 646). Resolutions in particular, even when the problem is suggested by social issues, are constructed on the basis of these meanings rather than by reference to their actual social location. As Longhurst notes, this gives a personal and individual character to problem resolution, denying social embeddedness.

Longhurst's analysis of environment and naturalism provides an interesting and significant focus for the investigation of the continuing serial genre as a central element of *Emmerdale Farm*. It heightens an awareness of the construction of place in the generation of meaning in the continuing serial and, as such suggests that place will be significant in production. The last two chapters indicate that the inside is indeed built up and given specific form in the production of the serial. The operation of strongly domestic locations gives form to this particular "community" and internal coherence to the fictional world of the serial. This said, *Emmerdale Farm* also presents a *rural* community and it is the relations between the domestic and the rural which construct the widest 'inside place' of *Emmerdale Farm* in ways which inscribe British culture and society in the serial. The domestic and rural identities reach out beyond the serial's

boundaries, linking it with other domestic and rural places which in turn contribute to its meaning.

To analyse the social construction of *Emmerdale Farm* through place means looking at differences evident in British soap opera. These differences must be understood, not just in terms of various producers' ideas, which is how the television industry tends to account for them, but also in terms of of the serial's social production within, and of, culture. Thus, although both *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale Farm* operate through the personal and community, the possible meanings are altered in the construction of the world of the latter as a rural place because of the role of the rural in British culture.

In the light of these comments, the consideration of the significance of place within the soap opera genre as it operates to both limit and enable representation in *Emmerdale Farm* production, falls into two interacting categories, the domestic and the rural. In the former *Emmerdale Farm* is similar to other constructions of the inside in the continuing serial; the latter is different and modifies the former, as the genre interacts with other elements and processes in British culture. The two kinds of place are established separately first, their points of interaction are highlighted and then the political significance of such articulations in representation is discussed.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOMESTIC AS PLACE

The notion of the domestic place in the continuing serial combines the centrality of the family and the everyday. Such a focus, which involves the constructed realities of many women (Brunsdon 1981, Modleski 1984), also helps shape the perception that the continuing serial is a female genre, though as Fiske points out, the continuing serial often also provides a counter text to the

presumed ideology, by questioning ideas about fulfilment and happiness accompanying marriage (1987).

Production personnel identified the domestic, the home, as the centre of the serial. This is part of their insistence that the serial is a family saga; about the characters who make up the family (in its extended form) and the relations between them. They argued that it is the extended Sugden family which gives *Emmerdale Farm* its "shape", placing the emphasis of the action, even when it focuses on other locations and characters, on the family more than the farm.

The construction of the domestic as central location of drama and meaning in the continuing serial, *Emmerdale Farm*, is related to Realism through the room. On Realism, Williams notes that the reproduction of the stage as a room was a nineteenth century development in the theatre (1977: 66). He identifies the room as the place of the "specifically domestic unit" (1977: 66) and argues that, although there was considerable variation of intention and message in the dramatic use of the room, its emergence was nonetheless inscribed within Realism. He says:

> The truth is that the production of the room on the stage was a particular reading both of the natural centre of dramatic action in terms of social extension and the emphasis on the contemporary; it was also as it happens in its later development a specific naturalist reading in the full sense of the indissoluble relation between character and environment, in which the room was a character because it was a specific environment created by and radically affecting, radically displaying, the nature of the characters who lived in it (1977: 66).

Longhurst has picked up these aspects and, indeed goes further and argues that it is predominantly *living* rooms which construct the domestic as a first level of environment, commenting that "kitchens are a relatively rare setting" (1987: 640).

The room does constitute the basic domestic space of the serial.[4] Even work places often function as private spaces (Longhurst 1987: 641). *Emmerdale Farm* though confounds Longhurst's contention that domestic places are usually living rooms, because the kitchen is a central site of action as is food preparation and consumption. The kitchens of Emmerdale (those of the Sugdens and the Skilbecks) are particularly significant in any dramatic action which occurs within the house, and even the Mill House (the home of Sandie and Phil) and the Bates' house in the village use the kitchens as locations, sometimes to establish harmony (maybe making coffee or exchanging mutually interesting news), at others as a retreat into routine in moments of extreme difficulty. This importance of the kitchen as site of action and significance is part of the meaning of the domestic as place in the serial which I argue below is an outcome of the encompassment of the usual domestic place of soap opera by the rural through authenticity.

The continuing serial takes as its dramatic subject "day-to-day life" (Geraghty 1981:10). As Hobson says, "They are designed specifically to connect with everyday life.." (1982: 33). This everyday quality makes the construction of time so important. The everyday places stress on the routines of life, even where the unusual, like marriage breakups, nuclear dumps, murder or sheep stealing interrupt these routines. Indeed, the creator of *Emmerdale Farm* argued that drama was the tension between the everyday and the unusual. For him, everyday routines have a solidity which establishes them as limits, and drama flows out of the situations created by the activation of these limits.

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4. In the domestic place in soaps we have a dramatic situation which more closely approximates a nineteenth century trend in Realism which Williams associates with Scandanavia, Germany and Russia rather than England; that of using the room "as the centre of the reality of human action" (1977: 66), which implicates the private/public opposition also gathering force in the same period.

The domestic as the everyday relates a soap opera like *Emmerdale Farm* to viewers' lived experience. For example:

> Yorkshire's Emmerdale Farm also has a solid setting and has the added bonus of being able to get out of doors. It is full of people doing everyday things - making pastry, laying the table - all the comfortable clutter of living (Holt in *Stage and TV Today* 23.6.77).

Not only does the everyday authenticate *Emmerdale Farm* in this writer's eyes (she actually uses the word "feasible" in this regard), but linking these features to its rising popularity indicates that she thinks it a source of pleasure in the serial. One of the writers of *Emmerdale Farm* goes further. Although he identifies what he calls an "enshrining of trivia" as a weakness of television soaps, reducing them to "a palliative and a turning away from reality" (Robson 1987: 13), he also finds in the everyday the strength of soaps, the point of connection between television fiction and the lives of the people watching (and making) them:

> Allright. That is the tenor of life, isn't it? The common decencies of work and ordinary human intercourse which bear us all along our days deserve to be celebrated as well as the peaks of joy and the troughs of sorrow. And where else are they celebrated but in soaps? (Robson 1987: 13).

How is the everyday constructed?.

In *Emmerdale Farm*, as in all other British soap operas, the stress on the everyday articulates with the personal to make the domestic a central place to be established and linked to character in narrative. The understanding that it is in the private that the individual is 'real' underpins a particular presentation of the everyday in soap opera narrative and the narrative *through* the everyday. This is what empowers the domestic as place also.

The location of the domestic in *Emmerdale Farm* is the house, indeed the *inside* of the house; what has often been referred to as the private domain (cf Rosaldo 1974, Jordanova 1980). The domestic is thus constructed as the place of the everyday routines where characters cook, eat together, iron clothes, read the newspaper at the end of the day, care for the children and generally interact and support each other as a *family*.[5] No scene in the house is set up without at least some small household chore or action, like filling the kettle, stringing beans, folding ironed clothes or rolling out pastry, to grant it authenticity. This is strengthened by the sets having the facilities of running water and cooking heat, though cooked food and brewed tea are provided to save recording time. Interestingly, and in partial support of Longhurst's theory about the kinds of rooms shown, bedrooms seldom appear, except for affairs and once when Matt and Dolly were having marriage trouble. Bedrooms are associated with the unusual rather than the routine of everyday.[6]

The kitchen predominates in the Emmerdale set with a living area next to it, not separated by a wall. The same is true of the Skilbecks' part of the house which has an access door through to the Sugdens' area. The Sugden's kitchen is dominated by a large central table. It also contains the kitchen sink, an Aga cooker and a huge dresser. The main outside door opens directly into the kitchen with pegs inside the door for outside clothing and space under them for wellingtons and work boots. The Skibecks' kitchen is on a smaller scale, but the

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5. The domain of the domestic in *Emmerdale Farm* as in all soap opera thus explores the range of ways in which labour power *is* reproduced, which one social analyst points out varies spatially and temporally throughout Britain though little attention has been given to the different patterns regionally displayed (Warde 1985: 199).

6. One person remembered the days of Jack's and Pat's marriage as using the bedroom more as a location, though even here it must be noted that this marriage was threatened by Jack having an affair, something which may have prompted the bedroom scenes which this person recalled.

elements are much the same though lighter with a modern cooker and cupboards rather than a dresser. Many members of the production team commented on the difference between the Sugden set and the Bell's kitchen, noting that the latter had "all mod-cons" compared with the old-fashioned feel of the set. Again, the domestic as place would appear to be encompassed by its rural counterpart, in which it seems appropriate for things to be old, long-lived (cf Rufey 1987).

The action of *Emmerdale Farm* happens in the present. Even though *Emmerdale Farm* was only transmitted twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, it contrived to portray a whole week through these two half hours, an important part of the illusion of "real-time" of soap opera's naturalism and a major aspect of the appearance that the characters have continued to live their lives while the camera has not been recording their doings (Geraghty 1981: 9-26). It is the audience's own experience of time in the real world which is being appealed to to construct time and give it meaning in the serial.

Authenticity (especially the impression of 'real time') articulates time with space in every aspect of production. The main unit of time conveyed through the 20 and some scenes in each episode, twice a week, is the day and routine is the key to the portrayal of the day as it constructs the domestic as a particular place. A day is divided up into work, leisure and meals, each household in the serial with its own timetable, something we saw appealed to in the rehearsal involving the characters Amos and Henry Wilks in Chapter Two. In 1987, the farm routine was broadly early rise, milking while Annie got breakfast ready, breakfast, work broken up by "elevenses", dinner (always cooked) and sometimes (especially in times of crisis) a visit to the pub, more work with a short break, milking, tea then the pub or relaxation in the living room until bedtime. Within the three categories of work, leisure and meals, the same event is

repeated in episode after episode as the setting for a discussion about a relationship or a problem, but also for itself and the authenticity which it establishes both *within* the serial (the internal authenticity) and by linking the detail of *Emmerdale Farm* to the social world of the audience.

The timetables established for each of the characters are regularly reaffirmed and recreated, as for example the men come in from milking to breakfast in episode after episode. This means that routines themselves can serve to generate drama or as metaphors for happenings in another dimension of the construction. One of the most common routines established for all of the households (there were only five regular households in 1987) in *Emmerdale Farm* and the one which is most often used both for authenticity and to generate drama on its own account is meals. They are usually scattered through each episode, giving familiar shape to the portrayal of the days. Thus, if the Emmerdale men are having breakfast, the time is approximately 8.30 am, and the audience knows they have done the milking.

Timetables and routines which order domestic life do not just establish the everyday focus of the continuing serial. They have other consequences. They are a major part of what authenticates the internal, fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*, since they provide a consistency and coherence which makes that world 'real' for both personnel and viewers. Part of the business of rehearsals involved the stage manager ascertaining what breakfast at the farm is always like or what Henry and Amos have for tea, so that it could be ordered for recording. Such routines were partly what shaped any scene.

Though they attest to the constructedness of the fictional world, and the domestic place in particular, timetables and routines also deny or at least obscure that constructedness. Underpinned by the assumption of coherence, they appeal to notions of "how things are", "what people do", forms of external

authentication which we observed in rehearsals. People get up, breakfast, go to work, take breaks, divide their time between work and leisure and eat meals. The taking for granted of this as the basic structure of people's lives naturalises much of what is socially constructed, particularly a perception of a public/private division of existence, with its allied work/leisure opposition. Again, this is political ground and the movement between construction of place and denial of constructedness provides a space in which the serial works through these politically significant understandings about how people live their lives.

This process of naturalisation enables routines to have other symbolic importance for *Emmerdale Farm*. Thus meals can serve as pauses, as moments of harmony signifying the survival of the unity of the family despite all the chaos of a current problem. This was particularly so at Emmerdale, where the combining of the two family units, the Sugdens and the Skilbecks revealed, as almost nothing else could, the unity of the two families involved in the farming enterprise. Such a meal was common in 1987, after clipping, as a prelude to planning strategies in fighting the dump, to bring the family together to meet Henry Wilks son-in-law or just for Sunday dinner when Joe came 'home'. Sunday dinner, particularly during a struggle like the nuclear dump campaign, visually reaffirmed the unity of the extended family, even though the conversation was far from mundane and harmonious. The symbolic importance of the meal attended by the whole family is related to the tension between Jack and Joe as a major feature of the serial. They stand opposed on almost all farming and political issues[7] but the meal in which they sit down together encompasses this individual antipathy by family.

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7. One writer symbolically conceptualised Jack and Joe as an opposition between "light and shade", and even cryptically included this distinction in one script.

Meals are one of the main ways in which the gender roles in the serial are established, constituted; it is the women who do the housework including cooking, as is the case on actual dales farms. The work of maintaining the *domestic* place is, except for the pub with its male incumbents, done by the women, frequently Annie and Dolly. The focus of domestic place as *inside* is on the kitchen. This removes bedrooms and bathroom from the possible work areas for Annie and Dolly and throws the emphasis of female, domestic, routine work onto the preparation of food or any other tasks like mending or ironing which may be done in that room. Food preparation is the most common activity shown.

Like their dales counterparts, the Emmerdale women help with the farm chores but their primary role focuses on the farmhouse, the inside. Though this operates against the intention in other areas of the serial to show possible alternative roles for women in society, it also opens dramatic possibilities with the removal of the woman of the house for whatever reason.

At *Emmerdale Farm* inside space is female space, acting as a dramatic expression of the female characters; environment becoming part of the constitution of the character and to convey information about characters' feelings and actions, as Longhurst argues (1987: 644). The kitchen and living space at Emmerdale are always neat, because the actress who plays Annie has a conception of her as a morally upright farmer's widow being that kind of a person. This frustrated the producer of 1987 in an interesting way. He felt that such tidiness lacked authenticity, saying that actual dales farm kitchens would be full of clutter and the accoutrements of farm business and of living. This man had himself worked on farms near Dartmoor for three years and often used this experience as a referent, though research in the dales indicates that the impeccably tidy kitchen is no less typical than the cluttered kind.

The insistence on fastidiousness in the Emmerdale kitchen has other possibilities. It means that kitchen space can serve as symbol, an untidy kitchen immediately signalling something wrong. For example in 1987, it was used to indicate that Annie was in hospital. In a much earlier story, during Pat Sugden's time with the serial, untidiness again indicated Annie's absence but also problems of adjustment when women marry into the farm family. This symbolic possibility is generated by fastidiousness being an element of the kitchen rather than one among several states. I argue below that the enshrining of gender roles in the domestic, is also traceable to the encompassing of the domestic place by the rural in the serial.

The producer referred to other problems in the appearance of inside space which were bound up in conventions of soap production and characterisation by the actors. Essentially his comments revealed interior domestic space, again the farm, to be static, non-developmental. The walls have remained the same colour and the furniture in the same place, *because this is what the kitchen and living room are*. It is only a set, so its immediate visual recognition is crucial. The symbolic importance of this is, of course, in the way in which such a set, based on *rooms*, immediately connotes the domestic. Located in the realist conventions of the genre, this unchanging element of the domestic was something the producer felt powerless to change.[8]

The centrality of meals is symbolically rich, operating to create several meanings, some of which the production personnel are aware of, others not. The preparing and sharing of food at the kitchen table would seem to be about

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8. Another interesting point here is that the producer specifically cited the objections of the actor playing Annie as a major barrier to change. Here one gets something of the transference from actor to character which was part of the restored behaviour of rehearsals. As the fictional farm kitchen is the domain of Annie, so too is the kitchen set the professional concern of the actor playing her.

belonging, and it is the domestic which is the locus of this identification. This belonging is often stated in the scripts as "This is your home", part of the significance of Joe returning for Sunday dinner even though he lives elsewhere. Although the serial is located in the Yorkshire Dales, through the emotional resonance created by the establishment of Emmerdale as first and foremost a home, a place of belonging, its location transcends the actual specifics of the dales. The souvenir programme for the one thousandth programme in 1987 makes this understanding on the part of the production clear in an article entitled "Annie Sugden's Wonderful World!". After describing "her dales" in some considerable detail, Annie "writes":

> But if I'm really honest, there's only *one* real beauty spot for me in the Dales - and that's the home where I've lived for the past 40 years and where generations of Sugdens have lived for longer than that - it's Emmerdale Farm (Yorkshire Television 1987: 34)!

So Emmerdale can be for the audience, both a specific and existing part of the dales and something which is universal, home. And the sharing of food provides the basis of an idealisation of home, the domestic place.

There is another rich area of meaning implicated in this conflation of the domestic and food sharing; the mother, again in idealised form. The character of Annie was, from the beginning, a very strong and central one. Unlike some female characters in *Coronation Street* though, Annie's strength was never in her employment outside the home, her sexuality or her control over men though, like them, she was independent, strong-minded and completely in control of her life. These qualities though were refracted through her major role as *mother*, which brings her closer to some of the American soap opera women:

> The subject/spectator of soap operas, it could be said, is constituted as a sort of ideal mother: a person who possesses greater wisdom than all her children, whose sympathy is large enough to encompass the conflicting claims of her family (she identifies with them *all*), and who has no demands or claims of her own (she identifies with no one character exclusively) (Modleski 1984: 92).

As Annie fed her family, she provided them with advice, comfort, criticism and support. In the past, just entering the kitchen and finding Annie making pastry was a comfort. Unlike most American soap opera mothers though, Annie had an abrasive quality which personnel specifically associated with a Yorkshire "down-to-earthness" and commitment to absolute honesty and integrity. In later years the character has taken a lesser role in the drama, with fewer stories for herself, but as the mother she was still central, so much so that the production office in 1987 was already very concerned about the problem of replacing her from within the serial when the actress retired. Even in 1987, when the character was less dominant than in past years,[9] the major decisions at the centre of several narratives were not considered made until Annie had had her say. The story editor quite unequivocally commented that he thought that she was still the centre of the serial and certainly that she was the least flawed of all of the characters. Annie brought together kitchen, table, mother and family, operating as the epicentre of the domestic.[10] Her major association with the kitchen and its symbol of the table was made clear when the episode which saw her leave for

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9. The aging of actors and cosequently their characters is a perpetual problem for the makers of soap opera. Not only does this raise the possibility of replacing the character when the actor retires, but it also means that actors may not be able to do all that they used to. In the case of Annie, several personnel including the actress playing her, felt that a mellowing of what had been initially a very assertive, strong willed, acerbic character had resulted from the aging of the actress over the fifteen years of the serial's production.

10. The actress who plays Annie Sugden brought these elements together when she singled the family aspect as a favourite feature of *Emmerdale Farm* for audience members who write to her. She said that for them the eating together at Emmerdale was a major element of the characterisation of the Sugdens et al as a successful 'real' family.

hospital closed on the darkened, empty kitchen, with only the spotless table lit.

Meals, the family gathering and the kitchen's prominence produce two interacting idealisations at the heart of the programme, though acknowledged as such to different degrees by various personnel. The first is the family which links the mother to two other generations.[11] Though these are farming people with ownership of the farm largely coinciding with family, it is mainly the domestic which defines their familyness. The domestic brings all members together in informal, dramatically understated activities which personnel understood to be central to family. The second idealisation is the rural, which operates through both orders of authenticity to affect the construction of family. The totality of what family is in the serial thus depends upon the construction of another, encompassing, place; the *rural*. The interdependence of the two was made clear in one statement describing *Emmerdale Farm* as a:

> ...dramatisation of the everyday life of a Yorkshire farming community. An undoubted attraction is that the serial has something which no similar production can boast: more than half the action is recorded on location in the matchless Yorkshire Dales! Added to that is the fact that each of the characters symbolises a mainstay of traditional family life (Croston1981: 38).

The creator of *Emmerdale Farm* wanted the serial to inspire urban viewer *envy* as it portrayed the perfect existence for which everyone yearned. He thought that the serial should show the "rural idyll" and for him this meant that "the farm kitchen table was the philosophical centre" of *Emmerdale Farm* as it linked the rural with the domestic via the family. As the centre of the domestic,

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11. Until the actor playing Annie's father died in 1986, Annie was at the heart of a family with one ascending and two descending generations, all located at Emmerdale Farm.

the table represented togetherness of the family, nurture and a haven. Its meaning went further than this though, because it linked the domestic to the wider (still *inside*) place created around it. The valorisation of family which suffused a construction with its pivot as the kitchen table was in part derived from the rural, and originally a deliberately romanticised rural at that.

In the creator's conception of "rural idyll" and the deliberate generation of urban envy one sees operating a most basic opposition which is taken for granted by production personnel; rural versus urban. More than just an opposition, it implies the perception, noted by Williams (1985), that in English culture, the rural can stand for good, for the values of the real England. Thus the *inside* is more than domestic place. Naturalism and realism generate different kinds of authenticity to construct the inside as rural. As rural place also, the domestic focuses on the kitchen rather than living room, is organised around meals, requires moments of harmony in which the whole family participate, highlights the role of the mother and is invaded by work as pet lambs are cared for, copies of the *Farmers Weekly* lie about, the morning milk comes in a jug and domestic routines are set by the needs of the farm. The articulation of the construction of the domestic and the rural in *Emmerdale Farm* enables the serial to produce meaning in the context of the wider political processes of Britain.

The claim that the rural encompasses the domestic in the serial would seem to contradict the perceptions of the producer and editors, that the family is central to *Emmerdale Farm*. This thesis argues that part of what this family is is constituted by its rural location, so it is important to consider how the rural *is* constructed as place in the serial, before analysing the articulation of domestic and rural place and the participation of Emmerdale Farm in wider political processes.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RURAL AS PLACE

The overlaying of the rural on the space of meaning between conventions of genre and the systems of signification of British culture also links the internal world of the soap opera to the social world in another, more direct way. Opening titles of all British soap operas reflect their location in recognisable regions. Such identificaiton has even motivated choice of location. Consider Julia Smith's comments on *EastEnders*:

> ...I knew all along what I really wanted to do, which was a series set in the East End of London. I'm a Londoner. All the other soaps come from a different part of the country and I felt that the South was entitled to its own. I think the Cockneys have a vitality and a basic humour which is a necessary ingredient for a soap (*TheTimes* 19.2.85: 9).

The same was true for personnel in their initial proposal for Yorkshire Television to make *Emmerdale Farm*. Regional identity uses culturally significant categories to suggest that soap opera characters and their audiences inhabit the same world. The naturalisation of the Yorkshire Dales, the East End or working class Manchester enables other messages to be carried by the fictional worlds which relate to those named places. Place is politically significant, not for a mirroring of the named place to which it relates. Rather, through authenticity in production, the construction of place sets up a dialogue with other areas of social experience, enabling the interrogation of political meaning. In *Emmerdale Farm*, the construction of the rural is crucially implicated in that meaning as it draws the fiction into the political world of Thatcherism at the end of the nineteen eighties. This is because the serial constantly draws on what are highly politically charged stereotypes and meanings of the rural to present its fictional

world. Such stereotypes are precisely what the construction of the rural place in the serial is about.

As Donald has noted, any process of representation draws on other cultural images and representations. As a fiction, *Emmerdale Farm* is constructed, through first order authenticity, in relation to an interpretation of what is happening in rural Britain. Second order authenticity draws on images of the rural, which have many, even contradictory, meanings (Williams 1985). One way of looking at these images is to see them as stereotypes, not in the common-sense use of the term, but rather as presentations of what is already known, already existing within discourses of power (Bhabha 1983). To understand these constructions in this way is to recognise that they are also partly constitutive of the world for the dales farmers and that they may be either positively or negatively valorised, rather than being distortions or only negative images (Perkins 1979).

Bhabha focuses on stereotype in colonialism as the process in which the colonial subject is constructed in discourse (1983: 18, 19). Contrary to the usual view that the stereotype offers a single understanding of otherness, he argues that it is highly ambivalent as:

> ... a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated...as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved (1983: 18).

The political space of stereotype is essentially that of differentiation (Bhabha 1983: 19). In colonial discourse the stereotype is the form of knowledge produced about 'subject peoples' which authorises colonial domination. That is, stereotype constructs difference within a discourse already related to power:

> Therefore, despite the 'play' in the colonial system which is crucial to its exercise of power, colonial discourse produces the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible (Bhabha 1983: 23).

Without wishing to extend these insights on stereotype into Bhabha's Lacanian conclusions about subjectivity and embodiment, the author's recognition that stereotypes always already exist within discourses of power seems most useful when considering how the rural is constituted as stereotype in *Emmerdale Farm*. Pahl (1965) and Newby (1979) among many, point out that there is no such place as 'the rural', certainly not as it operates in British culture to imply discontinuity. Rather it is a stereotype in Bhabha's terms, which constitutes the rural as other, locked into a power relation with *urban* based British capitalist society. The rural, whether positively or negatively valorised (and it may be either), is constituted within discourses through difference, the power to define it and valorise deriving from the urban centre. As a construction which is grounded in stereotypes, *Emmerdale Farm*'s rural place responds to discourses of difference as it also helps constitute them. Some of the bases of this construction of difference need to be established to understand the constitution of the rural place in the serial.

URBAN/RURAL DISCOURSES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCE

The construction of the rural and the urban in difference, as opposites which interpenetrate in terms of meaning, has become part of the construction of the rural for all British people, both rural and urban. In discourses which constitute the rural and urban as separate kinds of places the domination of the

rural by the urban is authorised by the construction of the rural as other. The rural is constructed through language and conceptualisation in ways which actually empower the urban in social practices.

In the opposition which constructs the rural and the urban in English culture, different valorisations of each have been historically generated, but part of the meaning is produced by the very dichotomous structure which constitutes them. Always it is the *relationship* between the two parts which is central to meaning and the way in which the dichotomy is used metaphorically to interpret and explore other social phenomena.

Raymond Williams sums up the two most common dimensions of the rural/urban dichotomy :

> On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation (1985: 1).

Both positive and negative valorisations of the country exist today, but both the backwater and the rural idyll are constructions from the urban centre and the valorisation of the rural is in response to perceptions about the urban. The 'country bumpkin' is part of an uncompromising position on the developing subjugation of the country to the city and the transfer of political and economic power to the cities from the countryside. The 'rural idyll' asserts the domination of the city to no lesser degree, though its mechanism is idealisation from the perspective of the urban rather than debasement.

Although, as Williams points out, the country and the city are "changing historical realities" (1985: 289), as indeed the relationship between them

changes, the most significant way in which the rural has been symbolically constructed since the nineteenth century is the 'rural idyll' which quite specifically stands as a critique of urban life and industrialisation (Newby 1985, 1980, Youngs 1985, Lowenthal 1975, Davidoff et al 1976, cf Foster 1987, Leatherbarrow 1987[12]). To an extent, the continued existence of the backward, bumpkin image is encompassed by the idyll. *Emmerdale Farm*, as a continuing serial which seeks to create characters and stories which will concern its audience, mainly generates its characterisation of the rural from the positively valorised idyll, rather than rural backwardness. These negative images did sometimes feature in 1987, both in the serial and in other discourses about rural issues.

Briefly the main features of the historically derived 'rural idyll' conceptualise rural people living in communities shaped through the concept of 'natural'; they are self-contained, self-sufficient, close-knit, affording protection and a natural hierarchy in which all people know their place. Associated with this is agricultural work itself, the form of production which underpins the community. This is also seen as natural, fulfilling, non-alienating and the people who engage in it are thus somehow morally better people. Country life is timeless - continuity is its major feature. This is an extreme statement of the position, but most of these features can be traced in the construction of the dominant rural stereotype in *Emmerdale Farm.*

Temporal elements have often been used, particularly in anthropology, to establish difference, otherness (Fabian 1983: 16, cf Bloch 1977: 283). The *past*

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12. Leatherbarrow's article was prompted by what he saw as attacks on the modern city from the perspective of the superiority of the countryside in the April edition of *Town and Country Planning*. This reminds us of Williams (1985) argument that the idealisation of the rural is not uncontested within British culture.

is an important aspect of the way in which the rural is constructed, especially as it contrasts with the urban. Farming contributes to the idea of continuity, the never ending and seasonally defined efforts with and against nature to produce food. This idea gives a special position to farmers and has underpinned the special treatment of agriculture in Britain since 1948. Continuity is also established in images of the country grounded in past class structures and relations between country and city in which lock the rural into ever lasting fox hunts and country weekends. Here an absolute distinction between city and country even necessitates different decorations in the houses of each locality. Consider these quotations from an article on interior decorating in *Country Life:*

> A country house must never be mistaken by its decoration, for a town house. It is a different breed of place. The small country house in particular should have an intimate interior, charming and relaxed.

or:

> ...the mix of styles that would have been natural in a house belonging to a family over generations, when people bought furniture, fabric and pictures on their travels.

and:

> When the decorator has left, these country houses should never be so smart that the decorations are superior to the walking sticks in the hall, the log baskets beside the fire, the dogs barking and shedding hairs that are the raison d'etre of country living (Rufey 1987: 156-157).

Here is continuity of a healthy world of privilege, relaxation, sport - still available. There is no hint of no rural unemployment, overproduction, housing shortage, agricultural problems or chemical pollution of waterways. This is a very selective

rendering of the rural, one which not only denies the problems of the present but also much of Britain's social history.

The rural may also be understood as the past in a different sense. Here the countryside perceived as literally the place of origin of the majority of the urban population in some past age, provides the possibility of still existent ties, which however tenuous justify ongoing feelings of belonging and of some sense of ownership. Here the social history of a rural population driven or enticed into the cities well into this century with the development of industrialisation is not denied but evoked to render the countryside into what Crofts calls "the patrimony" of an urban "dispossessed" (1987: 44). Thus the association of the rural as the past fuels the growing demands in Britain for access and some form of national 'ownership' of the countryside and has a darker side in gates being left open and urban visitors' dogs being allowed to run free among farmers' sheep in the name of "this is our countryside too, you know".

The constructions of the rural as continuity or the past are highly political. As other, the rural is constructed as still ordered and meaningful in opposition to an urban which is perceived as being contaminated and disordered. It stands as a critique of city and industry in a modern world. This underpins the nostalgia, the longing for a romanticised past now lost which shades many of the popular constructions of the rural; in film and television, advertisements, diaries and novels about rural childhoods, travel and cookery books, herbals. This is not new (Williams 1985: Chapter 4), but today, from the perspective of a city seen as in decline in all ways the country represents this past age when things were simpler, purer and life was determined by the seasons so offered continuity, timelessness, absence of pressures and stresses (see also Newby 1980a,

Giddings 1978, Youngs 1985). In the era of Thatcherism, with its urban identity, such a perception was particularly meaningful.

There are several elements of the discourses which construct the rural in opposition to the urban which are part of the constitution of the rural place in *Emmerdale Farm*. These encourage and enable particular kinds of interrogations of British society in the era of an urban associated Thatcherism. The rural as nature is probably the most significant.

Raymond Williams has traced the development of Nature in Western society into an object, separated from humans so that 'man' could intervene in or command 'natural processes' (1980: 71-75). Thus, in the nineteenth century, with the rapid industrialisation of British society there developed a sense of Nature which empowered the distinction between city and country as different in essence. Williams says:

> Nature, in this new sense, was in another and different way all that was not man: all that was not touched by man, spoilt by man: nature as the lonely places, the wilderness (1980: 77).

This cherishing of wild nature was a challenge to the previous love of all that was orderly in the landscape, the cultivated fields and the visual dominance of human activity (Thomas 1987: 267-268) and has been traced by many writers to the newly developing need to "escape from the increasing bustle of the cities and factories" (Thomas 1987: 268, see also Drabble 1984: 86, Wiener 1981, Williams 1985, 1980).

These anti-city ideas about wild nature became harnessed to a conception of humanness as individuality, as an essence which needed the solitude of nature for revival and spiritual regeneration (Thomas 1987: 268; Drabble 1984: 86). Locked into nature, rural life is still often seen as

regenerative while urban life is debilitating and corrupting; the rural is the location of the real England (Williams 1985: Chapter 21, Wiener 1981: Chapter 4, Newby 1980a). As Newby sums up in his review of four literary examples of the rural nostalgia industry in the nineteen eighties:

> The public sentiment which all of these books tap is the widespread disaffection with the reality of modern *urban* living. In an increasingly uncertain and dangerous world we project onto rural life a peace, a solitude and a timelessness that poignantly express our dissatisfactions with the everyday reality of our lives. It is reassuring to know that out there in the sticks there is a more authentic existence which, as the *Sunday Times* compilation emphasises, "remains *fundamentally* the same." The countryside becomes more valuable (and also more fragile and more threatened) as a location in which to revive our flagging faith in the present and the future (1980: 325).

As Newby and Williams argue, most city people do not go to the *wilderness* for regeneration, but rather to human made landscapes[13] in which they do not 'see' the human labour. Although these lanscapes are not 'wild', they still appear as 'natural', certainly if compared with cities (Williams 1980: 77,78). Newby explains the centrality of the *visual* in this construction of the human made countryside as nature:

> By their strange alchemy contemporary rural life is transformed from a working segment of post-welfare state Britain, with its representative share of social tensions and economic problems; into a purely visual phenomenon: something to be visited, apprehended, viewed, contemplated or photographed, but rarely explained, understood or inhabited.

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13. Indeed, human activity is inscribed in the very term 'landscape'. As Thomas points out, 'landscape' which has come to encapsulate the rural at the visual level was derived from the term 'landskip', a form of rendition of the rural physical environment, in the seventeenth and eightteenth centuries. Thus, that landscape which was valued as authentic was the one which most resembled the paintings which were esteemed by the bourgeoisie at this time (Thomas 1987: 265).

and he goes on:

> This means that churches, castles, cottages, shire horses, blacksmiths, thatchers and gamekeepers are in, but chapels, council houses, combine harvesters, farm workers, modern farm buildings and almost any sign of traffic are out. All rural industry is out unless it is derelict (and therefore "picturesque") or unless it has apparently been taken through a lense smeared in vaseline, like the view of Hebden Bridge (1980a: 324).[14]

The denial of the human labour which actually created the countryside has been an ongoing feature of the construction of the rural as a visual phenomenon from the perspective of the city. Further, just as coal mines and lead workings have no place in rural romanticism, so too do such images tend to deny a social history in which industry itself had its roots in the countryside, in which it was the agrarians of the eighteenth century who were what Williams calls "our first really ruthless capitalist class" (1980: 79), in which the city and the country have always been inextricably linked and in which the moors and the wildernesses are as much human products as are lowland cornfields or the polluted rivers (Williams 1980: 83).

As well as nature, the village is another central element of the construction of the rural in difference, whether positively or negatively valorised. Idealisation has its focus on community based on the village precisely *because* of its opposition to the city. Although the landscape offers healing, moral

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14. There is nothing new in leaving farm workers out of the construction of the rural. Often in the eighteenth century emparking movement, this is literally what was done as villages were destroyed to preserve the vistas, unsullied by sign of human habitation, or workers were forced to carry out their labours within view of the house before the inhabitants rose to see them (Darley 1978: 15). Darley even reports that at Nuneham Courtenay an underground passage was provided for the cows to pass from one field to another "without spoiling the view" (1978: 52). By the nineteenth century labourers were considered more acceptable, but still only for their visual value as even philanthropists noted for their good works among the city's working people built hopelessly impractical houses for their rural workers, solely for the picturesque effect or laid a "path through the grounds from which 'the occasional group of villagers supplying an additional embellishment to the landscape' could be seen" (Darley 1978: 52).

renewal and freedom, it is the rural community which is the opposite of the city as a form of settlement, identity and social relations. Constructed from the perspective of the city, the rural provides the "knowable community" (Williams 1985: 165), epitomised in the village which provides what Williams calls "direct relationships", "face-to-face contacts within which we can find and value the real substance of personal relationships" (1985: 165). As another nostalgic remnant, this perception of the village manipulates an obvious physical difference of scale, another visual element of the rural, to explore the problems of social complexity of the city.

For the city dweller of the twentieth century the village as community offers the possibility of an alternative lifestyle which is better, more fulfilling, less alienating and the landscape empowers this further as 'natural'. The construction of the rural through the focus of community puts people back into the rural, but without overturning much of what is denied in the concepts of nature and in the primacy of the visual. Such a construction makes the village an important focus of urban interest in the countryside generating much debate about the need to preserve these bastions of "traditional life and values".

The construction of the rural in opposition to the industrialised urban can provide a very reactionary critique of capitalist society for which industry or city is used as metonym (Williams 1985: 291; Youngs 1985: 154). Relying on a backward looking idealisation of the rural, at bottom this critique seeks no real radical changes to the cities or to capitalism, but as Crofts says, it is elitist and tends to mean that once in the country, incomers strive to protect what they have newly gained at all costs (1987: 36). The continuation of cities provides a valorisation of this retreat.

The construction of the rural in difference authorises a power relationship between city and country. Denigration confirms the correctness of the hierarchy

and idealisation obscures it. Idealisation in particular is deeply harmful to the country, both in denying social history and in obscuring the social conditions of the rural areas of Britian. Urban definition of the rural obscures the actualities of rural un- or under-employment, poor social services and facilities, poor pay for agricultural workers who are the lowest paid of all workers[15] and often in receipt of supplementary benefits (Newby 1979: 166-178, Youngs 1985: 162, Foster 1987: 24) as well as the 'industrialisation' of farming and the economic problems of agriculture. Youngs says:

> It remains true that this is the country viewed from the city, an idealisation of cold, damp, rheumatism-giving landscapes, draughty cottages which have the quaint trait of an outside privy and no running water and a working environment of long hours, low pay and poor conditions (1985: 159).

THE CONSTRUCTION OF RURAL STEREOTYPES IN *EMMERDALE FARM*

THE SPATIAL DIMENSION

Though Emmerdale Farm is home as domestic place, it is also rural. In 1987 the very title and opening credits of the serial, showing the stone farmhouse, cows and calves all bathed in a golden glow, constructed this as a particular kind of rural. Primarily it is Emmerdale *Farm* itself which identifies the place of the serial as rural, but this identification is also created by the construction of space as a set of connected types of rural settelement extending

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15. In 1987, the rate of pay negotiated for farm workers was 99.22 pounds per week minimum wage for a 40 hour week, with 133.92 pounds for the top grade (*Farmers Weekly* 5.6.87: 12; see letter in *Farmers Weekly* 10.4.87: 61).

out from the epicentre of the farm, through village (Beckindale) and town (Hotten) to cathedral city (Skipdale), which evokes the past, and provincial city (Leeds), which is unequivocally urban. The farm is just beyond the edge of the village, though its precise distance varies. Hotten is a car or bus ride away. Thus rural space is established in set, discontinuous and visual, rather than relational, experience oriented terms. The rural place in *Emmerdale Farm* is differentiated, separated out into farm, village, town and region. All these spaces have their appropriate action, relationships and meanings which interrelated to constitute total rural place in the serial. Only one example of each type is used, each creating or implicating individual examples of social types which together constitute a whole. These spatial terms are the basis of a set of stereotypes of rural place. They imply something fixed, essential and deny the selectiveness of this image of a rural from which mining, industry, motorway complexes and nuclear power stations have been removed. This is the rural of agriculture, the countryside. The usual action of the serial takes place in Emmerdale Farm, Beckindale and Hotten, all of which have a positive rural valence and through typification interact to construct stereotypes of rural.

In the construction of the world of *Emmerdale Farm* as rural place, the first order of authenticity operated iconically in production to appropriate only certain spatial features of the rural. This is based on the production personnel's insistence that more than fifty percent of the action be recorded on location, with a considerable percentage of that on the farm. An interesting interplay between the actual and fictional dales means that the landscape both *is* that of the dales and at the same time not. On the one hand the production method of building up landscape through the juxta-position of outside scenes acknowledges the constructedness of the serial's rural space. *Emmerdale Farm*'s landscape was dependent on the construction of the landscape by the activities of generations

of dales farmers while at the same time not limited by and to this. On the other hand, first order authentication through outside recording, denies the constructedness, both of the television dales and the farming constructed dales landscape. There is an assumption that the physical existence of the dales landscape or the farm location will translate from its place in the environment to videotape in some way which precedes the construction which is *Emmerdale Farm*. Its meaning is immanent, part of its very appearance. This focus on the physical recalls rural/urban discourses and the construction of the rural as the visual as it articulates a particular kind of time and space conceived within what is 'natural' rather than social.

This notion of 'natural' is probably the key to the association made by personnel between the rural setting of *Emmerdale Farm* and the need to record on location. As *Coronation Street* demonstrates, the urban environment may be 'authentically' constructed on film lots and inside sets. The insistence on outside locations suggests the rural can not.[16] Inside recording would preclude the panning shots of hills, valleys or the farm itself, the physical countryside which *denotes* the rural. It would prevent the framing of a shot by trees or wildflowers, the staging of a conversation against a field of cows or the location of conflict within a farming task; milking the cows, cutting the hay, clipping sheep. The world of *Emmerdale Farm* is constructed through first order authenticity as a stereotypically rural place which is spatially based on the *physical appearance* of the countryside; with farms, animals, villages, fields, hills and sweeping agricultural landscapes. This is the minimum which stereotypically sets the rural

16. Since 1987 a great deal of the recording of *Emmerdale Farm* has been rationalised within one major location on the outskirts of Leeds. I believe however, that the farm location in Wharfedale has been retained, so my point that the rural cannot be completely presented through constructed sets would still appear to hold.

apart from the urban and is the basis of all of the rural stereotypes utilised in the serial, regardless of their valence or elaborations.[17] Landscape ramifies into two elaborations of type; farming and a "wild" nature rural, a timeless place of untouched places, wild animals and birds. In the serial these are not incompatible, and the farm characters are shown to be at home in both.

More than village, farm, animals and fields is necessary in constructing the spatial basis of the rural place of *Emmerdale Farm* as it locates the serial's fictional world in the actual geography of Britain: its identity as the Yorkshire dales. At the first order of authenticity, *Emmerdale Farm* as rural place is the Yorkshire Dales, not the Chilterns or the Lake District or the Peak District. It is denoted as such by using the name of actual dales locations. Thus characters mention place names like Thirsk, Harrogate, Buckden Pike or Aysgarth Falls.[18] At the denotative level, this construction of the rural appropriates space which the audience takes to be 'real'. This not only gives substance to the creation of place but also authenticates the serial.

The entire Yorkshire Dales area is appropriated as the living and working space in which the farm and village are located. The serial's rural place of action has both specificity and flexibility by being constructed as a pastiche of

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17. This spatial basis of *Emmerdale Farm* as *rural* place was confirmed and reproduced in the map of the village of Beckindale and its surrounds in one of the souvenir booklets produced for the serial. Here the village was situated beside a river and surrounded by walled green fields full of sheep and cows. Emmerdale Farm itself, depicted as the house and outbuildings with fields of cows and sheep, is set some way out of the village to the south-west. Animals, fields, farms and a central village are posited as the basic ingredients of the rural place. This was incontestible to one script editor who spoke about the map. Although he thought that viewers would have Beckindales of their own imaginations, what he mentioned as being different were things like the size of the village, how many streets, whether there was another pub or any other kind of facility not shown in the serial.

18. This is a technique which is similar to Anderson's description of the setting of a novel in a known place so that there is a movement of the immediate location, in his example a house, "from the 'interior' time of the novel to the 'exterior' time of the [Manila] reader's everyday life" (1983: 33), which gives 'confirmation' of the existence of this imagined community of the fictional work.

high and low dales, top and bottom land, bleak moor tops and lush valley floors. As a pastiche, it participates in the actual geographical area of the Dales, and which has been described by many writers, one of whom called it "some of the most beautiful country in mainland Britain" (Harding 1986: 9, cf Herriot 1979, Hartley and Ingilby: 85, Wright 1986). There are countless ways in which the serial is grounded in Dales space and so authenticated. Locations are often in Wharfedale, using the hilly dales terrain with its stone walls and barns. The actual history of the Dales region with its Viking conquest and legacy in the local names is used in dialogue. The local radio station in the serial is called Radio Wharfe, implying 'Wharfedale'. One story gave the location of Beckindale as North Yorkshire, an actual administrative area in Britain. Though personnel constantly remind people that the serial is a fictionalisation and therefore not bounded by what they call 'reality', the temporal and spatial drawing and locating of Beckindale is a crucial mechanism for authenticity by grounding it in that 'real' dales.

The Dales is variously a particular kind of topography, people with special qualities, a dialect, a national beauty area, rural, agricultural, part national park or even just the location of Herriot country.[19] All of these constructions become part of the rural place of *Emmerdale Farm*. Though at the first order of authenticity, they draw on the existence of the Dales as a physical place, they also employ the second order to elaborate the serial's Dalesness in terms of other widely held, even consensual kinds of understandings about the dales. Harding provides examples of both of these orders:

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19. The Richmond County Council advertises itself for tourist as "Herriot Country" (see 1987 publication for tourist information), drawing on the name of the author of books on the life of a Yorkshire vet which were used as the basis for the BBC series *All Creatures Great and Small*. The series was recorded in Wensleydale.

> Not as sweepingly majestic as the Highlands of Scotland nor as ruggedly grand as the Lakes, they are more rounded, more welcoming, perhaps (as is the nature of the folk of these dales) more friendly. There are few peaks much above 2,000 feet and few areas where a walker is liable to find himself in any difficulty. Somebody once called them 'The Striding Dales' and that seems to me an apt description, for seen from the summit of any of the major hills such as Ingleborough, Whernside, Great Shunner Fell, Wild Boar Fell or the Calf, the Dales seem to spread out across the landscape in great giant strides (Harding 1986: 9, 10).

Emmerdale Farm's rural stereotypes are constituted by precisely this kind of interplay between the two orders of authentication of the dales and the rural generally.

The physical, visual, dales affects the way in which space is presented in the serial. Particular cultural conceptions about the rural as a unique kind of place, are then imposed on this. These are less grounded in the social history of the dales than in a consensual view of the rural as, stereotypically, a different kind of place from the urban. Stereotype operates within the overall process of representation in two ways. It forms a bridge between the two kinds of fictions about rural place, that of the dalespeople and that of the television producers. It also transforms the rural place of the dales people, to produce a different quality of construction of rural place. Stereotypes of rural place provide both similarity and difference in the two constructions. Both similarity and difference were vital to the serial's interpretation of rural issues under Thatcher. Similarity provided authenticity while difference helped produce particular meaning for the interrogation.

One example of the difference between the two kinds of construction of the rural will suffice at this point. In the dales, the rural *was* space which was in many ways opposed to urban space. At the same time it was place defined always by the social relationships, past, present and future which shape it. The

landscape was conceived of as constructed by the major activity of farming and the dales space was differentiated by actual personal and known associations. Any part of this space was less a rural village in some static, spatial sense and more 'home', a place which is not known by is size, position on a map or major occupations but according to perceptual 'maps' developed and refined through people's mutual experiences, interrelatedness and conflicts. These maps identified a specific part of the road, not only by its name but by the fact that it flooded each winter or a row of houses according to the different people who have lived there and the ownership of a field in the village by the name of the farm rather than the person.

Through the maps no feature was simply its visual manifestation. A house was particularised through the shared knowledge that it used to be a barn, or that Frank Allen's daughter now lives in it, or that a large farmer who now has a new house used to live in it when he was just starting out. A farm would be partly constituted by the memory that "my uncle used to work up there as a lad, when Bill Metcalfe had it - there's a lovely view from up there, can see right down the dale"[20]. There was no such thing as non-social, or purely 'natural' space and no space which was not also intensely temporal, constituted as much by those who had gone before as it is by its purely physical characteristics. Farmers knew that what is physical had been shaped by their activities and those of their forebears. They argue that they have "made" the dales when trying to counter the introduction of environmental controls. There is no part of the

20. This kind of 'history' of the area is different from the kind which tourists and newcomers to the area are drawn to, which more involves events and patterns which lock the dales into the history of the rest of Britain, like the building of the Settle-Carlisle railway, or the lead-mining and woollen industries' histories. They are also drawn by stories of the old days which lock the dales into an agricultural past which does not seem so far removed when they are told stories of Irish labourers standing in the market square to hire themselves out each year, as late as the nineteen forties. The dales tourist industry has generated huge numbers of publications about such things.

landscape which is not imbued with social relations, even that which appears most natural, presented as such in *Emmerdale Farm* production practices. This is what place is in the Yorkshire Dales (cf Harper 1987) and it differs markedly from the idealised, visually dominated consensual view of *Emmerdale Farm*. In the construction of rural as place, through stereotypes, this idealisation goes beyond the obvious level of physical appearance and taps the second order of authenticity with connotations which implicate a plurality of other codes, and therefore meanings (Hall 1980: 133), through which British culture constitutes the rural. It is at this level that the stereotypes of rural place begin to ramify, selecting different attributes and giving different valences to rural place. The serial unites time with space to construct three interacting stereotypes of the rural, which are then available to explore British society in quite specific ways and with particular political consequences.

FARMING AND THE DOMINANT STEREOTYPE

Most personnel stressed the need for a farming strand in the interwoven narrative, because of the rural location of the serial. Farming is considered vital to construct the rural place as agricultural rather than industrial. This is one formulation of a rural/urban opposition. The serial's dominant stereotype of the rural is situated in the area of farming but centres on the family farm to define its ground. This is not contradicted by the inclusion of NY Estates as another form of farming, the stereotype of agribusiness. The stereotypical portrayal of farming through the visual, the farmer at his work, is mostly confined to Emmerdale Farm itself, and the predominance of office routines at NY confirms the at times actually stated view that this version of farming is not 'really' what the rural is, or should be, about. It is the family farm which is constructed as authentic, not

agribusiness, and part of this authenticity is in the contrast between the family farm and the estate at the level of the everyday.

So how is the dominant rural stereotype constructed? There is a sense in which Emmerdale Farm *is* the physical farm used as the location. To an extent Emmerdale was constructed in this farm's here and now, as it was at the time of recording. The farm location's spaces and buildings, particularly the farmyard and the mistle, were not dressed for recording. Their physical presence was part of the constitution of Emmerdale. When the milk collection was made, the tanker sometimes appeared in shot. This is an important level of meaning and corresponds again to the first order of authenticity. It was certainly the order which impressed those journalists who said:

> Farmer Arthur Bell and his son Trevor seem oblivious to the fact that their working 200 - acre spread regularly becomes television's beloved Emmerdale Farm (Burke 12.11.85).

or:

> North-east of Leeds, across the River Wharfe and you're there - unmitigated reality, which, in the case of Emmerdale Farm, smells remarkably like cow muck (Caborn 6.9.85: 14).

But there is much much more to the construction of the farm and its surrounding countryside in the serial.

The articulation of domestic and rural place establishes the farm in its often positively valorised type of *family farm*. This articulation corresponds with the most common form of farm in the dales where the farm is both the site of work and leisure activities, and thus unites private and public. At the same time Emmerdale Farm signifies rural place par excellence in a way which feeds back into the domestic, producing some of the specificities of the domestic place noticed earlier. This association between the rural and farming centres the

kitchen in the domestic place. The kitchen is a working place within the domestic, because of its location on a farm and inside work is therefore not unambiguously personal or private, but part of the farm enterprise.

In the serial's construction of the rural place, the farm was quite consciously located in a wider landscape. Even action shots like Matt lambing in the sheep shed, were shot revealing green fields and hills behind him through the open door. At times a long panning shot from high above the farm was used to establish the farm as part of the greater rural landscape. This began above the fields, trees and hills and moved across to find the farm which, from this vantage point, was revealed in its complete lay-out, *as it is* rather than the pastiche form which it takes in the scenes showing the Sugdens as farmers. Usually, the scene to which the cameras cut from this long and high shot was an action scene in a particular location, like dipping the sheep in the pens at the back of the foddering shed - movement from general farm space to specific task space, transforming the farm from part of the countryside to a particular and rural working space.

This is also a *dales* farm, and here second order authenticity uses ideas about dalesness to identify the serial through this geographical area. Consider Raistrick's comments:

> Skilled with sheep and completely self-reliant they are quiet, friendly, and very observant people. Not many people wander on the fells without their knowledge, and very few visitors can approach their knowledge and understanding of nature...The true-born dalesman has a keen sense of humour, but it is not easily displayed. It is often rather grim, like the moors and the weather around him, and it is always cautious and given to understatement...the true dales stock continues, shy and unrevealing but carrying forward a way of life that demands vigour and courage against fell country and weather, and compassion and understanding for sheep and stock, combined with a willingness to live without ambition and artificiality (1972: 32).

Annie Sugden and Matt Skilbeck are partly male and female manifestations of this image of dalesness, both grounding the serial in the dales. They belong to the dales and confirm dalesness as farming. As the actor who plays Annie said, "You can't imagine either of them living anywhere else". Both were born in the dales and married dales born people. Annie was the daughter of a horseman on the Verney Estate of the old days and married a local hill farmer, Jacob Sugden. She is therefore a daleswoman par excellence in contrast with so many actual dales farmers' wives who married into the dales. She is independent and hard-working, is always welcoming of the stranger or the person in need, loathe to show great emotion, is honest and upright and absolutely ruthless in pursuing that which she deems to be right; the moral centre of the whole *inside* place.

In an interesting parallelling of upward social mobility, Matt was brought up as an orphan[21] and came to work for Jacob, later to marry Annie and Jacob's daughter, Peggy (now deceased) and through her to receive a share in Emmerdale Farm. Matt is a strong, quiet man who is dependable and self reliant - all the perceived virtues of the dales farmer. He is a shepherd[22] and a man who rears prize winning sheep at that. This is significant. In an echoe of Raistrick's comments about dalesness, sheep are used *in Emmerdale Farm*

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21. Some history of Matt Skilbeck is included in the first book of *Emmerdale Farm*, entitled, The Legacy (Mackenzie 1977). As the serial progressed, Matt's only relative, Aunt Bea was killed in a car crash with his twins, Sam and Sally, leaving Matt alone in the world again.

22. Not only are sheep a dominant feature of dales agriculture in the national economic and husbandry scene, but the names of sheep are dales identifiers - Swaledale, Wensleydale, Dalesbreds, Rough Fell, Mashams (see Hartley and Ingilby 1985: 11).

over and over again as the symbol of the dales and of good farming.[23] Here the "good shepherd" image of farming articulates with the economics of the dales for which sheep are the pivot (see Chapter Five). In the recession and cut-backs theme which ran through 1987, the producers had Alan Turner defending the estate against the dismantling of the sheep production in an impassioned speech which included:

> Sheep have grazed on those fields and fells for centuries. It will take more than a mere accountant to render the Dales Shepherd a figure from the past.

Matt with his sheep is the epitome of the dalesman and a crucial figure in the establishing of the rural in *Emmerdale Farm* as, not just the countryside, but specifically the dales through a selective, and stereotypical, rendering of the region.

Farmwork is central in the serial's dominant construction of the rural stereotype through the family farm. This directly relates to personnel's understandings about the rural in British culture which force another modification of Longhurst's position. Work has only a marginal place in the urban soap operas. *Emmerdale Farm* is rurally located and for nearly all personnel, this was partly to be understood in work, farmwork, which is seen as different from urban, industrial, work. The latter may be able to be taken for granted in urban soap operas, but it was not for *Emmerdale Farm*. As television professionals, personnel also thought it visually interesting so a useful

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23. Sheep are often the focus of portraying a farmer as good or bad: the Metcalfe character in the story about Matt inheriting a farm lying on Emmerdale's borders was shown as bad by having the corpses of sheep in the farm yard and it was Jackie Merrick's concern for his sheep which led to him falling down an uncapped mine shaft at the beginning of the nuclear dump story.

component in the programme. Thus the rural serial, unlike the urban, makes both reproduction *and* production important, locating drama in both spheres and dissolving the soap opera distinction between sites of work and leisure.[24]

For personnel, the thing which visually most set farmwork apart from urban work was the interaction between farmer and animals. In this highly selective picture of farming on which the dominant rural stereotype was constructed, milking the cows forms the basis of the daily routines at Emmerdale Farm and connotes so much more about what kind of a place the rural is. The importance of milking for the rural stereotype of *Emmerdale Farm* cannot be underestimated.

Farming in the dales of farmers' experience is always geared to the future, to the next season's tasks, to nurture which constantly anticipates returns in the future, to inputs and arrangements which are always being judged in terms of what they will yield. To a certain extent farming in the serial is also forward looking, but more often it asserts its continuity backwards, or limits its future projection by laying down daily and seasonal cycles over it. This is very reminiscent of some of the attributes of the idyllic chronotope as described by Bakhtin (1981: 224-236) in which he relates "the creation of the cyclic rhythmicalness of time" (1981: 225) in the idyll which focuses on agricultural labor to the unity of time and space. At one level this is expressed in the "grafting of life and its events to a place" (1981: 225), so that time and space are inseparable and the life of this place is supposed to involve generations upon generations having lived, probably unchanged, in this place. This makes cyclic

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24. Though spatially in the serial the distinction between work and leisure is dissolved as, like the actual dales, the farm becomes dominant for all experience, temporally the serial still tends to distinguish between the two with work happening during daylight hours and night farming work therefore often signalling that something is wrong. This kind of distinction is no where as clear cut in the dales as in the serial.

time the major temporal dimension and it is this which limits the forward impulse of time (1981: 210).

The daily and yearly routines of farmwork, the rural being contained within cycles, *are* basic to the construction of rural place in *Emmerdale Farm.* Most episodes contain the events of a single day, the strongest and most effective presentation of this being considered to be its beginning complete with cock crowing and its ending with everyone going up to bed. This was an opinion expressed to me by a previous producer of the serial, and for him the perfection of this as the portrayal of a day as the best carrier of the narrative is linked to his perception, also that of the whole 1987 production office personnel, of the serial as a rural family saga. Thus 'the day in a life of' the family, becomes the unit of narrative. Many episodes begin early in the morning with milking, feeding the dogs, having breakfast, or for the more leisured, an early morning ride or walk. The producer linked his perception about the appropriateness of the unit of the day to the farm work routines which he perceived to be central for a farming family. For him, and indeed the creator of the serial, the constraints of everyday routine, especially dairying, symbolise farming and actually create dramatic opportunities.

Such cyclic time acts as a limit on the topical farming stories, particularly ones about developments in farming, which the serial habitually includes through the family farm. These stories locate farming and farmwork in a stereotype more often constructed through NY Estates, farming which is "modern", "progressive", "efficiency oriented". *Emmerdale Farm* considered twice yearly lambing, built a sheep shed for wintering the sheep, acquired more land to improve their economies of scale, were building up a pedigree Freisian herd and turned from hay to silage for animal feed. Insofar as these developments are ratified by the family farm, they are positively valenced,

though this stereotype is largely constructed through NY Estates, producing an overall negative valence for it, as it is locked into discourses about the 'industrialisation' of farming and the relationship between the city and the country.

Because these evidences of "progress" are encompased by a cyclical framework, innovation never becomes a major element in the constitution of the rural around the family farm. Though big changes are shown, this rural stereotype articulates with the conventions of soap opera to enable these developments to provide stories, then subside (Geraghty's change with no change, in 1981: 9-26), so that farming as a regular activity continued. Though Dorset Horn sheep were introduced for twice yearly lambing story, for the rest of the year only Mashams and Swaledales were shown, as they had always been. The family farm as dominant signifier of the rural is prevented from authentic growing, from "becoming" (Bakhtin 1981: 210) and so is temporally constituted either in the past or in a continuous present, the cycle which is also a fore-shortened future. Changes therefore do not take hold as they are encompassed by the temporal structure of the serial. The rural stereotype constructed such that the past is more relevant than the future, is available for either positive or negative valorisation, depending on the discourse in which it is employed. In 1987 both occurred in the interpretation of rural issues and its associated interrogation of British society through the rural.

There is another element of Bakhtin's analysis of the idyll and its related folkloric time which resonates with the dominant rural stereotype of farming in *Emmerdale Farm*. This dimension, which takes its full force in the idyll related to agricultural labour, is "the conjoining of human life with the life of nature, the unity of their rhythm..." (Bakhtin 1981: 226) which is supposed to be a "*real* link and common bond between the phenomena of nature and the events of human

life" (1981: 227). This is positively valorised and has the effect of transforming even everyday and routine actions into "essential life *events*", something which explains why *Emmerdale Farm* personnel conceive of the rural place of the serial as enabling, through making possible the showing of "life's dramas" of death and life in labour which is unalienating and which unites humanity with nature. The cycle underpins this stereotype, though here the space of the family farm articulates with a timelessness which becomes embedded in discourses to valorise the rural as somehow more authentic, more *real*, than the urban under capitalism (Williams 1985). In the serial this dimension particularly valorises milking which is after all only one aspect of farming, and one which is not even a universal activity in the dales. The sheep is a more apt symbol of the dales than dairying, but it is dairying which is central to the chronotopically constructed stereotype of rural place based on the family farm.

Milking is implicated in the chronotopic construction of rural stereotypes in *Emmerdale Farm* in several ways, all of which link up with 'maps of meaning'. At a practical level milking helps to establish the sunrise to bedtime preferred portrayal of the day, and episodes often begin with it. Already therefore it is the basis of daily cyclic time, a crucial dimension of the rural for the serial. Not only does it help to constitute *Emmerdale Farm*'s rural place as based on agriculture, farmwork, and variously timelessness, natural cycles, and the past; but it immediately sets this serial apart from most other continuing serials in Britain which are urban based. The full milking routine does not even have to be shown, but rather washing down the mistle or even bringing a jug of milk into the kitchen are enough to suggest it.

Milking implies much more than this. It involves animals, for personnel that most authentic experience of farming;[25] far more so than arable farming with its intensive mechanisation and thoroughly 'modern' approach. Animal care and milking form an important basis of a perception by personnel of farming in the dales as continuity. Milking links up with notions about the eternal nature of farming and the farmer and the primacy of nature (Thompson 1967: 60). One producer I spoke to saw milking, even with all of its technological and economic inputs, as an eternal routine which not only ties the farmer to the farm thus making his job different from most of the rest of the population, but as somehow grounding him in nature, therefore denying past and future as well, because in milking he is bound by *nature's* rhythms rather than anything else. This construction ignores artificial insemination and the organising of cows' pregnancies to fit the price structures of the outlets to whom farmers sell their milk, the feeding of protein to improve milk yields, the development of purpose buildings in which to winter the animals and the breeding programmes to improve milk quality and yields. It ignores the politics and economics of milk quotas and the controversy over hormone treatments. In this very selective view the farmer is part of a process which is somehow primordial, outside of time and outside of the social and the technological. The forward looking personal events which have the domestic as their place therefore happen in *Emmerdale Farm* against a rural stereotype which dominantly constructed as timeless, natural. This is the major contribution of family farming (itself the dominant image of farming in the serial) to the construction of the rural in the serial. The contribution of the farming cycle is central to this stereotype.

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25. In this perception television personnel are probably not alone if one considers that even children's toy farms and books about farming are heavily weighted towards farmers looking after animals rather than specialising in growing potatoes or cereals.

As milking defines the daily cycle in farming, so do the seasons mark the annual cycle with many of the same connotations about nature and timelessness. The seasons were therefore, despite the problems of outdoor recording prior to transmission, very carefully presented and authenticated as an important part of rural life. Costumes were appropriate for the time of year and the sets had appropriate scenery painted on the flats outside windows and doors. No detail was missed with bowls of seasonal flowers indicating the season and conventions like leaving the pub door open indicating summer. On location, though nothing could be done about the spring leaves on the trees for summer scenes being recorded, roses of the correct colour were wired to the climbers outside the farmhouse, and pots of marigolds and delphiniums sunk into the garden to create a summer display. Each technical department had its concern with this kind of detail to suggest the required season. I even saw the director reject a sound recording of sheep and lambs to play behind some scenes on the moors because he realised that since this was meant to be July, the lambs would be too grown to sound like that.

In fact, one of the major debates in production focused on the correspondence between transmission time and presented time, given the six week gap between filming and transmission. One group argued that no attempt should be made to create the illusion of 'real time', at least as far as farming seasons were concerned. Their ideal format was to film whatever Arthur Bell was doing at the time, so running six weeks behind 'real' time. The others insisted on the need for correspondence as a crucial element, derived from naturalism, to enhance the illusion of reality. This position apparently became dominant in 1977 when *Emmerdale Farm* ran the Queen's Jubilee story three months 'late' and the staff were rebuked by the Programme Controller. From that

time on, the attempt was made to establish correspondence and this was a real constraint on what was able to be shown in *Emmerdale Farm*.

Milking provided timelessness for the dominant rural stereotype through the daily cycle. The farming cycle made the seasons central to the same dimension. The various elements of the farming year, which production personnel conceived of as cycle, served many purposes. The presentation of farming in cycles each year not only stressed continuity[26], but also locked farming into eternal nature, making it an imperative in people's lives or as a metaphor for human affairs. Both of these devices of interference and metaphor were used in 1987.

In order to look at the construction of the *Emmerdale Farm* as it incorporates a seasonal cycle and so seeks both authenticity and connotative meaning, it is worth very briefly digressing into how dales farmers construct *their* rural existence in order to understand how the notion of cycle and seasons is a part of the meaning of farming and the rural to *them*. To a large extent, the seasonal cycle emphasis of *Emmerdale Farm*, though its meaning may be differently elaborated than for actual dales farmers, is grounded and therefore authenticated by activities which *do* follow in annually repeated sequences in the dales. Stories are also based on changes and concerns in these work sequences. Dales farming, particularly its visual aspects,[27] very much influences how farming is portrayed through a farming cycle in *Emmerdale Farm*.

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26. The seasonal cycle is so basic to the construction of the rural in the serial that the souvenir booklet for the fifteenth anniversary had a large section on the seasons, beginning with spring (Yorkshire Television 1987: 40-61).

27. The emphasis of the visual harks back to the importance of this dimension for establishing, denotatively and at the first level of authenticity, the dales as rural.

THE SEASONAL FARMING CYCLE IN THE YORKSHIRE DALES

WINTER

In the dales winter is generally the quiet part of the year, a holding operation. The dairy cows are "inside" where they will remain until May and the routines of feeding and mucking out shape the day, with milking providing a slow, even rhythm. The sheep, already in lamb are taken hay in their high pastures daily because of the lack of grass, providing a point of continuity with the past summer's activities; the hay is spoken of generally as a sign of farming competence and specifically as a reminder of the summer season and the actual occasion on which it was made.

Winter is severe in the dales, providing moments of excitement when heavy snow falls force farmers to move their ewes from high ground or stone walls to fall in. Generally, it is a time of expectation as farmers wait for spring, the time which produces the most important crop of the dales, lambs.

SPRING

Lambing is the main activity of Spring and greatly heightens the atmosphere for some time as the first dales lambs appear in February and the last as late as May. In lambing ordinary routines are suspended, with only the basics being done - milking of course must continue for those who are also dairy farmers. Lambing produces, as well as the continuing feeding of ewes who are generally now in fields closer to the farmstead, additional routines of checking and care which are geared to the possibility of things going wrong; difficult or still births in which the lambs will have to be pulled out, ewes refusing

to mother their lambs, deaths of ewes or lambs, sudden illness, lambs being caught in problem situations from which they must be rescued; the problems are legion. Now, the farmer's detailed knowledge of the flock stands him in good stead for seeing the ewes safely through lambing. Night and day merge into one long working day, and women and children may be brought in to help with the checking and care[28].

As each farmer's most intensive lambing stage passes, the frenzied atmosphere steadies and more routine care of the ewes and their lambs begins. For the next few weeks the ewes and lambs are moved from pasture to pasture, still often fairly low down, as they put on growth and gain strength, finally wherever possible being taken back up to the highest pastures the farmer owns. It is here that they will stay through the summer and into the autumn. The grass is fertilised to provide hay and silage and the excitement of lambing is followed by a hiatus; waiting for the grass to grow.

SUMMER

Summer is the busiest season of the year, with its success completely depending upon the weather. As always the weather is a dominant topic of all farmers' conversations. Throughout summer this dependence on the right weather, especially for dry days, gives an interesting rhythm to the passing of the weeks as farmers try to utilise good periods to their maximum. Summer therefore can look like periods of frantic activity at a wide range of necessary tasks, interspersed with quieter periods when more routine tasks are done.

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28. For some women there is even a source of income in buying pet lambs at the auction mart and raising them themselves for later sale as fat lambs.

During this part of the cycle the farmer has to be ready to alter plans, to interrupt routine, to make the best use of the weather for the necessary summer tasks.

Summer again finds farmers balancing stock and pasture, especially now that the cows, both dairy and suckler, are out again. What is of greatest concern now is grass for silage or hay, both of which are cut as soon as the grass is long enough, shorter for silage. This means that animals have to be kept out of meadows and fields which are going to be cut later, in order not to damage the grass. Speed is essential in mowing and processing, since this is halted by rain (though this is not always so for silage, which is part of its attraction for farmers). What happens now is critical for winter farming and inability to make hay in a poor summer with lots of rain means that all hay for winter feeding will have to be bought. This is the attraction of silage which is relatively new to the dales and rapidly increasing in importance, though farmers still make hay for the sheep.

With all work being done outside and fragmented holdings in the high dales meaning that farmers move through and past each other's land often, summer perfectly facilitates the co-operative social relationships which are important in dales farming. Neighbours will help each other gather the sheep or will lend dipping facilities. The time/space dimension of farming also means that farmers can constantly watch what each other is doing, checking their own progress against that of others, assessing the prowess of themselves and their fellow farmers, noting the success of a new procedure or the acquisition of a new piece of equipment or just simply for the joy of watching farming activities which are the centre of their existence, the focus of their identity in a community of like farmers.

With hay and silage making, the outside working day lengthens to cover all the hours of daylight, at least those once the dew is off. Meals are taken hurriedly, and snacks are pre-packed or brought out to the fields by those

women not involved. On these days, farmers work day after day to get the hay or silage in, in the same way that harvesting is done by the arable farmers[29]. The whole family will work at hay making and the routines of the farmstead are subordinated to outside farming activities.

Hay and silage making continue throughout summer whenever the weather and the grass are suitable. It, like all summer tasks involves extra labour, the nuclear family, other relatives, friends or casual paid labour being the possibilities. Clipping and dipping are other major tasks. They are done outside, may involve borrowing facilities (dipping) or contracting to have them done (clipping) and again the weather is all important, with the more routine work of the farm being done around these major tasks. During summer too, the lambs have their tails docked, wethers are castrated, ewes and lambs are doctored and injected, each of these involving the gathering of the flock. For arable farmers, summer also means harvesting, though this is often done using contractors. Often the fact that farmers add to the running of their farms a multitude of other activities - doing silage contracting, transport, farm labour for others, work at the auction mart, overseeing another farm, stock dealing or construction work - increases the pace of life in summer even further. Further, some farmers have responded to the rapid increase in tourism in the dales by providing bed and breakfast accomodation, camping sites, farm shops, farm tours and sheepdog demonstrations, though for most these are decidedly secondary occupations. The summer is the time of greatest and most varied activity and it is echoed in and the atmosphere further heightened by the greatly increased population as tourists flock into the dales.

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29. Although in the past strict Methodists apparently used to work aften dark on Saturdays to avoid working on Sunday, today farmers work on this generally quieter day of the week to make hay or silage if the weather is right.

AUTUMN

The most significant part of Autumn is the sale of the cross-bred lambs and the pure-bred ewes and tups (rams) which represents respectively the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. The female (gimmer) cross-bred Mule or Masham (the former is more popular) lambs are for many farmers their main income for the year and there is considerable excitement and mounting tension in the weeks leading up to the September sales. Preparation for the sales is time consuming as they are dipped and clipped to accentuate their conformation and facial features.

With autumn sales, the cycle comes to an end. But autumn is both an end and a new beginning, and the second kind of sale, later in autumn, symbolises this. These are the purebred sales, the sales which provide the Swaledale and Leicester sheep, the means of production, through which the Mules are bred. Thus, the two kinds of sale articulate with each other. Purebred ewes and tups are an end product for their breeders too, as well as a beginning for the buyers. These sales anticipate the final act of autumn which is also the beginning of the whole cycle, as the tups are put with the ewes to get them in lamb once again. For arable farmers it is also a beginning as the crops are sown. As both an end *and* a beginning, autumn sees the climax of the farming year and signals its slowing down as cows are brought in once more for winter and the tourists slowly disappear.

This is clearly a cycle which is responsive to the different seasons producing a very irregular year (Thompson 1967: 71). As such it is compelling for television personnel in a variety of ways. Particularly from the perspective of the urban dweller, it is what Thompson describes as a "more humanly comprehensible" form of labour (1967: 60), responding to the needs of a task and its time. Further,

there is less alienation, less division between labour and the day itself. Finally, for the medium of television, the seasons *visually* mark labour onto the landscape itself. The quiet, grey, walled landscape of winter gradually greens through spring, to be transformed into a green and yellow patchwork with the cutting of hay and silage in summer, subsiding into grey again through the browns and oranges of autumn. The dominance of the visual in the conceptualisation of rural place gives the seasons and their cycle a central place in *Emmerdale Farm*. We only need to consider *Emmerdale Farm*'s manifestation of one cycle based on the above dales farming cycle in order to trace the transformation between the two.

THE SEASONAL CYCLE IN *EMMERDALE FARM*

The serial tended to concentrate on the visuals of the activities themselves. Taken together, they fitted into the prevalent idea among personnel, that farming is marked by seasonal activities which must be shown, though one director expressed a worry about making such activities interesting year after year. At another level these activities generally operated to produce quite different kinds of meanings from those they hold for dales farmers. Sometimes activities were shown to provide drama in their own right, at others to point up the drama in another area. On still other occasions, they were more sketchily covered, simply locating the place of drama as broadly rural. These various dimensions will become clearer in the description of the 1987/1988 farming cycle for Emmerdale Farm.

Lambing went on for longer than would be normal - about 6 weeks. Lambing is always a feature of Emmerdale's cycle, partly because of its visual qualities and partly because it has the drama of new life for production people.

In 1987 lambing was used to generate drama in farming with a late night difficult birth, unusually on NY Estates. For Emmerdale it became part of the campaign against the threat to dump nuclear waste on the fell where the sheep of Emmerdale Farm were kept. Rather than lambing acting as a limit on political activities and keeping the farmers from taking part in the campaign, as would be most likely in the dales, the reverse happened and it became a sign of disruption of the norm, as ewes and lambs were lost because the Sugdens were away from the farm, campaigning. This metaphorical focus which used animals for heightening the drama of a quite different story is very much in keeping with the way in which many personnel, past and present have envisaged farming in the serial. Lambing thus helped to construct a timeless, animal dominated, rural stereotype though its dramatic import made it far more than just this.

As in the actual dales, it was summer in the serial which was most marked by farming tasks. In 1987 *Emmerdale Farm* showed silaging, clipping and dipping, only indicating haymaking through conversation, one of the many ways in which farming, especially topical developments, is often made into an ongoing preoccupation for the television farmers. Silaging, clipping and dipping all happened in the same story month, and the pressure which this engendered became a significant factor in a story about Annie the mother, having to go into hospital for an operation, a story which came about because of the actress's need to do just that. This meant that *Emmerdale* took the opportunity to focus on the labour needs of a farm, especially at busy times, something which is a very real consideration when planning the labour intensive summer tasks. Though the serial did, as the farmers do, get extra hands in for clipping, the narrative stressed disorder in the house in Annie's absence, here focusing on the crucial nature of the work of the farmer's wife in the house, labour harder to replace

than that of hands in the sheep pens. Of course this story was about the centrality of the mother and unity of family; here articulating the domestic and rural place within the drama.

Silaging was treated as an ongoing thing, serving to make the point that the labour of the farm must go on no matter what else is happening, that it is tied to cycles of nature. Thus is was not done in a block with long scenes, but rather used in short scenes which separated scenes about Annie getting ready to go and leaving and all kinds of other soap opera activities. The action of silaging helped here - there is something unrelenting about the cut grass being swept up by a machine and sprayed down into a catcher, as the tractor goes round and round a field. The serial presented this, correctly, as a two man operation with Jack and Jackie cooperating, one collecting the grass and the other using the tractor to press it down in the silage clamp.

Clipping was more complicated to set up, and required the use of experienced shearers as doubles for the actors. The director of this block was a New Zealander who had shearing experience himself, and he was so enthusiastic about the clipping scenes that he spent a lot of time getting them visually good as well as suitable to carry the narrative. All of the close-up clipping (powered[30]) was done in the pens at the farm by Trevor Bell and a professional shearer. Then the actors stepped in and clipped the sheep for the wide-shots. These were cut together in editing. Clipping was used for several things, for its farming content and visualness, to demonstrate just how busy they all were at this time of year and also for the humour which was generated by

30. In many parts of the dales clipping is only done by hand shears, with powered shears only being used to clean up the faces of the gimmer lambs before sale in the autumn. *Emmerdale Farm* was therefore representing clipping through the most up to date technology.

having an inexperienced friend, the local builder, to help them. Through him they made rural points about farming as skilled hard work, needing co-operation and involving routines which mean working through dinnertime and quite late until it is done. Here the daily cycle was subordinated to the annual one.

Dipping was treated far more casually, forming little more than a visually interesting backdrop to a conversation about the dump in one programme. Thus it featured only as a seasonal task. It was done as farming is often done on the serial; the farmers being discovered at a particular task, often by another character, and then after little more than a minute turning from the task to talk, the real point of the scene. *Emmerdale Farm* does this for authenticity. For them the most significant aspect of farmers is the work they do but since actors lack the expertise they often just use the visual image of Jackie or Matt at their task and then break into this with conversation. This is one of the reasons that the dales farmers criticise *Emmerdale*'s farmers for not working where they perceive themselves as working hard all of the time, but the dipping scenes had a new dimension for them to criticise. By turning away, Jackie left at least three sheep in the dipping tub which meant that firstly they had to fend for themselves in what is always a potentially dangerous situation and secondly he could not know whether they spent the compulsory minute in the dip. Then too, dipping is one of those jobs where farmers just keep going; there is no time to stop, nor is there the inclination with the pressure to get through, the stink of the dip and the worry that the weather might change.

The autumn tasks represented were the sales and harvesting. The sales happened at about the right time for the dales, but were not shown as sales, only the sorting of sheep into pens which the farmers do before. Harvesting happened very late indeed, in November at least two months after the production farmers had done theirs. This was because of narrative needs.

Harvesting was used to explore the relationship to the farm and each other of Jack and Matt, both very experienced farmers and share-holders in the farm. The story-line concerned the hiring of a combine and a lack of communication between the two of them such that they both hired one. It was a very small story, but one which was intended to set the scene for Matt inheriting a rundown farm on Emmerdale's borders. As lambing had symbolised trouble in the community, harvesting stood for discord on the farm itself. The discussions about it to an extent established a continuum, since they recalled past harvest procedures

This really took autumn into winter, and the only real winter task for the end of 1987 was the preparing of the poultry for the Christmas poultry auctions. Cycle is confined to a rural stereotype which has farming as its basis; the village itself never reflects this kind of understanding of time. The pub has no seasonal ebbing and flowing of trade as pubs in the dales do, and this is important as an omission, because what it means is that the crucial second industry of the dales, tourism, is rarely shown. The importance of tourism to the dales is not really new, so it is not just a failure of the production office to catch up with new developments which explains the lack of tourism. Rather the omission can be traced to the drawing of the farm and village as authentic, as exemplars of a rural England which would be diminished by allowing it to become the object of the tourist trade. Rural place is agriculture, nothing else, which is what sets up the tension between the family farm, Emmerdale Farm and that only other example of farming, the agri-business concern NY Estates.

Emmerdale Farm thus utilises seasonal activities in the dales to construct the cycle at the centre of their dominant rural stereotype. Farming in the dales *can* be conceptualised as a seasonal cycle which provides a good description of events through the farming year. But insofar as the notion of seasonal cycle can convey a kind of a closed system in operation and give a sense of changeless

time with renewal but no change, this focuses on nature's rhythm's in farming and so ignores its social construction. *Emmerdale Farm*'s use of cycle and continuity involves all of this, yet within the activities in the dales described above there is the shift to silage and to sheep sheds for wintering sheep which have altered both daily and seasonal routines and things like milk quotas and the buoyancy in sheep which has been aided by subsidies, which have altered the very forms and numbers of livestock which farmers keep. Dales farmers are only one part of a wider agricultural system which is not static.

Far from being a natural cycle, the farming cycle and the meaning which farmers attribute to the seasons and their interrelationship through farm work is socially constructed. Though the seasons have pertinence in an explanation of why farmers do things when they do them, though there is a relationship between farm work and the seasons which orients tasks to those seasons in all kinds of ways, this must not be seen to be a seasonally determined and natural cycle.[31] The work that farmers do, even the nature of the farm enterprise itself is socially constructed. Farmers produce what they can most economically produce in a capitalist environment, using methods and technologies which are changing all of the time. Further, too great an emphasis on seasons, on nature, ignores the fact that *nature* itself is the social construction of the relationship between humans and their physical environment, the meaning of which may change. It also obscures the degree to which the dales themselves are a human construct, shaped by the agricultural and mining (social) activities of generations of human beings. Finally, it focuses a presentation of dales farming on the relations between farmer and 'nature'. Farmers do understand farming as working with,

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31. Of course, even the seasons themselves are social rather than natural constructions, conceptually dividing up the physical world which is not so divided (cf Bourdieu 1987: 97-109).

and against, nature but they *also* formulate it as a deeply social thing. This is lost in the serial's presentation. These are all consequences of the transformation of farming from the social to the natural in the serial via the reification of the seasons in cyclic time.

For dales farmers farming is social in the meanings attributed to it and the relations with others embedded in it. The cycle *is* significant in farmers' constructions of what they do, linking their stereotypes of the rural with those of *Emmerdale Farm*. They are though intensely aware of the human side of the farming cycle, despite the centrality of that incalculable component, the weather. Farmers therefore are constantly looking *forward* to the next task, to the time of sale or the harvest. The continuum which this constructs interrelates the social with nature.

The past is a concrete part of this continuum. Again it is social and enters the present and the future as memories of past good and bad seasons, times of ill luck, the acquisition of new machinery or land or land-marks in the wider agricultural system like the milk quotas are used to assess this year's performance. These memories will not be confined to the individual farmer speaking. In relating the past to the present and the future, he will range widely, comparing his experience with that of other farmers, remembering comic moments, using someone else's experience to make a point about his own present season, remembering his neighbouring land when so and so had it; always locating himself within a wider community of like farmers.

Thus the continuum is both backward and forward looking and, in a movement which is the opposite of *Emmerdale Farm*, the experience of change breaks the limiting capacity of cycle on the future. It is only the generally negatively valorised secondary rural stereotype, constructed through NY

Estates as agribusiness which carries future time in the serial. Otherwise the future focuses on personal relationships.

NY ESTATES AND THE SECONDARY RURAL STEREOTYPE

NY Estates holds an ambiguous position in encoding the rural. In its opposition to Emmerdale Farm it ultimately becomes almost non-rural in the way that it functions. It represents the trend of the nineteen seventies of finance capital replacing the old established order of the squirearchy, taking over the spaces and superficially the working relations but never the social relations in the wider area of the village and countryside. Its routines are those of an office and its concerns are with profits and the management of a labour force, all things which connote meanings other than the rural in the serial.

At the same time, NY is still about farming, its major temporal dimension being the future, progress, efficiency of method. Joe Sugden's association with NY gives this something of a positive valence, but in 1987 the discourses in which this stereotype appeared most often presented it negatively. An Emmerdale Farm/NY Estates opposition particularly constituted a crucial method for exploring rural issues in the serial in 1987, and ultimately generated a far wider critique of Britain under Thatcher.

NY Estates thus serves as the focus of a technology based, future oriented rural stereotype which remains secondary to and confirming of, the dominant timeless rural stereotype which forms around Emmerdale Farm. The village of Beckindale also generates another chronotopically constructed stereotype of rural place, one which is located in discourses which are different from, but nonetheless overlap, the rural stereotypes based in farming.

Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates are very much identified with particular people, the Sugdens and Skilbecks at Emmerdale and Mr Turner, Mrs Bates the secretary plus Seth, Jock and Bill as the workforce at NY. As farming, they establish the rural place of occupation, of agriculture. The village of Beckindale functions as the place of identity for *all* of the programme's characters, particularly in its major symbols of pub and church (there is no chapel). Through them, the farm family too becomes part of the village.[32] This is village as community, a linch-pin of the rural constructed in opposition to the urban. Community, another significant stereotype of rural place is constituted socially by individual, representative social types; the farm family, the publican, the retired incomer, the estate manager, the game-keeper and so on.

Through the village is constructed a rural stereotype of place which is very conscious of the past. Thus the Sugdens are perceived to have lived at Emmerdale for a thousand years! (Yorkshire Television 1987: 7), Emmerdale Farm is to be found in the Doomsday Book and in 1987 the church as symbol of the village celebrated *its* one thousandth anniversary. This creation of an ancient history has no part in the other major continuing serials and must be seen as a part of the construction of *Emmerdale Farm* as rural place within a general contention about the longevity of the countryside and the contrast between city and country. This is not the past living in the present and in space itself, through remembered people, places and events, as we saw in the actual dales. This seldom happens in *Emmerdale Farm* and only the most recent past

32. Village shows, participation in the annual best kept village competition and cricket matches with rival villages have all focused on this village identity.

is regularly spoken of in the pub or on the farm. Rather this is the past reified, the thing by which the rural is positively valorised.

The pub is domestic space if one considers Longhurst's comments about the 'privateness' of 'public' places in soap opera. Women do enter it alone and people gather to chat in ways similar to their behaviour in their own living rooms (Longhurst 1987). But the producers have also always seen it as an important element and authenticator of this as a rural place, as the following reply in response to a complaint that the characters spend too much time in the pub makes clear:

> It is the nature of a rural community that there are few meeting places in which people encounter each other on a day to day basis in circumstances which don't relate to their work directly. Public Houses have fulfilled this role in such communities for centuries - why should one fictional village be different? (3.4.87)).

Without restaurants or cafes, laundrettes or hotels as authentic gathering places in the rural place, the characters of *Emmerdale Farm* are left with the pub, and this producer sees this as a perfectly reasonable reflection of what happens in the dales. It is interesting to see this evocation of 'the real' to justify this element of the serial when the same verification is so often spurned in other contexts. The pub feels right in terms of the construction of a rural place, and here it is important that dales people *do* meet in the pub.

In *Emmerdale Farm* the ruralness of the village is further emphasised by the presence of a market town which at times is made to stand for the present and the urban from whence all evils in the serial come. Hotten, the third and final kind of settlement which constructs rural space in the serial is ambiguous, as befits the very edge of the (rural) inside of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. The Auction Mart signals it as, to an extent, still rural, located in

agriculture; the small country town which as Williams says falls somewhere between urban and rural (1985), but Hotten is more urban than rural in its connotative meaning. Interestingly in British culture; in newpapers, television plays and even the presentation of the news, the small town often retains some of the supposed virtues of the country.[33] In contrast, in *Emmerdale Farm* Hotten as town has quite often been used to stand for urban influences, exemplifying the kinds of wrongs which are seen to characterise *modern* Britain, unemployment, family breakdown, violence or theft and conmanship. Here the crucial contrast is between village and town. Spatially and temporally, Hotten marks the edge of the rural place and, through typification, provides the contrast which serves to emphasise the village as the epitome of the rural.

Emmerdale Farm conforms to Longhurst's inside/outside division as it constructs a strongly developed inside world, the coherence of which is ensured through consistency and continuity (Chapters Two and Three). Within the text of the serial, the outside world is poorly theorised, at best sketchily drawn. The outside serves as a 'them' who generate the issues which are then explored in personal and community terms. This was particularly true of both the nuclear dump and the recession which formed parts of the story in 1987. At other times outside has been another place, the city, Leeds, Lincoln, London or Italy as opposed to Emmerdale Farm which is rural and this outside has invariably been the source of social evils.[34] This tallies with Longhurst's point that the outside is

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33. One perfect example of this was the way in which reports of the Hungerford 'massacre' in which Michael Ryan stalked and killed 15 people in the small market town of Hungerford found the horror magnified by the 'quiet' and 'peace' of its countryside setting (see Geoffrey Smith's article "Time must blur this nightmare" which comments on this aspect of the popular perception of Hungerford, in *The Sunday Times* 23.8.87: 23).

34. See for example past stories about stock thefts (in *Young Passions* (Lee MacKenzie1985)), rape (in*Innocent Victim* (Lee MacKenzie 1981)), throwing labourers out of tied cottages (in *Good Neighbours* (Lee MacKenzie 1981)), all of which derived their main offender from the city, never from Emmerdale Farm or Beckindale. Even the

usually disturbing (1987: 642) but this structural feature of *Emmerdale Farm* comes from a reformulation of the inside/outside opposition as the rural/urban, in which the rural is inside and the urban is outside. This elaboration sets *Emmerdale Farm* apart from other continuing serials in Britain.

It is the dialogue between the domestic and rural place which constructs the total environment, the inside, of *Emmerdale Farm*, the place of its fictional world. In this rural serial, soap opera's basic domestic place is encompassed by the rural, itself constructed as stereotypes, in ways which alter its content and meaning, though not its centrality to the narrative as it unfolds through the personal. At the same time, the interactions between the needs of 'drama' (especially 'good drama'), realism and the soap opera form, the domestic place and stereotype mean that rural issues are often depoliticised, certainly personalised as they are raised within the serial form. Further, the generation of differently valorised rural stereotypes, not only has implications for the possible interpretations of these rural issues but, more importantly, is crucial in the meanings generated as the serial raises questions about Thatcher's Britain within the soap opera form.

CONCLUSION

The fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* is therefore the rural, constituted in contradictory ways through the three stereotypes of rural place within the terms of the rural/urban discourse in which the rural is defined, and its domination authorised, in opposition to the urban. Indeed the stereotypes are

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serial's token unemployed person, Archie Brooks, comes from Hotten the town rather than Beckindale village.

part of this discourse and their different valorisations enable the rural location to develop different meanings as the serial interrogates the political field through rural issues. Through its interconnections with other codes and meanings in culture this is a rural with flexibility as it is interconnected with other discourses in British culture and politics. Several other spatial factors are politically significant for this flexibility. The important category of 'region' carrying meaning which varies itself with its historical context we have already seen. The category and its meaning are contested within this historical process.

Further, and equally contested in terms of meaning, this is a rural which is also the North, not the South which is the most usual image of rural England (Wiener 1981). The location is Yorkshire and the dialect is broadly Northern even where actual dales accents are not achieved. This characterisation further informs things like the down-to-earthness of Annie Sugden or the honesty and industry of Matt Skilbeck as dales types. This North versus South overlaying a rural versus urban characterisation has been part of the ongoing dialogue about the serial from its earliest days when the then Programme Controller wanted to locate the serial in Yorkshire but also in the countryside to counter the industrial image of the North. The theme recurs in newspaper articles about the serial:

> Northerners love it because it reflects their own village ponds. And they nag at the programme and stick their expert advice into the arguably wrong way Emmerdale dips its sheep (Rook in the *Daily Express* 11.11.85: 9).

The same article quotes Richard Thorp (characterised as a Southerner) who plays Alan Turner commenting on how the serial countered his stereotypical view of Yorkshire:

> Before I joined Emmerdale I thought Yorkshire was a load of derelict factories held up by damp sheep.

The implication is that working on the serial has helped to change his conception, as it will do for viewers.

The makers of the programme are aware of the regional and Northern content of the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. Indeed, this identity is something which they hold in common with the actual dales farmers even though their experience is urban rather than rural. Personnel too live and work in Yorkshire and the North and, for people who are interested in and critical of the developments in Britain both professionally and personally, these historically changing categories provide ways in which to contemplate Thatcherism. As well read people located in the North, television personnel are responsive to media reports about Britain's uneven development under Thatcher (indeed under any leader (Soja 1985: 118, Warde 1985: 201)), the enriching of the south-east with the increasing dominance of finance capital and the development of the new industries and the continuing running down of industry and services in the North, especially the old industrial centres and the strongholds of the Labour vote. London is the centre and to work in Yorkshire is still, in the parlance of the BBC to be located "in the regions".[35] Thus many television professionals will ultimately aspire to work in the South; certainly if they become free-lance workers they often re-locate to be closer to the centre of "the action". Indeed, here the series production office personnel can be seen as holders of cultural capital processing information from a variety of sources,

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35. *Nationwide* is a good example of how the category "region" operates here. Nationally important news generally comes from London and the programme crosses to the various regions in order to uncover more "local" stories. For more on this see "Everyday Television: *Nationwide*" by Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley (1981).

information which is given a particular potency by their own participation in the differentiation between the North and the South both in terms of life chances and perception.

Finally, the spatial category of nation is also relevant to the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*. Certainly it is available to be employed for certain narratives. In 1987 the most notable story to do this contrasted Britain to Italy, in a way made more interesting by the fact that both countries are part of the EEC, so strongly criticised by Thatcher and the farmers. Indeed the terms of the contrast in the story accorded well with some of the content of this criticism as Britain was drawn as young, egalitarian, vigorous and progressive. In contrast Italy was old, decadent, class-ridden, rigid, stagnant, inefficient and backward looking. In a metaphor which appropriately was located in farming, the aristocratic ideal figure who stood for Italy was discovered by Joe Sugden, energetic, new technologically able farmer businessman to have allowed his olive groves to die without replacing the old trees! This was one time in 1987 when progress in farming was unambiguously positively valorised through NY, although as always the focus on Joe Sugden made this mechanism complex.[36]

These categories and their wide, contested meanings enable the serial to do many things through its construction of rural stereotypes. We have already seen how meanings can be constructed through the dialogue between the domestic and the rural. The serial can also develop stories and explore themes and issus through various kinds of relations between the part, here the rural, the North, the periphery, any or all of these, and the whole, Britain. The part and the

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36. This is an interesting anomoly, since it could be understood to be located within farmers' discourses about the role of Britain in the EEC, in which they see British farmers being discriminated against for being more modern and efficient than their continental colleagues (see Chapter Five). This discourse seldom features in *Emmerdale Farm*, since the EEC is never a real part of their presentation of farming.

whole may be collapsed, with the dales as the rural standing for the whole. In this process something far greater than the dales is implicated in a story, but it is given authenticity and power (as well as intensified or even different meaning) through the presentation of the dales as the location. Here, the dales is made to stand for the whole, but the grounding of the serial in the dales gives added potency and involvement to the process, because the dales is a named place in Britain. Through the fictionalisation of the dales, Britain wide problems of human relationships as well as ideas about change are played out and given the kind of "flesh and blood" immediacy which drama's personal perspective brings to statistically recorded information. In doing this, *Emmerdale Farm*'s version of the dales incorporates elements which would never be seen in the actual dales of 1987.

In the process of the part standing for the whole, it is highly significant that Britain is presented through the rural (and perhaps too, the North). This is 'natural' humankind; people at their best and most basic (Newby 1985, Shoard 1987) who are being affected by the negative side of social change in the nineteen eighties. This will be a matter of concern for the rest of the thesis and we will find that because of the dominant rural stereotype such a perspective in 1987 was ultimately conservative, even at times reactionary (a political perspective which is encapsulated in the philosophy of Jack Sugden as he opposed both agribusiness and the nuclear dump) and at the same time a powerful opposition to Thatcher's brand of conservatism. The rural is enabled as a stand-point for a critique of Thatcherism, precisely because of its construction within discourses about the rural versus the urban.

The regionalism and the rural location of the serial also therefore allow for *Emmerdale Farm* to establish its fictional world as separate from the whole, to set up an opposition, even an antagonism, between parts of the whole. This is

as enabling for *Emmerdale Farm* as it is constraining, creating important possibilities for exploration and endowing stories with meaning outside of the obvious implications of the narrative's constructions. The dominance of the rural in the serial also means that the social dramas which are the essence of soap opera must be explored through stories and themes which are perceived as appropriate to the serial's rural setting. Thus the overarching themes of in 1987 were agricultural overproduction and the dumping of nuclear waste. It was through these that the production office both constructed its version of Thatcher's Britain and commented on it. That this represents a constraining factor of the rural is clear when one constrasts this construction of Britain in 1987 with that of *EastEnders* which had running through it the transformation of the East End of London with the yuppie development of Dockland and the struggles of the working class to avoid eviction as well as the problems of unemployment and the social problems associated with the economic situation.

In order to discover just how *Emmerdale Farm* participates in political processes it is necessary to explore the kind of specificity established in this constrast with *EastEnders*. The rurally located fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* is both constraining and enabling for this participation and it is important to establish just how this is so. Further, in this regard it is important to trace the connections between part and whole which the serial establishes and the significance of this to any commentary on Thatcher's Britain. To this end, the next three chapters take three rural issues and explore how they were constructed and contested in the dales and then trace the transformation of this in *Emmerdale Farm*'s constructions. It is then possible to draw conclusions about the serial's participation in wider political processes and the way in which its rural location gives crucial meanings to this participation. The three issues

are agricultural overproduction, the environment and the changing demographic composition of the countryside.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMMERDALE FARM AND AGRICULTURAL OVERPRODUCTION IN THE 1980S

PRELIMINARY REMARKS TO CHAPTERS FIVE, SIX AND SEVEN

In 1987 the serial *Emmerdale Farm* was built up, constructed, within a general climate of the rural in Britain as a place in crisis. There were three dimensions to this definition of crisis. First overproduction and rural recession, a situation in which production exceeded the needs of the market, leading to EEC wide surpluses and the 'blow-out' of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) while farmers in most sectors of the industry were battling diminishing farm incomes with less and less room for manoeuvre. The second dimension highlighted the environmental effects of capitalist farming as the countryside increasingly came to be understood as a place which was being irrevocably changed by modern farming practices. Allied to this was a rural population which was altering demographically with technology replacing labour, leading to changing settlement patterns often understood as the general depopulation of the countryside.

Emmerdale Farm in 1987 constructed a fictional rural world which included all three of these dimensions. As such it can be considered to be both reacting to other constructions of rural crisis, and itself becoming part of the overall construction, confirming its facticity and through drama, adding the personal dimension. Personnel's perceived need to respond to "what was happening in the countryside" not only obscured the constructedness of rural crisis, but was also confirming of rural stereotype, of the rural as a unique place. Such a view also underpinned the three dimensions of rural

crisis in the national arena. Overproduction resulted from the post war perception of the specialness of food production and the need to protect farmers' incomes; environmental concerns clearly proceed from the countryside being understood as different from, better than, cities and a national heritage; the fear of rural depopulation represents a concern that something essential about the countryside will disappear with the working rural community and has never been equalled by anxiety for urban communities.

One dimension of the construction of rural crisis in *Emmerdale Farm*'s fictional world thus worked through rural stereotype which confirmed the dominant stereotype of the rural discussed in Chapter Four. This was a positively valorised rural which took form within discourses in which the rural was not just opposed to the urban but was significantly unique in an urbanised Britain. Such a stereotype enabled another dimension as the serial used the rural to construct a particular 1980s Britain. The issues involved in rural crisis locked the serial's fictional world into the Britain in which the viewers, and producers, lived and their rendering of that world through the rural gave particular meanings to the interrogations of Thatcher's Britain which were an ongoing part of production and representation. To explore how these three dimensions of the rural crisis were constructed in *Emmerdale Farm* in 1987 therefore goes much further than exploring the uses and consequences of using stereotype to construct the rural. It enables us to expose the particular interrogations of British society being made and their significance in the political struggles over questions about how Britain is and how it should be - hegemonic struggles which television programmes engage in through representation.

The next three chapters will consider in turn each of these three dimensions in the construction of the rural in crisis in Britain. The last three chapters have demonstrated that what the rural is for *Emmerdale Farm* is

partly made up of the ideas and practices which constitute a very contradictory, even contentious rural in British society, and partly constructed from the conventions and genre of soap opera. *Emmerdale Farm*'s rural place is constituted at the point of articulation of these two strands of construction. Rural issues became major stories for *Emmerdale Farm* in 1987 because they constituted part of what the countryside was in 1987, because they provided good vehicles for drama and because they were seen as good stories.

Though these stories were partly shaped by these imperatives of production, their content was also dependent on constructions of overproduction, environmental issues and the problem of rural depopulation in rural areas, in Parliament and select committee rooms, within specialist organisations and in other media representations. As well as how the serial rendered British society through one segment of the whole, the issues make it possible to explore further the process of representation as a whole. Here, rather than the focus being on the production process as a mechanism in the *process* of representation, the issues will enable us to explore representation as also a *relationship* underpinning that process - a relationship between constructions, images and practices.

These three chapters explore the construction of overproduction and rural recession, degradation of the environment by farming practices and the depopulation of the countryside in *Emmerdale Farm* against the other dominant constructions of these issues which together made up the general climate of the rural being in crisis. The thesis thus conceptualises a multifacetted discourse of crisis which can be used to see how different constructions interrelate to constitute the whole discourse and how transformations between constructions are produced according to the different conditions of their production, different interests, needs and political locations. In all cases the constructions of the dales farmers themselves will

be included, since without these it is impossible to comprehend the full political field of each issue, and how *each* construction is political. Without them, the area most implicated in *Emmerdale Farm*'s contribution to the overall construction of rural crisis is absent, and one cannot appreciate the significance of the particular rendering of the problem which the serial is making.

OVERPRODUCTION AND RURAL RECESSION

INTRODUCTION

As 1987 saw a national concern with the state of agriculture, so did the farmers of *Emmerdale Farm* experience a crisis. The state of agriculture in 1987, particularly the rural recession which was bound up in the overproduction problem, was one of the two long running stories of 1987, covering many blocks of programmes and so dealt with by several writers and production teams. The story's longevity meant that rural recession served as a background to many other storylines. In consequence *Emmerdale Farm* itself constructed an ongoing version of agriculture in difficulties and, in taking up the idea of crisis, became part of the national characterisation of agriculture as in crisis. This chapter will explore the way in which these stories of rural recession developed and the consequences they had for *Emmerdale Farm*'s rendering of British society.

The serial's rural recession was both a construction and an exploration which involved a process of selection and it is instructive to consider what was included and what excluded by that selection process. This chapter locates *Emmerdale Farm*'s construction of a crisis in agriculture among other dominant constructions from which it was partially derived and which it confirmed. To establish the full significance of the serial's

construction, the chapter also compares this construction (and the other dominant constructions) with the understandings and experiences of dales farmers in the nineteen eighties and the discourses in which these were contested. Through this comparison the chapter concludes that, despite the implications of most dominant constructions, there was no one phenomenon of rural recession based on overproduction and that the version constructed in *Emmerdale Farm*, though it tended to coincide with the terms of the dominant Thatcherite model, at various points also contested those terms, adding other dimensions which were significant in a critique of British society as a whole.

CONSTRUCTING THE OVERPRODUCTION CRISIS

In 1987 there was a common claim in the media, by political parties and government, by farming organisations and farmers themselves that British agriculture, indeed that of the whole EEC, was in crisis. Key commodities like dairy products and cereals were being grossly overproduced under the dual impulses of the drive to increase production to offset possible future downturns in the market and the push to maximise profits by taking advantage of British government and EEC grants and pricing policies which rewarded quantity. For the individual farmer, the situation varied with region and commodity produced and the crisis was experienced as falling real farm incomes with less and less room to manoeuvre.

These were the main features of the hard-pressed agricultural system as it was presented to the public; the basics of a national, media dominated construction of agriculture in a recession associated with an overproduction crisis. In a nation in which over 98% of the population is urban based, most people learned about agriculture not through direct experience, but through

the media presentation of rural matters (cf Smith 1974). Both national and farming media emphasised the fact that most products were in surplus, costing millions of pounds to the government and the EEC.[1] All positions showed that farmers were, despite subsidies, grants and increasing production, suffering falling real incomes and that each year more farmers left the industry.

The dominant construction of this dimension of the rural crisis was contained within the field of economics as debates about measures to reduce surpluses ranged widely over financial incentives to bring down farmers' production and devices and alternatives to alleviate the economic consequences of such incentives for individual farmers. In all sections of the media an important aspect of the construction of crisis was the quantitative representation of the surplus and the money needed to fund it. This was, in part, because the effects of overproduction were extremely visible as 'food mountains' built up (OECD 1987). Not only was this evidence of a crisis in the system of agriculture but the financial implications for Britain and the EEC were enormous. Farmers were being subsidised to produce quantities of cereals and dairy products which were so much in excess of EEC needs that millions of pounds then had to be spent to store the fruits of overproduction. By 1987 the bill for food and agricultural support had reached 2.5 billion pounds annually (*Guardian* 14.2.87: 1) and was threatening to bankrupt the EEC whose projected deficit for 1987-88 year was 4,000 ecu (European Currency Units) or 4 billion pounds (*The Times* 24.4.87: 4; *Independent* 27.11.87: 1). On the BBC's *Farming* programme in November 1987, Brian Gardner of Agro Europe in Brussels, predicted that

1. T.K. Marsden et al tell us that in Britain "by 1980, 40% of the farming industry's income, excluding the indirect benefits accruing to owners through the rising price of land, were paid for by the state" (1987: 300).

the CAP would be out of money by the middle of 1988 if support for farmers was not severely and immediately cut.

Despite appearing as an economic problem, overproduction and rural recession were constructed within a discourse dominated by the state and the Thatcher Government. The latter particularly (Mrs Thatcher was a major protagonist) continually operated as a major contestant in the debate, indeed in the actual construction of events as crisis. 1987 saw a struggle in which the Government sought to get the country, and the rest of Europe, not just to accept a particular construction of the state of agriculture, that of "crisis", but, to use Hall's words for a wider context, to ensure that the crisis was "'lived' in *its* terms" (1983: 30). That is, by playing a major role in the discourses in which the agricultural crisis was defined and contested, the Government strongly pushed particular views about how it should be solved. The very definition of agriculture as being in *crisis* contained within it the imperative that some action *had* to be taken, that things had to change.[2]

As with the miners' strike, the Government was a major source of information and generator of news worthy events in the political struggles over overproduction and rural recession. At times there was a tendency for the situation to be defined in the Government's terms but where there was no ambiguity in the metaphors and characterisations used by Thatcher to construct the miners, there was considerable ambiguity in the constructions of the farmers, and much room for contestation.

Because the system of agriculture in Britain is itself politically constructed, this confers a certain importance on government and state which was responsible for instituting arrangements for the development and

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2. The imperative built into the definition of agriculture as in crisis here is akin to the feature of the Japanese government's strategies for the nuclearization of Japan in which, as Hook notes, the metaphor "nuclear allergic" which was used to characterise opponents of the policies also carried with it, through medical discourse, the need to affect a cure (1984).

continuity of agriculture and, importantly, for funding them. A brief summary of how agriculture is constructed will illuminate the political processes which produced particular, contesting views of the state of agriculture and what needed to be done.

Since the 1930s British agriculture has been protected, an extension of protection granted to industry, and from the late 1940s state involvement in agriculture was increased. The food shortages of the Second World War prompted post-war governments to establish a system of agriculture which was both efficient and aimed at self-sufficiency (Shoard 1980, 1987, Lowe et al 1986, Newby 1985). Policies were developed to guarantee farmers a level of income which would encourage them to expand and to fulfil the politically necessary food production at a reasonable cost to keep prices comparatively low.

Constructions of the crisis in the *farming* press focused on agriculture as a political construction, at the same time contesting the Government's and the EEC's economic construction of the situation when they stressed that it was politicians, not farmers, who were to blame for any crisis. Many farming writers and broadcasters accepted something would have to be done but they rendered it a strictly political issue and there was an expectation that the government (and the EEC) would give the farmers direction. Some examples from the farming press indicate these kinds of arguments:

> Politicians should remember that surpluses are their fault...Had they taken decisions when they should have done - and not backed off in the selfish interests of winning elections - the industry would not have been in the position it is now. To blame farmers for being too efficient is an insult for the hard work of the industry and to the intelligence of everyone...Farmers should not be expected to pay the price for earlier political prevarication (*Farmers Guardian* 2.1.87: 1).

> "I would remind those who now say cut that the common agricultural policy crisis is not of our making. Agriculture was the most planned UK industry and only responded to the instructions given, yet

governments can wash their hands of it" (Country Landowners' Association president, John Norris, in *Farmers Weekly* 24.7.87: 17).

I wish politicians would understand that it was their policies which led to the expansion and that we need time to adjust. We need a blue print for the future....Until they do produce a plan we are simply going to stagger from one crisis to another until a balance of production and consumption is achieved (*Darlington and Stockton Gazette* 27.12.86:17).

And in the new mood of realism sweeping Europe that food surpluses can no longer be countenanced politically, there is a danger that new policies can swing too far and too fast (*Farmers Guardian* 16.1.87: 1).

It was a political mess and politicians could solve it - without harming individual farmers.

The above quotations, by linking the maximising of production to political needs of government and state, focus on the politics of overproduction. They deny the way in which expanding production was also part of the logic of capitalist farming in specific market conditions. This drive contributed to the problems of the individual farmer struggling to overcome falling real farm incomes and, in turn, fed back into the politics of trying to find a solution to overproduction. The imperative for individuals to farm as accumulation, at certain levels of profit (not the same for all), was out of step with the needs and capacity to pay of the nation, and the EEC. This dimension of the crisis was sometimes pursued more clearly in the general media than in specialist farming communications. In the general media, overproduction could link falling farm incomes and degradation of the environment by capitalist farming practices and associated rural social problems (see Chapter Six). Ian Bradley argued that:

It is becoming increasingly clear to more and more British electors that the highly industrialised and concentrated form of agriculture which is practised in this country more than in any other EEC state is not only producing too much food but doing untold damage to the rural

> environment and diminishing employment (to) opportunities in the countryside (*The Times* 11.2.87:12).

The article goes on to consider the value of less intensive farming methods. The same issues are central to a three part consideration of farming in the *Independent* by Richard North, in which he discusses their relationship to the imperatives of capitalist farming in an era of diminishing returns. He individualised the issue by using the case of one farmer to give depth and identity to the broad problems and he quotes him saying "'I cannot afford a single acre to be idle. I have no choice but to make the fields work as hard as I can. I need top yields'" (20.1.87: 15). North comments:

> This is the bind in which farmers and conservationists find themselves. There are anxieties that nitrogenous fertilisers, a vital input for farmers, are damaging drinking water supplies. But as they face declining profit margins on each tonne of crop, farmers can only surge on, maximising chemical-use as they try to maintain income (*Independent* 20.1.87: 15).

Thus the non-farming media tended to look at the *countryside* as much as farming, linking agriculture with environment and at the same time identifying some of the compulsions which lead farmers to continue to increase production, even as government, state and EEC struggled to reduce it.

What complicated the politics of agriculture and overproduction enormously, producing a multifacetted Government construction of the crisis, was that Britain could no longer tackle its problems in agriculture as a nation, since it had been, from 1973, part of the EEC. In fact, it was within the context of the EEC that there *was* an overproduction problem of crisis proportions. At the centre of this problem was the cost of the CAP within the overall budget of the EEC.

Britain's entry into the EEC in 1973 changed the boundaries of trade and production for British agriculture. EEC membership altered the

parameters in which production was thought of and in which trade presented opportunities and limits for individual producers. Cheap imports from countries like Australia were cut. The EEC controlled market encouraged British farmers to increase production since they now had a market for their produce. Between 1973 and 1984 British cereal production for example increased from 13 million tons to 26 and a half millions tons and from under to over supply in cereals, leaving 8 million tons for export (*Darlington and Stockton Gazette* 27.12.86: 17). Further, measures like intervention buying (the EEC sets a floor price for cereals and undertakes to buy any whose price falls below this floor) guaranteed the sale of agricultural products regardless of their quantity (or quality in many cases), while new subsidies and grants made increased production profitable in itself. In this way the EEC sought to guarantee farm income and altered the definition of supply and demand. Not only did this increase efficiency and production but, free from the exigencies of an unpredictable market and in a situation of managed demand, farmers pursued methods which pushed levels of production increasingly upwards, except for bad seasons.

The efforts of the nineteen eighties to cut the costs of the CAP by reducing farm output and the costs incurred by the EEC represented yet another redefinition of demand, this time to reduce the role of intervention buying and farm support. At the same time these moves introduced new political struggles and extended the range of contestation over the construction of agricultural crisis and therefore what needed to be done. This area of contestation introduced ambiguity into the relationship between the Government and the British farmers; at times, where Thatcher and her Ministers insisted on strong measures being taken immediately, confirming their separation but also uniting them when Britain was seen to be being penalised for greater efficiency and productivity. Dubbed in media and political spheres as the imposition of an "economic reality" or the principles

of "supply and demand", these measures further deployed understandings about the desirability of the free market dominant in Thatcherite politics.

The EEC was the focus of much of the coverage of the agricultural crisis in both the general and farming media in ways which brought Britain into conflict with the EEC. As a major political issue the economics of the CAP, through the doings of the European Commission in Brussels dominated one view of the problem. In Britain some parts of the media played out a xenophobia with British farmers being discriminated against:

> We won the war in 1945 but have lost our industry and our independence through politicians and bureaucrats to the EEC...and they have not even fired a bullet (*Darlington and Stockton Gazette* 25.4.87: 17).

> UK farmers, whose incomes have deteriorated further than those in any other EC country, would still be severely handicapped. The exchange rate for agriculture must be brought much closer in line with the market rate (Simon Gourlay of the NFU in *Farmers Guardian* 20.2.87).

> We must make sure that our efficiency in grain production - as in milk and sheepmeat - is not penalised by EEC discrimination (*Farmers Weekly* 23.10.87: 1).

Time and again Brussels was portrayed as actually working for the benefit of the "lazy" and "less productive" French farmers.

Although media debates mostly accepted without question a crisis of overproduction and the need to do something about it by cutting back on production, the coverage makes it clear that this was a crisis which was generated through a particular political and economic organisation. There was clearly no *world* surplus of food in the era of "Band-Aid", only countries which could not afford to buy the food produced. There was not even overproduction of most agricultural products in Britain itself (cereals are a notable exception (*Darlington and Stockton Gazette* 27.12.86: 17)) but just

as in the post war period, levels of production had been determined by the British state, now it was the EEC which determined acceptable levels of production. The issue was a political one.

In Britain, EEC problems coincided with the Thatcherite ideals of free-market policies and reduction of state intervention in all industry. From the rest of British industry, Thatcher now turned her attention to agriculture, declaring early in 1987 that:

> It helps no one for resources to be wasted in producing unsaleable surpluses which then have to be stored and disposed of at huge expense to the taxpayer (*Guardian* 14.2.87: 1).

In this one could see an example of the Government, through the state, constructing the situation as the representative of the whole, the nation, against the part, the farmers (Sparks 1981: 81). In this dimension of the discourse through which the rural crisis was contested, a different stereotype was presented this time of greedy farmers, growing rich at the taxpayer's expense and throwing the EEC into crisis. This was bitterly resented by farmers and formed a large part of the correspondence to the *Farmers Guardian* and the *Farmers Weekly*. It became an important stereotype in the construction of rural crisis and overproduction through agribusiness in *Emmerdale Farm*.

Thatcher's "economic realism", a particular understanding of the concept of "supply and demand" which was prominent in most constructions of crisis at the national level, was later to earn her the jibes of other member countries' leaders, who talked about her "shop-keeper mentality", as she sought to cut community spending in agriculture still further (*Guardian* 10.3.87: 8). Despite their strong tendency to blame politicians for any crisis, the farming papers also reproduced Thatcherite attitudes, both through officials, like John MacGregor the Minister of Agriculture, giving the

Government position and through the contributions of those farmers who had come to construct the crisis within the Government's terms. This strand built on the "supply and demand" emphasis of Thatcher's above statement and focused on the need for the market to control production. Thus, the *Farmers Weekly* reported MacGregor supporting price stabilisers to control the CAP payments to farmers on the ground that the more "normal" operation of the market beyond a certain cut off point in the quantity of production would quickly educate farmers about over-production (13.11.87: 13). The paper also carried the views of a farmer from Norfolk who argued:

> ..the US and EEC should agree to scale down and then curtail subsidising agricultural exports to allow world market prices to harden to realistic prices (21.8.87: 11).

and:

> The heart of the matter is that only the market can set efficient and prompt signals. Politicians or bureaucrats cannot. They can only assess the market based on what has happened. They are not market entrepreneurs. That is not their job. Only the market can articulate accurate market demands and prices - as the Russians too are finding out, painfully (15.1.88: 10).

Entrepreneurialism was strongly represented as part of this market push. In article after article examples were given of farmers who had taken the plunge into some extension of their farming activity, and who had been able to carve out a market for themselves. Thus an agricultural economics professor was able to assert that what the "crisis" really involved was "a continual stream of new opportunities" (*Farmers Weekly* 8.1.88: 13). Farmers had to be more tuned to the market:

> It is no use complaining that all this action will be grabbed by someone further down the marketing chain. If that is where the market growth is then that is where your investment must go (: 13).

So there was a strong component in the discourse of crisis which presented the situation very much in the terms of Thatcherite taken for granteds (see also NEDO report, 1987). Farmers had to take responsibility for their own well being and for the crisis itself, and the way to enforce this was for the state to withdraw substantially and for the market to prevail. Yet the methods used to respond to overproduction involved more, rather than less, state (and EEC) intervention. At no time did overproduction cease being a political problem in some way and this was one focus of the construction of agriculture in crisis at the level of the media, the Government, the agricultural industry and for individual farmers themselves.

Despite its presentation in most media to show individual situations, the generalisations which characterised much of the discourse through which an overproduction crisis was constructed and contested tended to reduce all individual farmers to equal positions, ignoring the differences between regions and different product sectors, setting agriculture, the rural, against the rest. This tendency accords with the understandings of the rural in opposition to the urban, considered as part of the construction of rural place in *Emmerdale Farm* (Chapter Four). The same stereotypes were part of the construction of the political and economic situation of agriculture by the Government, the state and other media. Yet the countryside and the agricultural sector were never undifferentiated, especially in overproduction.

Efforts to reduce overproduction had been piecemeal, combining a variety of measures and affecting different regions and sectors differentially. Taking land out of production or payment for alternative crops like timber, extensification of the pastoral sector of agriculture in selected sites, making housing and industrial development more possible on hither-to exclusively agricultural land and, of course, price and subsidy cuts, levies on farmers in the case of continued production of surplus and quotas - all of these things

contributed to the armoury of the EEC and the British government. None of these were purely economic measures; all had political elements and political consequences. For example, the milk quotas which were introduced in 1984, increased in 1986 and had begun to appear permanent in 1987, had produced hardship for many, hitting smaller farmers and those who had amassed huge loans, often on the advice of the banks and bodies like the government's Agricultural Development Advisory Service (ADAS), in order to expand what had looked like never fail farm businesses (*Sunday Times Colour Supplement* 14.12.86: 28-38).[3] In response to such hardships, the Government was attacked by various organisations of small farmers several times during the year. Despite the "greedy farmers" tag, there were in Britain farmers for whom the subsidies and intervention buying at current rates meant the difference between survival or failure, with implications for continuance of the rural communities. The measures taken by the Government and the responses to these, particularly by the National Farmers Union (NFU), gave rise to the further question, particularly in pre-election 1987, of who now was the 'natural' political party of the farmers (*Guardian* 12.2.87: 19).[4]

Though the Government and the EEC could generalise about the crisis, the differential surpluses and management strategies for different sectors of the industry[5] meant that overproduction experiences of individual

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3. Even dales farmers who confessed to still be making a good living had their income cut and the forced reduction of their herds, and often extra quota obtained so that milk production could be increased, only brought production back up to pre-1984 levels rather than enabling them to increase income from milk as costs of production rose.

4. As it happened farming and the countryside were marginalised as issues in the 1987 election, pushed out by questions of the inner-cities, economic performance, housing and health. But 1987 did see the unprecedented situation of the NFU passing a motion of no confidence in Michael Jopling, the Minister for Agriculture, demonstrating the political turmoil surrounding agriculture..

5. Farming newspapers reflected this by actually dividing their contents into the various sectors of the industry, both for general discussions and when specifically addressing the problem of the CAP crisis.

farmers diverged, depending on size of operation and the sector on which they relied. Although farmers all produced for a profit and the need for accumulation helped to produce surplus production, they were able to construct different versions of the "crisis" according to the specific characteristics of their situation. It depended on the degree to which their industry was over supplied, the measures being taken by Government and the EEC, the margins for manoeuvrability and even the part of the country in which they lived. In the dales, for example, there was potentially a major division between those who mainly produced sheep and those who depended on dairy production.[6]

Like all other British farmers, farmers in the Dales had obeyed the call to develop agriculture, and the viability and additional profits in so doing, until their general level of farming had reached high levels of efficiency. The push towards greater production with greater efficiency had meant that farms got bigger with farmers acquiring extra land whenever possible. In the upland Pennine Dales this meant that cultivation pushed further and further into previously marginal and unprofitable land.[7] The post-war trend in agriculture also involved the increase in owner-occupation of farms, which by 1987 had reached two thirds of total ownership across Britain (Whatmore et al 1987a). At the same time, even where farming was dominated by animal husbandry as in the Dales, the numbers of people employed on

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6. Many farmers, particularly those low down, produced both, but the hill farmers were entirely dependent on sheep raising.

7. The individual histories of farm families and their farms chart the trends of growth and intensification. For example, a forty acre farm bought for 2,000 pounds in 1932 to keep 40 sheep and 12-15 cows supported a family. Today, this same farm, now farmed by the original farmer's son, has reached 280 acres (typically made up of pastures and fields in several parts of the local area), 160 cows (80 milkers and 80 replacements) and between 400 and 500 sheep, the size of enterprise which the farmer claims is necessary to support *his* family. The farm buildings necessary to maintain the running of the farm had been extensively upgraded in the seventies and in 1987 the farmer was contemplating building a new, all purpose, building and the rationalisation of his other buildings and operations.

farms decreased, as technology and machinery introduced from the 1950s reduced the number of farm labourers. Everywhere, capital was replacing labour and greatly adding to the value of land so that banks became happy, indeed pressing, to lend to farmers, increasing capital costs, making them vulnerable to rising interest costs and locking them into ever expanding levels of production to service their investments. Even when there was just the family to support, individual farmers were compelled to expand to maintain the same levels of profit and the insecurity which characterised the entire expansion, indeed had even contributed to it, encouraged further expansion either in size or into other sectors of agriculture.

The political structure of the agricultural system also produced inequality. Subsidies, based as they were on *quantity* of production, benefitted the bigger farmers far more than their smaller fellow farmers, who incurred many of the same costs of production. So too did measures like tax relief on interest payments (Traill, 1982). That said, it was grants and subsidies which helped to make the farms at the poorer end of the farming spectrum (for example hill sheep farmers) viable, in some cases providing their profits (OECD 1987), and in 1987 there were even some farmers who had organised their enterprises in such a way to maximise returns from the state support systems.

Under this system, individual farmers had largely ceased to perceive the constructedness of the agricultural system and had come to regard maximum production and continuing expansion as 'natural' processes of farming. The problems of the nineteen eighties challenged these understandings and strategies. The levels of overproduction were produced by a socially constructed system of protected capitalist agriculture in which each farmer obeyed the logic of accumulation and tried generally to maximise (with individual levels of commitment to this aim) their rates of return for investment of capital within a highly protected market. By the

eighties many farmers were severely in debt in a situation of rising real interest rates (Whatmore et al 1987 a and b, Barclays 1987/1988). The overproduction crisis and the measures of the British Government and the EEC intervened to exacerbate these problems.

For Dales farmers, the imposition of milk quotas in 1984 was the turning point, the clear sign that production, no matter what the cost, was no longer acceptable. It was the first indication that they could no longer get out of trouble by expansion, the time honoured method. Milk quotas hit dairy farmers while the other main livestock enterprise, sheep farming, was actually expanding. By 1986 the effects in the Dales were ominous and serious. Some farmers no longer produced milk, having opted to get out in the paid exit schemes before 1984, and all were experiencing some difficulties, though only the small farmers and those who had incurred huge debts in the late nineteen seventies were in real trouble. Dairying was affected by production and consumption interrelating at new levels. Dairy cows were selling in early 1987 for only 200 to 300 pounds, half the price of 1975, limiting the ways in which milk production could be cut by making the actual sale of cows uneconomic. All farmers had cut back on the number of cows they were milking and reduced each cow's output by cutting down the use of concentrates. Nearly all farmers had reduced their milk herds, something which often caused heartache as the building up of the herds over time had been an achievement, a point of pride for the farmers concerned.

In addition, those farmers who had remained in milk not only had to contend with decreased incomes from milk but had a new element added to their annual milk production strategies - the imposition of super-levies or fines on all over-producers which were activated at the end of the financial year if the whole sector was in over-production. The imposition of super-levies gave a concreteness to the concept of overproduction (cf Poole,

Craven and Mabey 1987). It became a major component of the construction of crisis for all dales farmers, even those not in dairying. The topic of the super-levy became an ongoing subject of discussion and speculation among farmers, as they compared their rate of production with each other and the current rates published in the farming press. It also produced divisiveness as dalesmen blamed the the very biggest farmers (often "down south") who were deemed to be the cause of the overproduction problem.[8]

The smallest farmers were badly affected by the need to cut back herds which were sometimes only a dozen cows and some were wondering about their futures (and those of their children) in the industry. This produced some bitterness in the dales itself as bigger farmers acquired more land when farmers sold out and were seen to have more space in which to manoeuvre. Although farmers acknowledged that something had to be done to curb overproduction of milk, they usually opposed quotas applying to all farmers regardless of size, arguing that quotas harm the small farmers far more than the big ones.[9] Then too, quotas altered the tenant/landlord relationship as some tenant farmers had difficulty in negotiating agreements about quota allocation with their landlords. Bitterly, they talked about quotas being the "biggest asset that farmers have got" and how "you can't get them

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8. As Newby et al (1981) indicate, definitions of "small" and "big" farmers alter with the politics and economics of farming. In the pastoral dales too, type of land is as crucial as sheer acreage, and most farmers prefer to have a mix of high, middle and low land for maximum productivity. In normative terms, farmers describe farms of 200 acres as "not very large" while a farm of 600 acres is in typically understated terms, "bigger than some". The cut off point of 300 acres used by Newby et al for small farms corresponds fairly well to size designation in the upper dales, with some (a few) farms being 1,000 acres and some only 50 acres. Farmers also judge size by herd numbers. Here the large herds in 1987 were from 50 to 80 milkers with various numbers of followers, while some farmers only milked ten or a dozen cows. Quotas which were uniformly applied across all dairy farmers could threaten the viability of these small farmers, while only enforcing cut-backs for the larger producers.

9. Some farmers with herd sizes between fifty and seventy milkers who were considered big by high dales standards also used this argument, but here they were drawing a division between upland and lowland dairying, the latter often involving much larger herds (see Poole, Craven and Mabey (1987) for comparisons of large and small enterprises).

out of the landlords".[10] There was also much talk about diversification as farmers responded to the many cries for them to go into alternative ways of generating income.

Farmers' experiences in the dairy sector had made them, in varying degrees uneasy. Within a general agricultural situation in which overproduction was dominant, they were by no means sure that even so far sound areas of agriculture would stay that way. For them there appeared to be a very uncertain future over which they had no control. The imposition of milk quotas had taught them how fast things could change, since some had even been advised, right up until the time of quotas imposition, to expand their milk production. The articulation of economics and politics in agriculture conditioned the way in which they perceived their position in the wider agricultural world. They saw themselves as pawns in a game, under the domination of politicians and bankers in London and Brussels. The CAP is so complex that farmers (and many others) joke about their inability to understand it, intensifying their sense of powerlessness, and being at the whim of 'them', here the politicians and the bureaucrats.[11] This use of 'them' gives a nebulousness to the understanding that agriculture is politically constructed which is not to be found in the same kind of construction in the farming press, where it is specific, named politicians and "Eurocrats" who are clearly to blame.

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10. In order to maintain control, milk quotas are administered through the Milk Marketing Board and are attached to land, so that in order to lease or buy a particular amount of quota a certain percentage of the farmer's land must also be leased. Given the entire holdings any landlord farmer had, it was at his discretion that quotas were leased to a particular tenant, giving farmers considerable power and commodifying the quotas, pushing their prices up..

11. This feeling is common among all farmers. In a BBC television programme, *Seventy Summers*, about a farm in the Chilterns, one farmer said "They are bureaucrats and politicians; they run our lives, they have done since the war and they will do until I die" and later, "Politicians are as unpredictable as the weather. We plan our week, our month and the weather intervenes..so do the politicians" (*Seventy Summers*, programme 4).

The feeling of powerlessness when recalling the quotas and the lack of warning about them, activated another important construction of farming in the dales, one which it contradicts, that of independent and self-reliant farmers, doing the job as they want and see fit. Independence and self-directedness are parts of farming which farmers value, so that this loss was often central. Some dairy farmers said they no longer liked the dairy side of their enterprise as much because the quotas have "spoiled the job" - they felt that they had lost control. The interference of bureaucrats and politicians to *curtail* production was for them irreconcilable with their self image of independence and self-help in a way that subsidies to *encourage* production and expansion never were. It was only expansion within the agricultural system which seemed right, 'natural', to them, which is hardly surprising given that they had been encouraged to expand for the last 40 years, for some their entire farming life.[12]

Many dairy farmers also tended to be hostile to the idea of diversification which was a central part of Government solutions. The policies here involved state funding and support for those developing alternatives to farming, something which was picked up in the media which revealed countless instances of how this or that farmer had created a thriving leisure park or some other business on what used to be farming land. Dales farmers reacted in a variety of ways to these exhortations. Some developed alternative enterprises, especially within tourism, but many remained sceptical, talking about the problems of the area for producing any other kinds of products or commenting on the vast amounts of cash some of the reported enterprises had cost. These farmers had a tendency to mock the

12. One of the criticisms of the initial efforts to reduce production through the extensive methods of the ESAs scheme or the set-aside proposals had been that it was 'unnatural' for farmers not to produce as much as they could, or to receive money for doing 'nothing'. Or farmers explained how *they* would not be able to fulfil the demands of the ESA's, say delaying the time of cutting hay, because they needed the second cut to achieve crucial maximum levels of production.

notion by characterising it as encouragement to "start craft shops". Reactions depended on individual farmer's financial and organisational situations, their physical location and the flexibility of their farm businesses.

Rather than craft shops and leisure parks the one general trend in the dales which followed the imposition of milk quotas was the expansion of the sheep industry as farmers sought to increase diminishing farm income and to add a little more security. Because they were able to do this, and the sheep industry continued to hold its buoyancy, with Britain only being 80% self-sufficient in sheep production rather than overproduced as for dairy, the middle and large farmers at least were admitting that their living was still pretty good, though not as good as it had been, since the cost of inputs like chemicals and fertilisers were rising much faster than produce prices (The National Sheep Association 1987, OECD 1987). Some of these farmers and others who had non-farming income sources did not perceive a crisis at all.

The sheep industry appeared to signal something quite different about the state of agriculture in 1987. Farmers were making consistently good prices for store and breeding lambs in the auction mart and many increased the size of their flocks, sometimes obtaining extra land. However, even in this sector farmers did not feel secure and there were many discussions about the problems for the dales likely to come from the combination of the buoyancy of the sheep market and the difficulties being faced by the arable farmers of the lowlands generally, under pressure because of falling incomes and the government and EEC determination to decrease the cereal mountains. There was a very real fear that these farmers would react by finding other sources of income, that they would take some land out of arable production and diversify into sheep, which would in turn threaten the livelihoods of the dales sheep men, especially those producing the cross-bred Mule which was proving so valuable in 1987. The dales farmers simply could not compete with the southern and lowland arable farmers who had so

much more feed and less harsh climatic conditions. In addition to this competitive price problem, they feared that it would not be long before sheep too were in overproduction and that without the flexibility of the arable areas, livestock farmers who can mostly only grow grass given their conditions, would be very hard pressed to find an alternative crop. By the end of 1987, it was clear that, even without over-production, the EEC was determined to bring in measures to limit sheep production.[13]

In the auction mart, pubs, out in the fields and when they stopped to chat to each other in passing, farmers debated the situation in sheep, often prompted by the Sunday farming magazine television programmes[14] or a news item in the media. As always they used such debates to modify or confirm their own constructions of crisis, based in personal experience. They were concerned with the value of the harsh conditions for breeding their pure-bred sheep, about the value of innovations, like sheep-sheds for wintering sheep and other aspects of their craft pertinent to the argument about just how threatened they could be by the lowland arable farmers turning to sheep in order to restore depleted incomes.

Many farmers presumed and some even welcomed the idea, that quotas would ultimately be placed on sheep, despite the fact that Europe was not self-sufficient in sheep. It was in the expectation of this happening and with the memory of the milk quotas being imposed without warning and after a poor year that many expanded their flocks, hoping that quotas would be established on the basis of these increased numbers. This support for quotas makes an interesting contrast to the criticism of the milk quotas and

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13. On the BBC's *Farming* programme of the 14th of November, 1987, various spokesmen for British farmers discussed the EEC measures proposed for limiting production and cutting support prices for sheep, which included price cuts of 8p per kilo, predicted to be higher for Britain than any other producer. Both the injustice of this and the absurdity given the under-supply featured strongly.

14. All of these programmes available in 1987 are now defunct.

produced a different kind of government/farmer relationship in the constructions of crisis of many sheep farmers. Sheep farmers worried about their survival if generally more prosperous southern and lowland farmers used sheep production to make up their shortfalls in arable production. They not only overcame their resentment of 'them', the bureaucrats and politicians, having control over their production but welcomed, even demanded, such control. At this level then farmers were re-articulating the arguments in the farming press that agriculture was also a political construction and a state responsibility.

Though from the outside, that is in the general constructions of crisis by government, state and media, the politically based constructions of crisis through overproduction had a tendency to homogenise all farming enterprises regardless of size or agricultural sector, from the inside, that is to the dales farmers, there were several possible constructions which articulated with these general constructions and with each other. Taken together, dales farmers demonstrated a real ambivalence about the Government and state: they accepted without question the correctness of the state having a role in agriculture, yet at the same time it was state control (and there is a physical, not to say Southern spatial identity in Westminster which adds to this) which generated feelings of powerlessness and so much uncertainty. This is despite the demonstrable power that their representatives in the NFU had in the political processes as they affected agriculture (Lowe et al, 1986).

There was thus no *one* overproduction crisis, and no construction of the crisis was made outside of the political field. Both dairy and sheep farmers constructed their versions of crisis against national and European political constructions as the political situation interacted with their personal and farming fortunes, the normal vagaries of the weather, disease, bad luck and particularly the markets as they responded to measures taken against

surpluses, often appearing fatalistic about *all* these kinds of problems. Even within the general downturn of the industry, some years were still better than others and the daily and seasonal routines still provided the main structure of their farming lives (see Chapter Six).

The ambivalence about Government and state intervention and the range of opinions about whether there *was* a crisis of overproduction can thus be understood in terms of differential conditions not always made clear in the rhetoric of Mrs Thatcher or the NFU's attacks on the EEC or the Government. Dairy cut-backs had caused problems, but the extreme good health of the sheep meat industry and the popularity of the North of England Mule cross-bred lamb, firstly gave good incomes for sheep raising but secondly gave an alternative for those who had been forced to cut back on milk. And in addition, by 1987 some good prices for dairy cows were reappearing as stock became harder to get because of the constant culling of herds since the initiation of quotas and prices for calves (the necessary offshoot of dairying) were very good indeed. Nevertheless, the ramifications of the general construction of overproduction crisis created very real worry and uncertainty in the minds of farmers, who were both affected by the general atmosphere of gloom and concern and by the fear that their safe sheep markets would be affected by other farmers' expansion into sheep.

Although these two views appear contradictory, at the very least demonstrating that the crisis varied from region to region, they are in fact different facets of the same problem. The happenings in the dales show the working through of the very processes which generate overproduction and which ensure that current Government and EEC policy is not the solution. Dales' farmers had already been implicated in the overproduction of dairy products and they themselves had used the buoyancy of the sheep industry to recover, at least partially, income foregone. Their uncertainty was derived from the fear that other farmers displaced from arable farming would do the

same thing, this time moving into sheep and in turn threatening *their* livelihood. All of this expresses the contestation, the working through of a generalised crisis of overproduction in the agricultural sphere. The different constructions were not just perceptions based on different experiences, but responses to different power relationships between the various parties concerned.

If there were different constructions of overproduction, depending on the political relationships involved and the experiences of agriculture implied, how did the fictionalised overproduction crisis of *Emmerdale Farm*, presented over a period of a year to at least 9 million people each episode, construct the crisis? What was its relationship to the overproduction crisis which the foregoing discussion reveals was not one thing, but many interlocking constructions and relationships? What was the significance for its presentation of crisis, particularly for what the serial had to say about the state of British society, here rendered just through an agricultural sector being subjected to Thatcher style rationalisation?

OVERPRODUCTION CRISIS IN *EMMERDALE FARM*

In Britain, the rural recession with its associated overproduction could be seen to involve the same processes of rationalisation and productivity which Thatcher had already applied to industry and mining. As the Miners Strike was over the closing of pits, so the rural recession was about constructing a leaner agricultural industry, producing the same (indeed less given the context of the EEC) with larger farm units and less people. This was one dimension of the contestation over the rural crisis and it is to be understood within Thatcherite politics of the nineteen eighties. The Granada documentary, *Living On The Edge*, which focused on the many groups of people marginalised by the Thatcher Government's policies, made this point

about rural recession when it included small dairy farmers. The sameness of farmers was underlined in the ironic comment made by one farmer:

> I suppose we find that we have a lot in common with the miners (wry laugh)...because their industry's been cut back considerably...the steel workers. It's something that we're all in together...

The fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* on the other hand, though it seeks to uncover through drama the essential sameness, humanness of people (Chapter Three), is already constructed within difference; the difference of the rural (Chapter Four). Thus the overproduction crisis became another dimension of that construction of difference, a difference from which ultimately the serial interrogated British society. In building up the exploration of difference, this section seeks to penetrate the serial's construction of the overproduction crisis. It asks, if the above outlines what overproduction was for farmers, Government, state and other media; if it reveals the interacting and contested discourses which constructed overproduction and rural recession as crisis; how did *Emmerdale Farm* signal the same message of crisis and what contribution did *it* make to the construction and contestation of a 'crisis of overproduction'? What did it choose to show to make the points of surpluses politically generating a constricted economic situation which exacerbated individual farmers' already falling farm incomes? How did its conventions alter the representations of this dimension of the rural and with what significance? How did the presentation of overproduction itself construct an image of the rural which was particular and had consequences greater than the actual story itself?

Unlike past financial stories, the rural recession associated with overproduction was an ongoing theme throughout the whole year, becoming the most significant storyline three times and the subsidiary one at least

once. Spread as these stories were throughout the year, the agricultural economy acted also as a backdrop of uncertainty, very much like it was in the dales for many farmers. At the same time that it gave rise to major stories of conflict and tension, rural crisis was constructed as ongoing and pervasive through conversations in the pub, in houses, at the auction mart and over work, as the general features of the rural recession, overproduction, competition from other lowland areas and the problems of country communities were rehearsed. When the theme generated a dramatic story though, it constructed the crisis through the personal and particular. In doing this, the programme set Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates in opposition to each other. 1987 ended with Joe, the NY Estates Regional Manager receiving the news that NY was to close its Beckindale operation, having been unable to find a solution to the crisis in either diversification or expansion. Emmerdale Farm, the family farm, on the other hand, had seen some problems during the year, but was expanding its way out of them. These stories thus together encapsulated the various pulls of expansion and contraction in agriculture which were reproducing the production of surpluses, often extending it into other product sectors, while attempting to solve individual farm income deficiencies in a tightening market situation. Thus it was the *general* problem of overproduction and rural recession in the whole system of agriculture and its logic which *Emmerdale Farm*'s construction used, and the particular constructions of Yorkshire dales farmers which contested overproduction, took second place, with significant consequences. The serial's area of contention focused on the *morality* of solving production and income problems in a situation of crisis, rather than on the constitution of the crisis itself. The process which transformed this representation was the depoliticisation of the crisis.

With the overproduction crisis featuring in many of the sources on agricultural matters for *Emmerdale Farm* personnel, rural recession not only

generated good stories about human conflict and problems ('good drama') but, basing several ongoing stories on it, provided first order authenticity. The assumption that such rural troubles constituted a significant element of the rural in the late nineteen eighties perpetuated a stereotypic construction of farmers and the rural as different, experiencing a situation unlike the rest of Britain. It was this stereotype and depoliticisation of crisis which transformed the various national and dales constructions of rural recession into an *Emmerdale Farm* one.

In 1987, the story about financial difficulties in *Emmerdale Farm* was not the first time such an issue had been tackled. In the past such stories had mainly featured Emmerdale Farm and resolution had been as various as Henry Wilks buying a partnership in the family farm or often lending money for particular enterprises and bank loans to improve economies of scale by expanding into new land. Resolutions were thus at times genre driven and at other times reproduced measures dales farmers were using in the expansionist 1970s and early 1980s. On the whole, reference to the experience of dales farmers has mainly been in the setting up of the problem rather than in its resolution, and there has been a tendency for the structural problem to totally disappear with this solution. This time though, it was a matter of regret to at least some of the people in the production office that they could not be 'real' enough (their word) in their interpretation of what was happening on farms in the dales in this period of crisis. Here they were explicitly concentrating on crisis as falling farm incomes and felt that they could not, in the case of Emmerdale Farm in particular, adequately demonstrate the fall in fortunes because of the history of the farm constructed through past narrative. The farm had been established in 1973 as a barely viable hill farm and stories through the seventies had focused on the family's struggles for survival, only gradually building up the farm at a time when most farms were actually experiencing rising incomes and good profits. The

current production office personnel felt that this had never given Emmerdale Farm the appropriate level of solvency from which to experience the difficulties of the eighties, so they felt forced to work the rural recession story through Emmerdale only in a very sketchy way.

This history had ramifications for the development of the theme of crisis, since it necessitated locating the experience of major difficulties within the other farming enterprise, NY Estates. Then, the centrality of the opposition between NY Estates and Emmerdale Farm as family farm meant that as NY contracted, the family farm expanded, so that Emmerdale continued to build as it had done since its inception.[15] In turning to how this multi-stranded narrative constructed an overall image of the rural in recession, and the significance of this construction, it is necessary to remember what was noted above, that it was the smaller farmers who were most likely to fall victim to the trends of rural crisis (*Sunday Times Colour Supplement* 14.12.86: 28-38), and that, for many, it was agribusiness (like NY) which was to blame.

NY ESTATES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF RURAL CRISIS

As always in the serial, polarisation ignored the intensification, the high input of technology and machinery, the use of artificial insemination, fertilisers, pesticides and additives which all family farms, even in the uplands like the Yorkshire Dales, employed and on which their levels of production had come to depend. Rather, in *Emmerdale Farm* 's construction of rural recession as part of a wider debate about British agriculture, it was at

15. This opposition between the family farm and agribusiness is a strong element in much rural sociology in which the family farm takes its meaning at least in part from that which is perceived to be its opposite - agribusiness (for example Davis 1980).

NY's door that the evils of intensification were laid. And while NY faltered, Emmerdale prospered.

For NY Estates, the agricultural recession in 1987 became a major feature of the stories from May throughout the rest of the year. It came after a period of expansion for NY Estates, which was wholly consistent with what had happened to farms of all sizes in Britain (OECD 1987: 16,17) and this greatly added to the uncertainty which was a hallmark of developments at NY.

Initially, the economic crisis for NY Estates was interlinked with the theme of Beckindale being designated as one of the proposed sites for shallow dumping nuclear waste in rural areas and the fight against this by the community. This had begun in February and one aspect explored was the way in which it could affect property values and the desirability of living and investing in the area. As agribusiness was dependent on the willingness to continue to invest of shareholders, NY was particularly sensitive to anything which made Beckindale seem undesirable. By June, when the Financial Director sent his accountant to see Alan Turner and Joe Sugden at NY in Beckindale to discuss the state of business and the future, there had already been a scare that the Beckindale estate would be closed by Head Office. This was averted by cutbacks which provided the atmosphere of fear, uncertainty and the establishment of what one script writer called a "crisis routine". Indeed, the language of crisis was strong in the script outlines submitted to the production office for the story block which included the accountant's visit, introducing a major recession story for the serial. In this block particularly, but for the whole construction of recession and NY Estates, the focus was on falling profits necessitating cutbacks in labour, stock, enterprises and money invested. This overtly constructed the crisis as an *economic* one.

Joe Sugden and Alan Turner were major characters in the June story about rural recession. It was they who fought for jobs on the estate and to keep its farms operating at full capacity wherever possible. This had been established before the meeting with the accountant. At this meeting, Joe countered the accountant's proposal to close down sheep operations at Beckindale, by pointing out the buoyancy of the sheep market and suggesting they get out of milk, selling herd, equipment and half of the milk quota, leasing the other half to ensure both a regular income to replace the monthly milk cheque and the possibility of resuming milk production in the future. This was ultimately accepted by Head Office, producing subsequent stages in the story of strong opposition between Alan Turner and Joe Sugden, the NY employees agitating to ensure their continued employment, the sale of the herd and quotas (some of which Emmerdale leased) and the shock speculation buying of milk quota by Joe, which set both Turner and his brother Jack against him, though for different reasons.

The script outlines and the briefings of the directors by production office personnel included much detail about the reasoning behind each development of the story. This reasoning always referred to the kinds of calculations which farmers themselves were having to make in order to survive in the industry. A lot of research was done on the scripts. For example, the producers and script writers used their farming adviser from the North Yorkshire Branch of the NFU, for the background information in the scenes in which the future of NY in Beckindale were fought out with the accountant. It was couched in terms appropriate to the state of the industry at that time, talking about returns on marginal land, the firmness of the lamb market, the costs of inputs like taking stock to market and the need to generate cash. This all gave a first order authenticity clearly desired by production personnel. At the same time, production office personnel were prepared to waive this appeal to authenticity when, at rehearsals, the actors

asked for more information on milk quotas; since at that time the EEC was denying the legality of leasing.[16] This was one of the times at which the production office defended the storyline, licensing its departure from "reality" by pointing out that they were producing drama not documentary. Nevertheless, the actor playing the auctioneer researched quotas fully and had further discussions with the story editor about them. All of this was part of the atmosphere in which these scenes were rehearsed and prepared for recording. What was actually happening in the dairy industry, was for the production team headed by the director, a necessary component of the programme in order to create authenticity, though it had to be modified at times because of the script and the demands of the production office. The end product was a compromise.

The story of selling the milk herd set up the recession at NY, as a matter of decision making and organisation *in response to* an already existent crisis. Within NY Beckindale, contestation of crisis focused conflict between Alan Turner and Joe Sugden about the correct response. Within this dimension, the dispute *was* political, but it was entirely constituted within the politics of NY, the multinational organisation which pitted NY Beckindale against Head Office, in Lincoln. This made the personalities of Alan Turner and Joe Sugden central, with Turner relying on an impassioned idealistic speech to change the accountant's heart and Joe appealing to rational, business calculations about the market, long term savings, returns on investment and relative proceeds from sales of enterprises. That Joe won is interesting for many reasons.

The victory for Joe's solution confirmed and reinforced NY as agribusiness, the agricultural enterprise which is in farming for *money*, the

16. In the end leasing was allowed, vindicating the producer's stand at the level of authenticity too.

profits it renders. Arguments about economic rationality winning the day must be seen as elements in the ongoing construction of NY as agribusiness, indeed as business more generally. Joe and Alan Turner personalise NY, each giving business a particular dimension.[17] The contrast between the two men was a deliberate part of the drama and story for the script writer.

This story, including the elements which introduced it, used Turner's incompetence and lack of imagination, his at best ordinary management skills, his cowardice in the face of his superiors, his bullying of those whom he controls, his preference to let things jog along unchanged and his mistrust of those more talented or better connected than himself, all of which had been elements of stories since Turner was transferred to NY Beckindale. The milk herd auction story was interesting for the way in which some of this appeared to have changed as Alan Turner, so often the bad man in the serial, became the impassioned spokesman for NY, the men's jobs and the well-being of the community.

Turner has often been used as a representative of big business which stands in opposition to community, and this contrast is given an added dimension by him being an urban, character. Nonetheless, although on many occasions he has worked through this typification, it has only been one aspect of his character as is the case for all characters in the serial. Other stories have focused on other qualities, the loneliness of his divorced state, his love for his son, his affection towards his secretary as well as his

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17. It is common in the discourse of the programme to delineate these two characters in this way, with Joe Sugden being referred to always as "Joe", but Alan Turner mostly called "Turner". This was the topic of some speculation at one rehearsal, the actors noting that Phil Pearce, the builder with whom Sandie lives and the shady one time manager of the Hotten Auction Mart, Eric Pollard were also known by their last names. They could come up with no explanation for this interesting feature of production. Clearly Joe is given his first name in the same way that Jack or Matt are, as a member of the Sugden family whom the audience and cast know "as a person". This possibly gives the clue to the prevalence of the use of the surname for the other three, who are all more drawn as types, both social and in personality.

conceitedness, pomposity and fear of failure at NY. He is human as well as a stereotype. This means that in a story such as this in which NY's operations in Beckindale were threatened, he could step outside of his typification and oppose Head Office, a 'them' of which he was not, at that point, a part. Now his identification was with *place*, the dales and the rural community as he expressed sentiments such as:

> Sheep have grazed on those fields and fells for centuries. It will take more than a mere accountant to render the Dales Shepherd a figure from the past.

and later,

> Beckindale will be a ghost village, Mrs Bates. He's [Joe] let them in, you see. A ghost village with a nuclear dump and an agricultural museum called Home Farm.

Now the rural community had become predominant and encompassed the usual focus in the serial of farming itself, in which narrower oppositions dominate. Now it was farming, agriculture as the basis of rural place, especially *rural community* which was opposed to business, capital, located in the urban. This gave the overall *morality* to the story. That this is how the struggle was explicitly perceived by the production team is clear from the rehearsals of the scene in which the accountant first confronted Turner and Joe. After the run through the director told the actor playing Howard, the accountant, to play the scene as if he is very cool - he thinks that he is superior to these 'mere farmers'. Yet both Turner and Joe were managers and company employees, representatives in other contexts in the serial of that very category of business!

A different kind of defence of the Beckindale NY operations was presented through Joe Sugden - the pragmatic and rational. Joe was

presented as pure businessman, able to operate on a level above emotion, but bringing imagination, flair and daring to management. As Alan Turner's boss he articulated ideas about economic calculation and logic. He accepted the crisis as an economic one, therefore that Head Office would inevitably make cuts. He therefore set about making sure that the continuation of the operation of NY in the dale and the jobs of the employees would not be endangered. He is a businessman, as his buying of the quotas to deal in them shows and this is part of the opposition between him and his brother Jack as the idealised, committed 'non-businessman' farmer. In the words of the script writer for this block, buying quota made Joe for Jack "a parasite on the decaying body of British agriculture".

Joe's participation in the recession story of selling the NY milk herd, encouraging Emmerdale Farm to buy more cows, himself buying quota, charts the decision making processes involved in rationalisation of business and industry. However, as Turner's usual negatively valorised role as the personification of agribusiness is rendered ambiguous by his encompassment by the rural and community, Joe's position in the rationalisation of agribusiness in the dale (and indeed the country) is made ambiguous by his membership in the Sugden family. He is a Sugden with impeccable qualifications as a working, caring farmer and member of the Beckindale community to underpin any business decisions he makes.[18] He alone straddles the two kinds of farming set up in the programme. He was born on the land which as Shoard (1987) points often means that people are seen as generally "better than" urban people. Further, in his dealings he declared his reasons as being to preserve people's jobs and assured the estate workers they would be all right under his guidance. Here is a

18. Joe was the mainstay of the family farm for many years in the 1970s, only able to leave Emmerdale for NY when Jack came home and settled down.

paternalism more redolent of the moral and social relations of a past manorial based agricultural system (in which Emmerdale Farm itself is often supposed to somehow still exist) than those of the agribusiness one which he represents. The first story of rural recession demonstrates ambiguity in the characters of both Joe and Turner, as the responses of each represented important elaborations of their characters, an important element of soap opera where audiences feel that they come to know the characters as people (Dyer et al 1981, Hobson 1982, Taylor and Mullan 1986).

The first major recession story thus importantly takes the details and the logic of overproduction and falling farm incomes, and by rendering these through both the conventions of drama with its focus on the personal and conflict and the continuing serial, particularly through the concept of place, constructs a moral community of farming which overlays and interacts with the dominant rural stereotype. Before turning to this dimension of the recession story, which is central to the serial's overall interrogation of British society in the eighties through the construction of the rural, a final comparison between Joe Sugden and Alan Turner is necessary.

Despite ambiguity, Joe and Turner can also be understood as representatives of different styles of business and management. Such an interpretation can be taken from the programmes themselves, but script outlines, comments in rehearsals and character interpretations by various personnel further confirm its validity. Turner's mundane management style, plodding methods, lack of imagination and constant turning to Head Office for direction and approval, characterise his kind of business. On the other hand, Joe is imaginative, ready to take risks, sure of himself, capable and clever and with a sound overview of operations. This characterisation was made explicit in the outline for the first recession story. He has in past stories spent time being management trained in France, attended seminars and been praised for his various reports on complex aspects of modern farming

practices. Further, he is an entrepreneur as his buying of quotas showed. Indeed the actor who plays Joe wanted in 1987, for this area of entrepreneurialism to be the one into which his character developed and was hopeful that it would be so.

It is thus not too fanciful to understand Joe and Turner as representatives of an old and a new business and business management. Turner is old style business as characterised by Thatcher and her representatives; inefficient, lacking vision, conservative. Even his evocation of the community in his plea that NY Beckindale remain unchanged can be seen as reminiscent of 1970s social democratic arguments about the need for state support for industry, for the good of the whole. Joe on the other hand, represents a new style management, eager, hungry for new business, new opportunities, imaginative and thrusting; the new manager of Thatcher's Britain. Interestingly, and somewhat in contradistinction to the moral valuation of NY Estates when encompassed by an urban/rural opposition, this opposition *within* NY also gives a moral dimension to each of these styles of business management. Here the ambiguity discussed above comes into play, Joe's positive valorisation as efficient and caring farmer tending to construct his version of management as morally superior within NY. Certainly it is Joe to whom the men turn, as Turner in his weakness constantly puts them off, is made ridiculous,[19] lies and blames other people.

The protection of the men provided the second major story in the rural recession theme and came out of the first. Selling the herd logically provided the opportunity for Head Office to sack at least one labourer, the cowman, Bill. For a time emotions arising from this uncertainty were held in check by Joe's strong but nonetheless vague assurances that he would prevent any

19. The actor playing Turner worried about the levels of buffoonery his character sometimes reached. He felt that it made it difficult to take Turner seriously as a particular type of person in a position of some power.

sackings, but matters came to a head when a letter from Head Office demanding the lay off of Bill and another labourer was left on Turner's desk to be read by Jock, the union steward. The information was passed on to Bill, who sought out Joe in the pub and hit him. This story definitely accorded with production personnel's intentions to demonstrate the personal consequences of economic trends, like recession. It also added another dimension to the working through of rural recession in NY rather than Emmerdale, the family farm.

This story, and the final story for the year about the closing of the NY owned Auction Mart, added industrial action to the serial's construction of rural recession, as the personal consequences of the cutbacks and closures for those concerned were given a class dimension and the farm and NY employees an additional identity as trade unionists. This dimension also served to separate further NY from Emmerdale Farm, the family farm, in its experience of the recession. Through their union representative the workers were shown trying to find out what was going on, finally striking for a day to protest to the Managing Director about the worsening cuts (including Bill's possible sacking) which preceded the actual closing down of operations in the dale. Now characters became a blend of separate individuals, roles and class positions. Disorder on the estate which came to stand for the economic part of the farm going wrong, was revealed at many levels but always with consequences for individual characters, at the level of the personal; in the bad relations and secrecy between managers, in bad relations between Joe, the good manager, and the men who had always trusted him, in the skilled men having to do jobs they were not qualified to do and in things going wrong, rubbish not cleaned up, one of the herd contracting brucellosis, Joe's horse dying in a fall and even the cows not being milked at one stage, a powerful metaphor for rural disorder (Chapter Four). Into all of this the strike erupted, though it must be said that the rhetoric about labour and

management rang more true for a television company than a farming estate (see Chapter Seven). This is but one of the situations in which elements of *Emmerdale Farm* come from the life experiences of the makers rather than rural life, often giving the presented rural life a slightly urban twist which is not overcome by painstaking care about detail (something which the NFU adviser commented upon).

The notification of the selling of the auction mart came in November, after several months of fighting against cut-backs and many scares in which Sandie, the auction manager, fought for information and the continuation of the mart. This final major story in the construction of the rural recession in the serial in 1987, returned the emphasis to the moral community of farming.

There were many elements of the story, but the most telling one was the way in which the auction mart, which is in Hotten the small country town very near to the village of Beckindale, came to stand as the symbol of the rural community. Indeed this point, and then the rural/urban or small people against big business relation through which it worked, was made quite explicitly in many of the scenes. At one point Ruth, the vet, says "Hotten's a small community. It depends on the market." This sentiment had a particularly profound resonance among the dales audience of the serial. One woman, who had long and close connections with her local market confessed to crying during the episode in which the last auction sale was shown. She too commented on the crucial importance of the auction mart to *her* town, for casual employment of the young, for the farmers' conducting of their business and in many other ways.

Emmerdale's presentation of the auction mart closing then was one of the stories which captured the imagination and emotions of many of its dales viewers, and there was speculation about whether it would really close or be saved at the last minute. The knowledge that markets *were* closing down or being amalgamated in the countryside, added both meaning and

authenticity to the television presentation for the dales farmers. However, though the theme had this specific kind of resonance born of similar experience in the dales, the concept of *community* through which the theme was worked is such a strong aspect of British culture and society (see Chapters Four and Seven) that the story would have struck a chord in the serial's entire audience, especially perhaps those who have seen their neighbourhoods and towns decimated by the shutdown of the industries on which they depended. This makes an interesting comparison between the way in which the city and country are differentially constructed and valued in British society. So much less concern was expressed nationally for the Middlesboroughs with their declining industries and populations who have to leave, often breaking up families, to find work, compared with the rural villages and towns. Certainly before the 1987 election, there was far less talk about the value of and need to sustain the declining industrial communities than there was about keeping farmers on the land and the populations in the villages.

By the end of the year, neither Joe's method of economic rationalism nor Turner's "crisis routine" had prevailed as even Joe failed to prevent NY from pulling out of the dale. The end of the year saw big business pulling out of the dales. The serial thus made specific and personal the general information which was available to the public. The announcement of the closure meant that 1988 began amidst much speculation of what would replace NY and with some individual characters being asked to make choices between being relocated by NY in other estates around the country, or remaining in Beckindale, having committed themselves to the community. This can be understood in terms of a tension between the well-being of the individual and the whole, another manifestation of that between the construction of farming as economic enterprise and moral community. True to his ambivalent character, it looked like Joe at least would commit himself

to the community, in defiance of his economic, rational outlook during the recession.

The state of agriculture in 1987 was thus assumed to be characterised as crisis in the economic sphere by the makers of *Emmerdale Farm* and was explored in terms of its social consequences through dramatising the fears and uncertainties, the decisions and struggles which are an integral part of the economic realities of a large company trying to maintain its overall economic viability. It thus became explicit that this was a crisis of capitalist agriculture, a crisis of overproduction which had finally failed to keep farm incomes up to necessary levels.

The focus on NY Estates in the construction of the economic recession in agriculture conformed to, and indeed reinforced, the idea that NY Estates was about finance and economics rather than farming, and because NY operated as one of an opposing pair with Emmerdale Farm, it created the illusion that if NY is business, the family farm is only partially so. This dovetails with the routine way in which the two farms were presented (Chapter Four). NY's routines were always those of an office; farm work rarely shown and usually only for purposes of drama when the unusual was highlighted or meetings between people out on the farm were contrived. A story could be about NY Estates and never show any farm work at all. It is Emmerdale which is the *farm*. Further it was Emmerdale which stood for the continuing system of farming in the dales, NY which stood for the new type of system, the interloper. Emmerdale is the past, the present and the future in farming so that as farming in the dales (and elsewhere) goes on despite any economic setbacks, so too does Emmerdale, the family farm. Of course, there is some truth in this portrayal of the difference between the two kinds of enterprises and their fates in times of economic stringency, though not the implication that the family farm is less clearly located in capitalist business interests. The family farm *is* still the dominant form of farming in Britain

(Whatmore et al 1987a and b, Marsden et al 1987). The family farm *can* take diminishing returns for far longer than an agricultural estate set up to farm only for profit (Newby 1985, Whatmore et al 1987 a and b). That some companies were pulling out of agriculture does not mean that it was the big farms which were suffering most in 1987, only that profits in farming had fallen, here below desired levels for finance capital's investment in land.

The opposition between NY and Emmerdale the family farm not only renders the two kinds of enterprise equal which they are not, but further it denies, even overturns the inequality between large and small, between agribusiness and family farm, which was present in farmers' experiences of agricultural crisis. In the serial it is not the smaller farm which suffers, but the large. Members of the small enterprise are able to take control and solve their problems, while those in the large one flounder amidst contradictory orders and policies, general disorder and uncertainty. This overturning of the constructions of crisis which we saw operating in the first section, has to be understood in terms of the morality through which *Emmerdale Farm* constructs *its* crisis, but the final discussion of this transforming process depends upon the details of what happened to the family farm during 1987.

EMMERDALE FARM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF RURAL RECESSION

For Emmerdale Farm the family farm, the economic crisis of 1987 had a different content, as the stories dramatised another area of the problems involved in capitalist overproduction in agriculture. The crisis here was less one of the present and far more nebulously, one of the future. Yet it demanded immediate action.

Both options in such a situation, expansion or diversification were canvassed in the serial, much as they were by individual farmers all over Britain. These options were again personalised and separated with Matt and

Joe (still a shareholder of Emmerdale Farm) advocating expansion and Jack, accepting neither option and being particularly vocal against diversification. Through Jack were expressed the kinds of comments which could be heard in the dales themselves, especially the scorn directed towards the government and bodies like COSIRA which advised farmers going into alternatives in order to bring their incomes back up to early 1980s levels. Jack and the dales farmers were particularly scathing about ideas like caravan parks and craft shops, and one writer who treated this matter for *Emmerdale* said that he had been congratulated by farmers in his area for criticising diversification and having Jack say "We are *farmers*, not caravan park owners". This certainly struck a chord for farmers many of whom are quite ambivalent about this kind of solution to any overproduction problem.

Ultimately, the production office decided on expansion for Emmerdale. As the script outline put it, it was "an expansion they desperately need if they are to be among the few small holdings to survive the next ten years of recession in farming", thus locking Emmerdale Farm into the structure of agriculture, operating against a background of unseen but numerous like small holdings. Significantly Joe, as the far sighted businessman, was a major figure in the story, encouraging the family to expand.

Recession for Emmerdale Farm was very much a minor story in the overall construction of the agricultural crisis in the serial, and one which, although it was foreshadowed in many conversations about the need for Emmerdale to grow to maintain viability, was generated by the happenings at NY Estates. By NY becoming the initiator and main locus of the drama surrounding the broad crisis theme, the problem was totally entrenched in a separate *economic* sphere, the economic being privileged in stories about NY. Thus, Emmerdale responded to developments at NY, the metaphor for the wider recession. Emmerdale came into the story about NY getting out of

milk production and took advantage of the sale of herd and quotas to expand, their ultimate solution to diminishing returns and the inability of the farm to support five adults and two children plus give some income to both Joe and Henry Wilks as shareholders. Thus they expanded as NY contracted. The drama in this situation derived from Jack's reticence to involve Emmerdale with NY Estates as an example of the agribusiness he deplores. Though they were already tenants of NY for some fell grazing land, the act of leasing quotas involved them with hated big business even further and troubled his conscience as well as his image of independence. This was only a problem for Jack, the serial's social conscience. Matt and Jackie, as well as Henry and apparently their bank manager, saw this form of expansion as the only thing which would save the farm for the future. Interestingly, farmers in the dales (among others) identify farmers with large bank loans as those who are in greatest difficulty in the current crisis, but such economic actualities are not for Emmerdale and certainly banks were still happy to lend to individual farmers they assessed as sound (Barclays Bank 1987/1988).

In early 1988 the production office of the serial commissioned an agricultural business analysis by computer of all of the enterprises in the serial to decide on their viability and if not, what would be needed to support the numbers involved. The story editor explained that this was necessary since the media profile of agriculture was so high that the public knew a lot about farming and it therefore became even more important to "get it right". That said, he pointed out that, as a soap opera farm, Emmerdale had a flexibility that the dales farmers never have. "We can do anything, diversify, get extra land from somewhere, even find minerals on Emmerdale land".

The final theme for the year, that of Matt inheriting a rundown farm on Emmerdale's borders from an old man he had helped, was evidence of the truth of this comment. Although it was unclear when I ceased monitoring the

programme in February 1988 what exactly Matt and Dolly would decide to do with the farm, one possibility was that the land could be run in with Emmerdale, thus expanding the farm in a way generally impossible for actual dales farmers. The other option, that of Matt and Dolly splitting away from Emmerdale and taking over this new farm, was also a solution to the problem of the balance of land, labour and income at Emmerdale which would bring both farms closer to the forms and organisation likely to be found in the dales. The programme makers were very aware of this aspect of the idea, since the lack of this balance has been criticised by *Emmerdale*'s audience many times. In many ways, obtaining more land was a solution to the need for expansion closer to the hearts of most farmers than the increasing of the milk herd and production which Emmerdale finally adopted. Land is still the basis of the enterprise which makes other kinds of expansion possible and it is very rare for a farmer to suddenly acquire much desired additional land of the quantity that Matt did in this story. But here, as often before, it was the problem rather than the solution which was 'real'.

I now turn to some of the more general consequences of *Emmerdale Farm*'s particular construction of rural crisis in 1987 within the overall situation. In particular, since this chapter is specifically exploring the dimension of the process of representation which involves the relationship between social constructions of rural crisis in the dales by dalesmen, through experience, and by the serial, through dramatisation, I consider how *morality*, by replacing politics, effects a transformation between the two, such that the latter is expanded into a much wider commentary and critique of late twentieth century Britain, particularly the struggles for and against a new hegemonic order of Thatcherism.

CONCLUSION

The interaction of the continuing serial genre with various, contesting, discourses and constructions of the rural generally and the overproduction crisis in particular produces a dimension of the representation process which can be explored in the transformation between the construction of crisis through experience by dales farmers and that developed and presented by television personnel in *Emmerdale Farm*. This can be conceptualised as two related but different sub-systems. One is concerned with the experience of dales farming in the midst of a crisis of agricultural overproduction, the other with making a serial centred on the fate of the rural inhabitants of *Emmerdale Farm*'s world in the midst of a version of such an agricultural crisis. Common to both are the nationally available and contested constructions of crisis by state, Government and various media, which are simplified and directed in their interaction with each sub-system in different ways which are generated by the different dispositions, purposes and experiences of the social agents who are also differentially constituted historically.

In the dales, the situation farmers faced was complex, nuanced and uncertain. Some parts were marked out by the specificities of their region (especially their reliance on sheep), some by the particularities of individual situations, others by the problems of British agriculture and the balance between the different branches of production. Further complications flowed from the economic and political articulation of British agriculture with their competitors in the EEC and the difficult relations between the EEC and US and other foreign agricultural producers (*Guardian* 16.11.87: 6). At all times the dales farmers were constructing at least part of their situation as crisis through the articulation of their own regional and product specific experience and the overarching and national discourses in which agriculture was constructed as gripped by an ongoing, EEC wide crisis. Indeed, their own

constructions contributed to the contestation which marked these discourses. The particularities of their own situations at all times provided the privileged readings of these constructions and therefore the diversity of understandings of crisis which different farmers had.

Emmerdale Farm's world of rural recession was less one of contestation over the *definition* of rural crisis, though the production team tried hard to capture something of the essence of the dales farmers' situation in their construction of plot and incident. Their very aim to do this, usually stated in terms of dramatising the social consequences of crisis in the countryside, was part of *their* situation in which they were empowered as television workers to explore the workings of the world. The technical, organisational and genre demands of their work situation provided one set of parameters within which this intellectual exploration of agricultural crisis could occur. Therefore, rather than seeking to reproduce the complexities of overproduction and farmers' responses, through dramatisation and the imperatives of soap opera, the serial simplified and ordered the multiplicity of conflicting and complicating factors. It established a hierarchy of importance and options which in turn shaped the construction of crisis in a particular way. Some factors were given great prominence while others were marginalised or ignored, not according to their pertinence for dales farmers, but according to the logic of the serial's production.

One significant point of interest comes from considering the contrast between the lived events of the dales farmers and their television versions. The producers of *Emmerdale Farm* constructed the serial in terms of a general opposition between NY Estates and Emmerdale Farm as the embodiment of the experience of all family farms. This essentially encapsulated their understandings about farming within nationally available discourses about the post-war developments towards more and more efficient agriculture in capitalism. The options for Emmerdale Farm, the

family farm, were always explored in the context of the relationship with NY Estates and a universe of invisible competitor farms. Emmerdale stood as the exemplar of the latter which denied the wide differentiation between family farms while concentrating on those features, such as work relations encompassed by family relations, which they had in common. These relations with NY and the assumption of a background of like family farms shaped the logic of plot development and became part of the construction of an overproduction crisis in 1987. NY experienced overproduction as an immediate problem to which they must develop fictive but plausible economic strategies. For Emmerdale Farm, the problems were not so immediate and yet, through the construction of opposition, it had to respond to the television version of agricultural overproduction by a drive to expand its resources and its output. NY's downfall, was countered by Emmerdale's expansion, both within the same problematic economic framework.

Hence, the fictional farm, driven only by the logic of television construction, reached an individual solution which was identical to that of all individual competing units in the lived world of agricultural overproduction, with markets and patterns of political subsidies and quotas. It is not a question of a conscious understanding and explanation of actual events which produced this 'mirroring effect', though personnel did enough research to have a good grasp of the situation. Rather it was the way in which opposition between family farm and agribusiness at the heart of dramatic construction drove the treatment of overproduction so that developments appeared in this way. In both the actual events and the television construction, the farmers experienced the problems of falling incomes and reviewed their viability. In both, the response within this broad process involved expansion and contraction. In the dales this frequently happened in the one unit, never as rapidly as was shown in *Emmerdale Farm* and size of operation often made both options impossible; in the serial,

expansion and contraction were separated, concentrated and used as *types*. In the former, expansion *and* contraction represented ongoing responses and strategies to survive and, if possible, prosper in a sector of society which has for the last forty years combined both uncertainty and prosperity in a differential way. In the serial, expansion and contraction were also influenced by actual events in the lives of the dales farmers as interpreted by a variety of people from the NFU adviser and the journalists of the farming press to the producer, but the final version occurred largely on the basis of the logic of the opposition between stereotypes of the rural place based on farming forms in a carefully crafted continuing serial. Thus the rural agricultural crisis which had many elements and contested constructions was taken for granted as a particular kind of phenomenon; simplified and translated into the contradictory and alternative strategies of expansion and contraction. The implementation of these strategies was used to explore the decision making processes, the human relationships, and through these some of the particularities and differences of each of the two kinds of farm. The serial neither 'mirrors' a 'real world' nor seeks to reproduce meticulously actual events, but the portrayal of the crisis of overproduction through precisely the two contradictory pulls which occurred in the dales is the 'accidental' by-product of the normal routines of television production.

The exploration of the construction of an overproduction crisis in agriculture in *Emmerdale Farm* had another dimension too, one which engages with wider discourses about the nature of the countryside. The oppositional logic of the serial, between Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates also provided this - the *moral*. Although both Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates were part of the same broad system of capitalist farming in Britain, one based on private ownership of land, production for a profit and with a form of production highly reliant on increasingly intensive methods, there were of course differences between them, both as types within the overall

system and in the consequences of their form of farming, particularly of scale. Constructing the contrast in the way that the serial does, through the personal, makes it possible to explore a further, moral, dimension through opposition. Jack opposes NY "and everything it stands for", often demonstrating this through his hatred of Alan Turner, its manager in Beckindale and his ambivalence towards his brother Joe, the Regional Manager. A potentially polarised moral view of farming in the dales is set up, with Emmerdale being good and NY bad. Through Jack, NY is time and again accused of farming only for profit, and the fact that Emmerdale too must operate at a profit is lost in assumptions of its moral worth. Thus the serial draws on the two strains currently prevalent in British culture about farmers, that they are caring stewards of the land or that they are greedy exploiters, separates them and attributes each to a different type of farming in a way which becomes a low level and simplified broad critique of capitalism, represented as the profit motive.

The notion that morality is a major dimension of the rural meant that a dominant focus of the stories of retrenchment and cutbacks at NY was the well-being of the men, the struggle to maintain their jobs and the continuation of the major employer in the dale. As the above account showed, so many elements of the construction of crisis were predicated on a moral community of farming, a given of the serial which is re-created, re-inforced over and over again. Even Emmerdale Farm's continuation fits with this. To construct a version of overproduction crisis, it was not essential that NY Estates should be so badly affected by the downturn in the rural economy that they should finally pull out of the dale. What *was* essential within the logic of the serial was that if this extreme was to be dramatised it was NY and not Emmerdale Farm which should be the focus, although every week small farms were folding up all over Britain. As the motif of the dominant stereotype of rural place, Emmerdale Farm though, has to be

continuous, indeed timeless, constituted essentially as it is supposed to have done for generations, the forging of farm and the Sugden family in a single unit which can withstand anything that fortune may send its way.

Thus, rather than the *definition* of crisis being contested in the serial, contestation focused on the *morality* of the forces which had produced overproduction - presumed to be agribusiness of which NY Estates is representative. The serial's construction of rural recession and crisis must be understood as part of its ongoing interrogation of the role of agribusiness in the development of British agriculture and, through this, at least an exploration, at times an overt critique, of the constitution and significance of business. Through the overproduction stories, the serial used NY Estates in particular to question the role of business in agriculture by pushing it to its limits in a recession situation. Agribusiness, and by extension business as a whole, was thus characterised as an enterprise dominated by (often faceless) people only interested in farming for profits, whose obligation is to urban shareholders and who will pull out of the dale, leaving people without jobs, as soon as the rate of return falls too low. In such a situation, Emmerdale Farm came into play as a moral category, committed to continuity and thus the moral community of farming. It is its icon; the only constituent unit of farming not tainted, able to generate the moral community.

Thus the serial's construction of the overproduction crisis suggested agribusiness as the cause of the crisis, while at the same time it greatly extended the terms of the crisis, beyond those of the state, the Government, the media or the dales farmers, though it included elements of all of these constructions. In particular, the serial's crisis lost the character of being many crises, the natures of which were contested among different farmers, as in the dales. For the serial there was one crisis, located in the economic understood in a particular way, and contestation became part of this rural crisis through the introduction of a moral dimension which extended its

analysis beyond what is wrong with agriculture; not just asking questions about how the rural should be, but also about British society as a whole.

To achieve this kind of analysis through a construction of crisis, the serial both depoliticised what in other constructions, including those of the dales people, was political and contested and privileged the economic. Thus economics was reified, constructed as a separate realm of existence even from the political with which it was interlocked in the actual events happening in Britain and the EEC at the same time (see Dumont 1977). In attributing an unquestioned facticity to agricultural crisis defined as economic, and therefore focusing the details of its own construction on exploring the social consequences of such a phenomenon, *Emmerdale Farm* treated the economic as a separate sphere of existence, over and above the actual activities of social agents. This enabled the serial to make explicit what was implicit in the dales, the idea that the agricultural crisis had originated elsewhere, to be imposed on the dales, and that it was only in the cutting back of production or the turning to alternatives that dales farmers were actors.

The serial's construction of crisis therefore obscured the social constructedness of agricultural overproduction, its generation by the activities of farmers themselves, banks, agricultural advisory bodies, politicians and investment bodies and its definition through the interaction of these activities and the wider political processes which determine their parameters. There was no EEC in *Emmerdale Farm*, no CAP and no British Government organisation of agriculture. The serial's 'imposed crisis' did not even feature the 'they' of the dales which provided a political dimension to the dales farmers' constructions of their agriculture in crisis. The construction of an agricultural crisis in *Emmerdale Farm* uncoupled economics from the political in every way, reconstructing it as a pure, taken-for-granted realm of existence which was imposed on farmers' activities. The economic was not

just separated out and reified, but was also naturalised, turning into 'one of those things' which constantly beset farmers, like a ewe dying in lambing or an outbreak of brucellosis. Both of these misfortunes afflicted Emmerdale Farm, and although the rural crisis story lasted longer than each of them, all three were resolved and the story, and the lives of the Sugdens, moved on.

The location of agricultural crisis in a reified economic sphere and its naturalisation as a force which imposed itself on the ongoing activities of farmers gave *Emmerdale Farm*'s construction of rural crisis a concreteness and at the same time a remoteness from 'normal' farming activities which were among the serial's contributions to the national construction of crisis through which most people in Britain understood what was happening in the countryside in 1987. Nonetheless, though reification of the economic had the effect of transforming dales constructions dealing with the same situations and events into non-political and moral categories, this very construction of a moral community of farming was itself political, engaging the serial in debate about the overproduction crisis in a way which questioned the very development of agriculture and indeed, some of the forces of late capitalism in British society as a whole.

That issues of business and the economy can be seen as intensely moral ones in British society is not new. The conservatism of the Thatcher Government is underpinned by a version of an ideal Britain of the individual, competition, free markets, the individual taking responsibility for his or her own existence, all of which make a strong appeal to morality. Further, the reification and naturalisation of the economy in *Emmerdale Farm*'s account of overproduction and crisis precisely corresponds to the way in which Mrs Thatcher's version of neo-liberalism also constructs the economy organically, as an entity which does things and with which governments

should not interfere.[20] Thus, more than just becoming part of the discourses constructing and contesting rural crisis, *Emmerdale Farm* can be understood to participate in contestation over the hegemonic order of the nineteen eighties, engaging with ideas of Thatcherist politics, suggesting, debating, and working through a variety of conceptions of an ideal British society. In this engagement and interpretation, agribusiness and the family farm come to serve as metaphors, something which is a central mechanism in *Emmerdale Farm*'s presentation of the environmental dimension of rural crisis, to be considered in the next chapter.

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20. Interestingly, a part of this ideology is the very notion of a 'natural' level of unemployment, a concept that explicitly seeks to deny the social and political *constructedness* of the economic.

CHAPTER SIX

CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT: BUSINESS AND STEWARDSHIP IN *EMMERDALE FARM*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of overproduction and the budgetary problems of the CAP were closely related to the second dimension of the construction of a rural crisis in the nineteen eighties in Britain, concern over conservation and the environment. As an issue, or rather a multiplicity of interrelated issues, conservation was prompted by the deleterious effects on the environment of post-war farming intensification. A climate of debate about the need for change in farming practice and organisation to reduce agricultural surpluses also meant that attention turned to the reforms which conservationists, critical of the drive to maximise production, had been demanding for decades. Thus the environmental dimension of rural crisis also was constituted by the contestation of the constructions of many interest groups, each of which attempted to attract both a consensus and the application of policy for its particular position.

This chapter considers some of the major contending discourses through which an environmental focus was given to the construction of a rural crisis. It furthers the investigation of how the countryside itself was constructed, particularly as an environment which is unique, quite different from the urban environment of most Britons. It explores how the dales farmers reacted in various ways to the conservation debates, themselves constructing versions of rural crisis as it involved the environment. In this exploration farmwork, by which farmers both maintain themselves and produce, not just food, but also their own identities, was central. Farmwork is

a major social domain for dales farmers, and one in which they regularly accommodate the twin tendencies in agricultural production of business and nurture or stewardship. These tended to operate as a contradiction in some other discourses about the environment and conservation (Lowe et al 1986: 103, 4, 129, Shoard 1980). Only when farmers confronted other discourses about conservation in the running of their farm enterprises, were the ideals of business and stewardship transformed into contradiction.

Emmerdale Farm also confronted the issue of conservation by tending to oppose business to stewardship. In order to explore the transformation in the process of representation which occurs in the relationship between different constructions of the Dales through the issue of conservation, business and stewardship with their cultural elaborations of efficiency and progress on the one hand and nurture and longevity on the other will be understood as tropes (Fernandez 1986, Lakoff and Johnson 1980). As metaphor and metonym, business and stewardship were politically active terms within the discourses through which conservationists, farmers' representatives, the Government, researchers and academics sought to make constructions of farming through the notion of environment crisis. These discourses empowered some social agents and disempowered others. In *its* construction of conservation and environment through fiction, *Emmerdale Farm* also used these potent tropes operating within other discourses. In order to uncover the full political significance of a conservation crisis constructed in this way, it is necessary to explore their construction of business and stewardship with that of dales farmers who generally succeeded in accommodating the two ways of conceptualising farming. The separation and opposition of business and stewardship, and thus their transformation, particularly within the soap opera form, created an entirely different significance for the politics of farming and environment in the context of television. Once again, it will be seen to have meaning in the

entire contested arena of Thatcherite conservative politics, rather than being contained within rural and farming issues.

CONFLICT AND CONTESTATION ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

> The problem is that most of the technological, managerial and economic influences behind modern farming and forestry are incompatible with the kind of husbandry most suitable for maintaining the nation's wildlife habitats and traditional landscapes (Lowe et al 1986: 64).

In all versions of the environmental crisis of the British countryside in the late nineteen eighties, issues of conservation were connected at some point to overproduction and the fact that no longer did the land need to be as productive. Farming at the same level of efficiency (indeed with the inevitable improvements from research and development), but with less demand, required less land and less people (see also Chapter Seven). This gave impetus to the consideration of conservation measures for protecting the environment; measures which were directly connected to overproduction through the farming organisation and methods which had helped produce it.

The technology and intensive farming methods which had enabled the surplus levels of production now threatening the CAP were also held largely responsible for much of the degradation of environments all over Britain; the destruction of plant and wildlife species, pollution of the waterways, problems of access for the public and the rendering similar of once diverse landscapes (Lowe et al, 1986, MacEwen and MacEwen 1987, Shoard 1980). Along with these drives in farming, went the plethora of privileges which had been designed to encourage more and more efficient production - absence of planning controls on farm development, non-rateability of farmland, state and EEC payments, grants and supports and tax exemptions, free (until 1987) farm advice through ADAS, a special

relationship between farmers' representatives and the Ministry of Agriculture (now MAFF). Indeed, farming was the only industry to have its own ministry with the minister a member of Cabinet (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987).[1] At the same time, technological and capital inputs into farming had displaced labour. Coupled with the farm amalgamations which were increasing as falling farm incomes forced people off of the land, this trend had reduced labour available to preserve the farming landscape; walls, fences, buildings were falling into disrepair and hillsides were becoming infested with bracken (Lowe et al 1986, see also *Farmers Weekly* 7.8.87: 12).

Conservation issues in British farming were argued by a multitude of groups and statutory bodies, locking the public, farmers, government, scientists and academics in debates about conservation and the countryside. It is not possible or desirable in this chapter to cover comprehensively these debates as they involved *all* participants. Necessary though are the dominant strains of the discourses through which various social agents defined and contested a rural *environment* crisis and the power implications these had as they constructed particular kinds of countryside. The discourses through which social agents did battle in various arenas were highly political, authorising some agents over others and empowering them to define the problem and consequently, its solution.

Most major discourses constituting the environment debate were dominated by what one academic work calls "the separation of nature and landscape conservation from the promotion of the economic exploitation of rural resources" (Lowe et al 1986: 59). Though this division in the countryside was evident in the representation of interests in the countryside,

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1. There is not really the space to consider all of these measures and their effects on farming and the environment in detail here. Good general accounts for the situation up until the late nineteen eighties are given by Lowe et al (1986), MacEwen and MacEwen (1987), Shoard (1980, 1987), Newby (1985).

the same authors tell us that, unlike many conservationists, the general public saw no contradiction between agriculture and rural conservation, at least in the actions of farmers (Lowe et al 1986: 119). That aside, the conservation debate was constituted by the ways in which various discourses operated to come to some accommodation between the conservation and exploitation of the countryside in their political positions.

A certain ambiguity, and thus space for contestation, was introduced through these discourses by the very notion of the countryside, and what exactly was meant by it. Here various stereotypes of the rural as place operated to provide foci for the political agendas in which they were constituted, bringing other connotations about the countryside with them. For some, the appearance of the landscape was the focus, for others it was a concept of nature generally and then more specifically, the actual, diverse environments with their unique flora and fauna.[2] Discourses which focused on the appearance of the landscape were quickly rebutted by farmers who characterised them, and the arguments about conservation which they supported as the misguided arguments of "townies". Here farmers themselves employed discourses of difference between rural and urban and used stereotypes of urban dwellers to authorise themselves by "proving" that only farmers understood and knew what was necessary for the countryside.

Such concerns for appearance, for landscape as *scenery*, were inscribed in the aims of various planning mechanisms for protecting the countryside, and even where proposals like those of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) went far beyond mere appearance, part of the response of the farming press often chose to represent them through the

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2. Several authors point out that the split between the ecological focus and that on the scenery, the appearance of the landscape underpinned the separation between the two government bodies responsible for environment, The Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987, Lowe et al 1986).

more limited aims. Thus the farming press characterised such conservation measures as constructing the countryside as a "museum", or ignoring the need for "progress" in the rural as well as urban areas:

> The planners and Council for the Protection of Rural England have imposed their view of a preserved, unchanging countryside on us. But their countryside never existed. So the rural economy is dying (letter to *Farmers Weekly* 1.5.87: 48).

> Farmers are refused permission to use existing buildings, for example, as a shop for farm products. The result is that planners have caused much unemployment; people have left and schools have closed. They want the countryside to be a museum (letter to *Farmers Weekly* 3.7.87: 72).

Such was the feeling in the farming press and among farming representatives, that the *Farmers Weekly* reported minister of state John Gummer saying of the ESA arrangements, "We must not lose touch with reality. We want the countryside to be farmed, not to be a museum. And we don't want it run by weekenders" (24.7.87: 14). There was political value for farmers in giving conservationists and planners a stereotypical urban identification which implied that they had less right to the countryside. Imputing to them the use of a stereotype which constructed the countryside as not just unchanging, but located in the past, was part of this strategy.

Such arguments set rural people against urban, the latter only being interested in the countryside's appearance, for their own recreation, something which was very much connected with the ongoing arguments about access to the countryside (see Shoard 1987).[3] In the national arena, this confirmed farmers' superior knowledge and position to be the

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3. Marion Shoard was a prominent figure in this part of the debate about the rural environment, something which took the declaring and keeping open of footpaths as a major element. In 1987, her book *This Land is Our Land* was made into a documentary which caused considerable comment in the farming community, attracting both support and criticism in the farming press.

conservationists of the countryside. This argument was raised time and time again in the farming press and television coverage of the issues:

> Being on top of your work in a good farming enterprise is the only way to be a dedicated conservationist (letter to *Farmers Weekly* 15.1.88: 10).

> Husbandry is the only acceptable way of control [of bracken] as the alternatives are based on sprays which, in today's environmentally aware society, are unacceptable (*Farmers Weekly* 7.8.87: 12).

The Government too, tended to take the view that farmers made the best conservationists, preferring to replace the grants and subsidies for quantitatively increased agricultural production with paid schemes of set-aside, encouragement to diversify or to change farmers' practices to less environmentally damaging ones. Through such schemes the farmer was still in control, even in matters of conservation, of his own private rural domain. The desirability of catering for rural conservation, recreation and access demands of urban people by leaving control of the countryside in the hands of farmers, was stressed in the Government's report on land-use for the 1990s:

> The first is that often the best means of providing the required amenity "good" is for the farmer to produce it alongside his existing output. This is the principle behind the recent introduction of payments in environmentally sensitive areas to farmers to use traditional farming methods. Secondly, the farmer, as an entrepreneur, responds best to a framework of economic instruments, and can be expected himself to resolve conflicts between use if provision of the desired package of traded and non-traded goods is the one which is most economically attractive for him (National Economic Development Office (NEDO) 1987: 18).

This very Thatcherite conceptualisation of conservation supported farmers' claims to be the best persons (both in terms of position and knowledge) to provide for conservation and recreation aims (Lowe et al 1986).

There were two major interacting elements in the nationally available discourse favoured by farmers, which gave them authority in the conservation debate, allowing them to define what was wrong and how things should be solved. These were the idea that farmers had made the countryside and, the associated idea that the countryside was a living landscape, not just the product of human habitation, but the place of work of many people. Both elements had some purchase in the British political scene by virtue of the potency of ideas in British culture generally which they utilised.

Lowe et al point out that it was the location of the majority of the British population in the cities which left the countryside free to serve as an ideal in British society (1986: 12). It is precisely in this realm that one influential dales farmer, Mike Keeble, located his argument in the farming press about what was wrong with the countryside. He commented that, "The British yeoman has always been a proud man, a bastion of rural society who slowly fashioned Britain as we know it today" (*Farmers Weekly* 24.4.87: 43). Without going into Keeble's proposed solution of community co-operatives which he also acknowledged NFU leaders would not favour, it is worth looking at the constellation of ideas which are clustered in a statement like this, very common, one.

First, there is the dominant idea that it was the farmer who shaped the countryside. Even where they held views about the countryside as nature, conservation writers also acknowledged the truth of this, some pointing out that there *are* landscapes, like moorland, which would cease to exist without particular farming practices (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987). The difference was, that conservationists perceived some kind of limit having been reached, so that now farming activities were destroying the environment, giving rise to the need for some other kinds of controls while still keeping the farming base. Coupling the creation of the countryside idea to the criticism of

'museum making' in conservation policy, the farming groups often spoke of the continuity of a process of change which had always characterised the countryside.

Second, supporting the dominant idea is the conception of the British farmers himself as the yeoman, proud, individualistic with values carrying morally beyond a mere member of the petit-bourgeoisie.[4] For the conservationists, Shoard has repudiated this most common image of the yeoman farmer, caring for the land as he makes a living for his family, an image very much located in the family farm. Instead she points out the way in which farmers are businessmen, embedded in a system of capitalist agriculture and that, further, most land is still owned by the very largest landowners, despite the fact that the majority of farmers are owner-occupiers (1987: 145, 1986). She argues that the common image of farmers has worked against any real attempts to remove control of the rural environment from farmers, who continue to be seen as "wholesome" people, bred in the countryside which Lowe et al call the seat of "dependable gentlemanly virtues in British national culture" (1986: 99, see also Williams 1985) and therefore the "best custodians of the countryside" (Shoard 1987: 103). Shoard goes on to say that the strength of this view comes in part from the fact that farmers really *do* have lifestyles which, when located in modern, industrialised society, in part fit ideals people espouse:

> Apart from the inherent worthiness of food production as an activity, farmers do "real work". They are sturdy yeomen who are their own boss and they do not go on strike (1987: 103).

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4. Writing of the seventeenth century, Laslett points out that "Yeoman" as "the status name of the most successful of those who worked the land" was sentimentalised in this period, and that "the men who had held it under the old order became farmers under the new" (1965: 43).

Thus ideas about the value of what farmers do, coincide with the notions that the countryside is a more worthwhile and moral place, authorising farmers in matters of conservation.

The idea of the land as a special kind of property and, associated with this, the ethic of stewardship, are part of the constellation of ideas surrounding the two major ones discussed above. On the former, Keeble says in the same article:

> Land is only worth what it can produce and yet it is a national asset and must, as such, be preserved. The well run estate brought some order to rural life and removed the capital implications of land from the farmer (*Farmers Weekly* 24.4.87: 43).

Such a view is not totally at odds with conservationists' views, in which the problem lay in land having a high capital value, encouraging the exploitation of even the most marginal and ecologically delicate land, the ploughing of footpaths and damage to designated Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI)[5] (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987). Many conservationists could even embrace Keeble's rural community co-operatives idea, though as he says most farmers (including the NFU) would not. The discourses of the conservationists tended to stress the need for controls and stricter protection policies on land as *nature*, the national asset, a view which often has as *its* focus the urban population and its need for revitalisation in the countryside (Chapter Four, Shoard 1980, Crofts 1987). In contrast, Keeble's radical scheme is not based on any idea of nature and would appear to be trying to make farmers' control through ownership more workable, preserving land as

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5. SSSIs were for a long time one of the major conservation devices available. Designated and administered by the Nature Conservancy Council, there are 4,000 SSSIs which are protected, valuable environment sites. The reasons for protection are various. For example, they may represent one of the few remaining types of a particular ecological niche or they may sustain a plant, animal or insect population which is dying out elsewhere.

a national asset by preserving the economic viability of farming. This was the dominant strain in the nationally available discourses of farmers and their representatives and was supported by the Government which tended to stress economic strength and independence as the way to preserve the countryside (NEDO 1987). These proposals, even when not articulated as such, were underpinned by the concept of stewardship.

The stewardship ethic with its ideals of nurture and husbandry has land as its basis. It is an ethic which evolved within farming and the exploitation of the land, so must be explicated in terms of the farmers' presentation of its ideals. For farmers, land is not just a major means of production and capital investment, though it is most certainly this. It also has meaning outside of production processes, locating farming within nature (see also Gray 1984b). From the perspective of stewardship, the power and privilege of ownership are compromised, certainly legitimated, by higher, altruistic concerns and responsibilities. For farmers, stewardship brings about a reconciliation of the contradiction between conservation and exploitation of the countryside (Lowe et al 1986, Shoard 1987). Its evocation empowered farmers in the national environment debate (cf Lowe et al 1986: 103, 109).

For farmers, land is a crucial resource; necessary, highly desirable and one which is largely non-renewable. Its returns are long-term and possession of it is one basis of power in the rural community (Saunders et al 1978: 61, Rose et al 1976: 709). Linked to private ownership, the particularity of land generates one tenet of the ethic of stewardship. In this view, the land as a very special kind of property is not *owned* by the individual, so much as held in trust for the next generation. This entails a duty to protect, preserve and even improve the land so that it is handed on in the best possible condition. Rather than owners and exploiters, farmers are custodians, stewards (cf Newby 1985: 67-70) and continuity is central to this idea.

Associated with stewardship has always been an idea of service. Power through land ownership was also held to produce responsibilities (Newby 1985: 68). Any idea that landowners were self-seeking could be countered from within the stewardship ethic by sentiments of helping those less fortunate to ensure the continuity of the community. Through an extension of this view into the late nineteen eighties, the evocation of the steward's role by farmers' representatives in the conservation debates implied that, as well as keeping the land in good condition for the next generation, the farmers were holding the land in trust "for the nation". Stewardship here draws on, not just the continuity of family or the rural community, but also notions about the land as nature, above total individual ownership. The sentiments of one farmer in a parish in Herefordshire when he said, "Farmers have a vocation, they are custodians and stewards of the rural landscape, as well as business men and producers" (Lewis and Talbot-Ponsonby 1987: 155), directly coincided with the image of farmers being pushed by the NFU and the CLA (see also Lowe et al 1986) If correspondence in the farming press is any indication, the statement could well have been made by almost any farmer in England.

The publicity which conservation issues received throughout 1987, causing concern for the conservative Government which had been content to pass a toothless Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981,[6] forced the farmers' lobby groups onto the defensive for the first time since the war. Farmers and their representatives were very worried about their image as greedy exploiters of the land, costing the taxpayer money to destroy the countryside. Poll after poll, though ultimately ambiguous about causes and solutions,

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6. Further significance must be deduced from the fact that in 1988 Margaret Thatcher finally took up the cause of the environment (*Guardian Weekly* 9.10.88: 3). This has to be seen within a European context in which Britain had through many incidents and policies begun to get a reputation as not just the 'dirty man' of Europe, but also a country which was greatly endangering its continental neighbours (*Guardian Weekly* 11.9.88: 1).

reported the public very concerned about the countryside (Lowe et al 1986, Young 1987: 154). One response was to encourage farmers to be more conservation conscious. The CLA for example urged Gloucester farmers to donate more to the farmers' conservation body, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, to protect conservation work (*Farmers Weekly* 20.11.87: 17). The need for farmers to be more active in conservation became an important strand in the general farmers' discourse, even though attacks on "conservationists" generally and Friends of the Earth[7] and the Nature Conservancy Council still continued in the farming press. The issue was contested within the widest farming community.

The NFU, CLA and some farmers through their newspapers urged farmers not to harm further their image. In just one farming paper, the *Farmers Weekly*, they were warned not to plough footpaths (10.4.87: 7), given information about fines for farmers who allowed silage effluent to leak from their silos (24.4.87: 54), urged to demand adequate information about the harmful effects of agrochemicals (5.6.87: 37) and to leave hedging for winter to save wildlife and flowers (31.7.87: 10), pleaded with for research on bracken on conservation grounds (21.8.87: 10), told about organic and extensive alternatives (for example 1.10.87: 45) and grants to establish then (4.12.87: 13) and told how to save decrepit buildings (15.1.88: 12). Many farmers were genuinely concerned as the papers were able to report case after case of farmers responding to the need to farm differently to protect the environment. Many, already worried by the threat of their farms going into receivership because of high overheads and falling profits, were very defensive about the arguments of the various conservation groups, and

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7. Friends of the Earth (FOTE) was probably the major conservation group attacked by farmers in the press, so much so that Jonathon Porritt published an open letter in the *Farmers Weekly*, denying that FOTE was a "farmer-bashing organisation", stressing that there was no incompatibility between conservation and farming, only the drive of post war farming to produce more regardless of the costs (8.5.87: 43).

responded even to paid schemes like those of the ESAs, by protesting that they simply could not abide by the conditions as it would cost them money.

On the necessary and desirable relationship between the exploitation and conservation of the rural environment, there was not even agreement among farmers, let alone between farmers and other groups. The different constructions of farming through business and conservation were presented as accommodation in much of the farmers discourse. One important location of contestation *among* farmers precisely focused on the construction of a tension between farming as business and as stewardship. In 1988 there was an ongoing correspondence in the *Farmers Weekly* in which farmers hotly debated who were best situated to be conservationists, large, affluent or small farmers.

Farmers were still considering themselves as responsible for conserving the countryside; contestation arose over who was best placed to do it. This part of the debate is closely connected with one point on which most farming bodies (and the Government) seemed to agree; that farmers would have to be compensated for any loss of profit conservation measures caused,[8] and indeed for any responsibility that they were asked to take in protecting and preserving the countryside. This was a major element of the ESAs, the "up-take" rate of which the NFU and others clearly hoped would improve,[9] entrenching farmers as managers paid compensation (*Farmers*

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8. 1988 saw enormous payments (19 million pounds) made by the government to chicken farmers to compensate them for loss of sales because of the comments by Edwina Currie, the Conservative Junior Health Minister, about salmonella being rife in British eggs (*Guardian Weekly* 25.12.88: 3). The irony of this is that it was the practices of the farmers and their opposition to health and safety legislation to alter these practices which caused the problem in the first place. It is a further irony that it should be a Thatcher self-help, free market government which was forced to pay such compensation. Ideas about protection and compensation in all areas of agriculture will take a long time to die in the farming population, despite their counter ideas of independence and control.

9. In May, 1987, the uptake rate for the Pennine Dales ESA was reported to be only 25% of farmers (*Farmers Weekly* 8.5.87: 10).

Weekly 8.5.87: 10). Money was crucial for work to be done in both domains of preservation (compensation for say, not being able to get a second silage cut) and restoration (for example repairing walling or restoring hedges), especially where technology had replaced labour so that farmers would need to hire help for specific tasks. If the public wanted the amenity, the public, through taxes, would have to pay.

At the widest political level, the farmers' representatives, the NFU and the CLA, turned partly away from their public espousal of the ideals of progress and growth and now retreated into the image of the yeoman farmer, operating from within the family farm as custodian of, rather than interferer in, the countryside.[10] Even the CLA, historically the lobby group of the larger landowners, made a push to gain the membership of smaller owner-occupiers and publicised its success, presenting itself as a broadly based representative group rather than a lobby group of the elite (Lowe et al, 1986, Newby 1985: 68). That strand in British culture which admires the independent, self-reliant 'toiler of the soil' was openly exploited, and clearly found appeal in a society which used clean, 'natural' country settings to advertise anything from cheese to sanitary napkins. The contestation over farming and conservation produced a morally ambiguous public image of farmers with *both* greedy exploiter and worker with nature having high profiles.

These were some of the major strands in the nationally available contesting discourses through which an environment crisis of the countryside was constructed and lived by farmers and television workers in

10. This is extremely ironic given the very vocal protests of many small farmers that the NFU had let them down badly in terms of representing their interests, despite the 1985 document "Safeguarding the smaller farm" (*Farmers Weekly* 17.4.87: 54, 24.4.87: 49)).

their different social situations. In order to understand just what significance the construction of a version of this crisis in *Emmerdale Farm* had, more detail is needed on how *farmers* lived the crisis, constructing it through their everyday lives. This was a major dimension of the environment crisis; the actual front on which all other constructions joined to shape the countryside in particular ways. As the NEDO report stressed:

> Changes in the overall land use by UK agriculture will be the sum of decisions by individual farmers. Each will decide between several possible responses to policies and economic forces. The pattern of these responses will differ, depending on personal, financial and motivational circumstances (1987: 3).

This comparative part of the study will be made through considering the lives of farmers in the dales, since the serial purports to be at least partially a construction of these lives. The next section considers how farmers in the dales understood conservation and crisis, at what points it was contiguous with other nationally available discourses about the environment and where it diverged from them. Then it explores the ways in which, in representation, a transformation of this multidimensional situation was effected through the particular constructions made in *Emmerdale Farm.* The political significance of *Emmerdale Farm*'s presentation of the environment lies not only in this transformation, but also in soap opera's rendering of the whole British society through this local and regional dimension of an issue of national interest with strong moral overtones.

CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT IN YORKSHIRE DALES FARMING

Contestation rather than consensus characterised the political process by which groups struggled to establish domination for their definitions of crisis and agendas for solving the problems of the environment.

During the entire period in which the above arguments about ways to accommodate the conservation and exploitation of the rural environment were being developed and disseminated, farmers were being urged to become better businessmen, to improve their methods of exploiting the countryside. Indeed, in the discourses about overproduction emphasis was placed on improving their farms as businesses and learning to think like businessmen, even entrepreneurs, and this was deemed to be the answer for all problems in the countryside (for example, *Farmers Weekly* 24.4.87: 61, 27.3.87: S9, 10.7.87: 1, 11.9.87: 13, NEDO 1987: 9). Failure as businessmen was thought more likely to put farms into receivership than poor husbandry (*Sunday Times Colour Supplement* 14.12.86: 28-38, Whatmore et al 1987 a and b). Associated with this conceptualisation of the problems of farming, the old catch cries of "efficiency" and "progress" as the only answer were still very powerful indeed, regardless of their identification as the heart of the problem by many (for example Lowe et al 1986).

Where criticisms of farming in terms of greater, environmental needs had been acknowledged in the farming world, business was in some ways conceptualised in opposition to conservation, or more strictly speaking as a limit on what farmers could do themselves. Hence the many calls for public financial support if conservation aims were to be carried out by farmers. Going beyond the public discourses, to what farmers (here dales farmers) were actually doing and saying, there is a blurring of divisions between business and conservation. From the standpoint of the farm enterprise and that major domain of farmers' lives, farmwork, farmers generally accommodated what were seen as two impulses in farming in other kinds of representation.

The accommodation of business and conservation or stewardship derives from many features of farm production; the overlaying of workplace on the home, the singularity of land as one of its major means of production,

farmers' own participation in some of the widely held cultural assumptions about nature and the countryside and about the rural as different, unique, as well as conceptions of time and space generated by a production process still to an extent constrained by forces outside human control. Uniting all of these features is farming as a particular kind of work underpinning a particular kind of enterprise. The way in which farmers conceptualise farmwork means that work and enterprise cannot be separated. This is entirely appropriate to their petit-bourgeois location (Newby et al 1981)[11] but becomes far more than a class identity in the culture of farmwork. It is in this culture that business and conservation are accommodated daily for dales farmers.

THE CULTURE OF FARMWORK IN THE DALES

It is by now apparent that farmers did understand their farming through conceptions of the farm as a particular kind of productive unit located within the wider (EEC wide) economy.[12] To stress its business nature some farmers even employed the metaphor of the farm as a farmer's "factory floor".[13] This

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11. Especially with the rise of owner-occupation, farmers are essentially self-employed businessmen of varying sizes, with many of the same imperatives and problems of any other small businessman. They need to run their enterprises according to the need to make a profit, with all of the necessary considerations about keeping the cost of inputs low while boosting output as high as possible, given their calculations of profitability.

12. Tribe (1978) has traced the development of this idea about the farm enterprise as a radical change from conceptions of agriculture from a sole focus on good husbandry. He finds that ideas about the centrality of farm as productive unit begin to appear in the middle of the eighteenth century, so that to concern for good husbandry in successful farming was added the need to see farming as business requiring management methods for the raising of incomes and profits (1978: 67; see also Newby (1987: 27) on this development).

13. One of the things for which some dales farmers criticised *Emmerdale Farm* was not showing the farm to be a business, for leaving out the amount of despised paper work (VAT forms, farm health check records, records of livestock numbers and milk yields, accounts) and the limitations which are set by the many regulations, the demands for money which involve coming under the regime of banks. For many farmers, these elements do set parameters and moreover involve them in hours of work over and above their physical labours on the farm, but this is seldom part of farming in the serial.

is a contentious description, stressing as it does sameness and the location of farming in an industrial economy by virtue of management, productiveness and profit. The metaphor is denied by some, especially the smaller farmers,[14] as an appropriate characterisation of farming. These farmers stress difference, the particularity, and even a *moral* superiority, of farming as something higher or better than mere industrial production. They will often use a version of the metonym of farming as stewardship, usually using words like "caring" or "looking after", and stress the nature of farming in its original terms of husbandry (Tribe 1978), located in the nurturing of the land and its products with skill and deep knowledge.

Thus, dales farming is constituted with ambiguity, inconsistency and contradiction, not just by farmers' representative groups, a non-farming public or in its depiction in a television soap opera, but also by farmers themselves. Yet it is not experienced as such by farmers in their everyday lives. Daily, they make accommodations between the two ways of constructing farming, in the work which they do, even in the most apparently economically oriented feature of their farming, selling at auction.

As petit-bourgeois producers, farmers are also responsible for the selling of their product. The selling of livestock, especially sheep and cattle, which is still done largely through auction in the dales, is the major culmination point of farming as business.[15] Farmers often quote the

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14. Newby et al point out that it is precisely the smallest farmers who may find farming as business uneconomic and are the ones for whom state and EEC have provided help to maintain them on the land because of this non-viability (1981: 45, 46).

15. In Britain there are areas of exchange in agriculture which have been taken over by capital (Newby 1985: 115-119, Whatmore et al 1987 a and b, Marsden et al 1987); see also *Farmers Weekly* 17.4.87: 34 which comments on the role of fashion in demands which are then made on producers), even where the whole farm has not been subsumed by large food or finance companies which in turn gain control over production. Cereal producers buying seed grain through agents to whom they are then contracted to sell the crop is one such area, but even in the production of milk, the monopoly buying by the Milk Marketing Board not only regulates the market and sets the prices, but also places demands on the producers, such as the regulating of milk storage on farms and collection. Even the season in which to concentrate calving can be manipulated by using differential price ranges for different times of the year.

operation of "supply and demand" to explain the details of what they do and when they do it, an explanation which derives a great deal of weight from the way in which livestock is sold in the auction mart.

The auction mart is an example of the operation of a market.[16] Producers bring their commodities into the ring and potential buyers bid against each other for them. The price is affected by the amount of stock available compared with the kind of demand there is for that stock and for most products the sellers can not know in advance what price they will get.[17] Demand is formed out of many conditions, both economic and seasonal.[18] In 1987 for example, store lamb prices were high, in part because of the high, government controlled prices for finished lambs, but also because there was good grass available which meant that farmers could easily keep a few more lambs for a bit longer. This gave manoeuvrability to sellers of both finished and store lambs, because they could afford to refuse prices they thought too low and keep the lambs until shortages raised the prices again. In the auction mart therefore, business considerations of price, relative profits and costs are articulated with the particularities of farm work, the care of livestock, the goodness or badness of the season and how one region's seasonal conditions compare with anothers.

In auction selling as business, farmwork (especially nurture and knowledge) is made socially significant (cf Gray 1984a). In this very public form of exchange sellers literally and in the form of guarantee, "stand by"

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16. At least this is the way in which sellers experience it, though the buyers can often be formed into tight cartels.

17. Farmers experience this as a market when they sell their stock, regardless of the intervention payments and various support payments implicated in the raising and selling of the stock. The exception to this is the fat lamb market in which, although farmers cannot know the price they will get in the ring, there is a government guaranteed payment (or was in 1987) which means that a bid that falls short of that sum will be made up by the government according to the prices agreed for that region in that week.

18. In 1987 calf prices were pushed up by increased demand from the continent and the fact that milk herd sizes had been depleted because of the milk quotas.

their animals.[19] Selling is also about farmers' status and prestige, since the animal embodies their husbandry; their knowledge and individual techniques, their skills and capabilities. As the farmers stand for the animals in the ring, so do the animals stand for the farmers, for their skill and their reputation within a group of peers in which farming is of dominant interest.

Even the prices "made by" the animals involve husbandry reputation rather than just economics. High prices and reputation interpenetrate. The public nature of the exchange (prices for cattle are even printed with the vendor's name in the local newspaper), makes it important for farmers to have their animals knocked down for the highest amount possible. They are even prepared to sacrifice cash in the hand to achieve this. One feature of many of the sales at the auction mart in North Yorkshire is the convention of giving "luck". At some stage in the bidding the seller offers one pound, five pounds or occasionally even ten pounds in "luck". This amount will be returned to the buyer, in the hope that it will drive the price higher. Simply as a strategy for getting a higher price "giving luck" is a bit of a gamble, since the price may possibly not go that much higher. But often it does. The price "made" (by the animal) is the final price at which the auctioneer knocked the animal down with no mention of the "luck".[20] It is *this* price which becomes public, and high prices become part of the farmer's reputation, part of the plethora of stories of his farming life and his skill which are a crucial element of who he is in the farming community.

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19. Animals may be returned to the seller after the sale if something is found to be wrong, especially if they have been sold as sound.

20. "Luck" was occasionally elaborated as "the luck of the land". Farmers tended to talk about the practice in terms of farming as business; saying that it was the bigger farmers who started it, trying to make more for their animals and that once *they* had begun the practice the smaller farmers who could less afford to give back any money had no choice but to comply. Small farmers and some farmworkers thus used this as another expression of opposition to the larger farmers..

The irreducible relationship between business and husbandry or nurture means that it can never be just business. Preparation of lambs for the 'back-end' gimmer Mule lamb sales of North Yorkshire are a perfect example of the way in which other cultural practices and meanings overlay the market form, transforming the simple transaction into an expression of husbandry as well. Though for some farmers this is their major source of income, the sale of their most important "crop" there are aspects of the gimmer sales which are incomprehensible within the simple market form. The time-consuming presentation of these lambs involves close clipping of the faces and necks of the Mule lambs to emphasise their big noses and the markings of their faces, sometimes called "bringing the natural colour to the surface". The lambs are "bloom-dipped" up to three times at considerable expense to turn the wool a dark, brownish colour.[21] Given that these lambs are being sold to breed good meat lambs, conformation (size, the way they are built, length and breadth of body, leg and hind-quarters) rather than colour and dark face markings is what is important. It is the dales farmers themselves who value the big noses and the faces with the darkest markings. *They* agree that neither have anything to do with the kind of meat carcass the next generation lamb will have. Indeed, in the push to overcome some of the problems of over-production through concentrating on *quality* of stock rather than quantity, this was one of the features singled out by farming experts. The *Farmers Weekly* for example said, "Mouths that wear better and small teats that allow lambs to feed more easily must be given priority over pretty Mule face markings" (31.7.87: 7). Farmers had taken no notice of such comments in the 1987 gimmer Mule sales, for in these time-consuming rites of

21. The British Wool Association stand at the 1987 Great Yorkshire Show in Harrogate had a display of farming practices which spoiled wool and thereby devalued it. "Bloom dipping" was one of the practices shown. Of course, since the dales farmers are selling the dipped lambs, it is not they who will lose money by the practice.

presentation, once again there is the articulation of capitalist competition with prestige and reputation as an important and public expression of the relations between farmers. Farming understood as business is compromised, indeed transformed in precisely that arena which would seem to be the least contentious, that of the market.[22]

As a particular kind of petit-bourgeois producer, farmers can also understand these animals which they are selling as the product of their own hard work and skill through a whole year's (sometimes more for bullocks and cows bred themselves) seasons. This is why selling is about husbandry as much as it is about business and exchange itself. It is also what gives farmwork the dominant focus in farmers' conceptions of what they do. In farmwork, farmers constantly accommodate what others understand as a tension between business and stewardship, efficiency and nurture, exploitation and conservation.

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22. Whatmore et al (1987a and b) found this in other parts of England too, though in different domains of farming. Various stewardship features of farming can become part of business type calculations, even compromising the business ideals of efficiency and maximum profit-making. In particular there are the needs of the family through time, which draw on ideals of stewardship and therefore continuity. Here, strategies will be affected by the intertwining of the relative states of the family and the farm (Nalson 1964).

THE ACCOMMODATION OF BUSINESS AND STEWARDSHIP IN FARMWORK

The reconciliation of caring and business, the ways in which dales farmers themselves articulate the different strains in farming in the basic practice of farmwork, needs to be explored through the major components of work as farmers conceptualise them. Here farmers are also influenced by constructions of rural place within the discourse of urban/rural difference (cf Newby et al 1981: 9).

FARMWORK AND NATURE

In Chapter Four we considered the seasons as part of dales farming. Though not determinant, the importance of the seasons as one, very visible limit to pastoral activity, encourages farmers to conceptualise farming within nature, something which is relentless, continuous, prior to and bigger than the human farming enterprise. The production of the farming commodity in the dales tends to be seasonal (though this is not so for all products; cf Newby 1985: 78)), the dales conditions preventing much of the flexibility through technology which is being introduced in other parts of agriculture. Seasonal cycles affect much farmwork, so farmers need to be sensitive to patterns and variations to calculate times of tasks. Sensitivity to seasons in the production process underpins both business and nurture calculations and articulates them in the stage of the work reached (Chapter Four).

The conception that they are working with nature colours dales' farmers' understanding of farming as far more than just a business. Certainly as business it is different, because of nature. Motivations and approaches in a particular task are often explained in terms of "supply and demand", but farmers will just as often say that, "its nature isn't it?" Nature acts as a *limit* for

them with the weather being a prime example. No matter how well regulated and business-like the farming industry becomes, no matter what technological improvements can be made, the weather, as a major particularity of farming can at any time subvert the best calculations about expected yields and prices. In only a few short days, even hours, weather can cost a farmer hundreds of pounds and send all of his calculations awry. Business calculations articulate with calculations about breeding, planting and seasonal cycles to make farming a different kind of enterprise from the small-scale production of almost any other commodity.

Farmers can organise, manipulate, contain and overcome much, but at bottom, especially where livestock is concerned, they see nature ruling. Breeding cycles, incomprehensible deaths in lambing or calving, sheep being struck by lightning or for the rain spoiling the harvest or hay making; all these represent limitations to business by nature and help shape husbandry skills. A great deal of work in livestock rearing and fattening is seen in nurture terms; not really interfering but rather tending while "nature" does the work (cf Bourdieu 1987: 102, also Gray's (1984b) use of the term "watching over" in this context).

Nature comprehended as those finally uncontrollable parts of the world operating outside of human forces, is limit and even foe to be struggled against by farmers, but it is also a source of much pleasure in the work. It sets farmwork apart from unpalatable toil in factories or cities, an idea which is influenced by rural/urban difference. In contrast farmers speak of their pleasure in the openness of the countryside, the fresh air, the living and working with nature. Working with nature represents for them a freer, better life. In this the dales farmers have much in common with farmers all over Britain (cf Newby 1979, Lewis and Talbot-Ponsonby 1987).

Much of the freedom and independence which farmers speak of in relation to their work is really associated with their self-employed status as

businessmen. Newby et al note the petit-bourgeois location of such fiercely held values (1981: 65). At the business level this can either be illusory, with farmers working to pay off bank loans, the very situation which was causing problems in a situation of overproduction (Chapter Five), or a burden which may even drive men to suicide (*Guardian* 12.3.87: 25[23]). The perception that they work with and in nature gives a powerful positive and emotional content to their understandings of their freedom. It becomes not just freedom from particular employment relations, but a special kind of individual freedom outside of relations between people.

Farmers' ideas that they work with nature give the same imputed meaning to much of which is socially and historically constructed about British farming. This *includes* business calculations, like the impetus to expand out of trouble. Because this had come to seem natural, banks were having to work hard in 1987 to convince farmers that it was not an appropriate strategy. Historically generated social arrangements had come to seem natural and were given specific meaning in farming by the significance of nature to farmwork.

FARMWORK AND LAND

Land is the basis of farmers' independence (Newby et al 1981: 52). It is a commodity, with a such high monetary value today that even a hundred thousand pounds would only buy a very modest farm.[24] It also represents values which cannot be measured in money. Land is the major capital investment for farmers, and maintaining the value of that investment is

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23. In 1987, Government figures showed that farmers and farm workers were the third highest category in the suicide statistics for 1979/80 and 1982/83.

24. It is these prices which prevented the young from entering farming, something which concerned many groups involved in agriculture in 1987.

important for the farm as a business, both in sheer terms of the value of the farm, but also because land is the *basis* of dales farming. Land is central to the *business* of farming, but its particularity is that it encapsulates both this business identification and the nurturing which is inherent in the stewardship ideal. It gives particularity to farmwork, despite its capitalist location.

Like the tourists, farmers speak of the beauty of the dales landscape, though the comment, "but you can't eat the view" may follow. More dominant is the perception of the land as a landscape which they helped to form with their particular kind of economic activity. Creators not just carers, the way in which they speak of land reflects this relation. Consider the term to "take in" land. This refers to uncultivated land, still wild and therefore indisputably nature, being brought into cultivation and use. Though land is necessarily prior to the farmed landscape, farming produces the landscape as it produces other agricultural products through the appropriation and *control* of nature in the form of land.

The centrality of land as both a resource and as an investment means that it requires constant improvement and attention, all of which costs money. The necessity and uniqueness of land as a non-renewable resource in the push to improve agricultural production makes farming land special. Land has represented a positive economic factor in farm *businesses*. Farmers have been able to get grants to drain land, improve pastures, reseed fields and to fertilise, actions performed in the interests of better stocking rates, better yields and better profits in return for investments and in the name of efficiency. Such thinking in relation to land is entrenched in farmers' day to day work routines and relations. They calculate the costs of inputs and regulate the ordering and use of new seed or fertiliser according to needs and best returns. But in work, these kinds of tasks are undifferentiated in terms of importance to the land from other kinds of tasks like muck-spreading, harrowing, checking and clearing drains and clearing rushes and

bracken. All the tasks are about maintaining the land properly as a useful resource. Nurture and efficiency intertwine in this overall objective, providing both long and short term goals in relation to land in farming.

Land is crucially implicated in the identity of the farmer and the farm family and through the care of the land we return to the idea of farmers' reputations within a community of like farmers. The condition of the land is evidence of skill and hard work of the farmer. As nature, the land is a kind of entity of its own, as is evident in the notion of "luck of the land" in auction sales where part of the condition of the animal was attributed to the land rather than the farmer. To sell this part would be "wrong" so the luck could leave the land. The articulation of this notion of land as an entity with the farmer's responsibility for care accords with the land being spoken of as in "good health"/ "heart" or not.

Further, the identity between the farmer and his land means that the condition of the land may signify neglect and therefore poor husbandry on the part of the farmer. This can articulate with suspicions about bigness (cf Newby et al 1981: 65), so that smaller farmers in the dales sometimes attributed this kind of neglect to the big farmers who had acquired too much land to care for it properly.[25] This was also evidence of a further uniqueness of landed property; its publicness and centrality to the landscape. Farmers who ran down their landed property at the very least spoiled the *landscape*, the environment available to all even though the land itself was owned by individuals. There is a tension between land and landscape which is a rural manifestation of at least part of the wider conservation debate.

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25. This point has been made by Lowe et al (1986) and Shoard (1987). They argue that the replacement of labour by capital means that there are less people working on the land to maintain the countryside. This what leads to neglect of walls and fences, to the infestation of bracken and reeds and to the dereliction of buildings.

The moral dimension of the small farmers' criticism about lack of care for the land can extend to the whole farm, so that several farmers spoke of fragmenting a farm through sale as "wrong". It was the destruction of a "good farm", and should not be done, though the financial incentives provided an acceptable excuse where poor care did not. At the level of the day to day routines, the morality in the nurturing of the land comes through in the way in which farmers speak of keeping the land up to peak condition. They will speak of cutting back rushes or bracken or clearing drains as 'cleaning' the land, so that an affirmation of well-kept land will be that it is 'good, clean land', an idea which is related to the notion of the land being in 'good health'. Even the common comment of "that's gay[26] good land" will imply a human care component as well as the possibility that the land is 'naturally' fertile to begin with, as opposed to 'poor', probably hill, land. This is often made explicit by the follow-up comment that so-and-so has "allus been a hard worker".

These ideas with their implicit moral valuations also involve an aesthetic component which makes the way in which dales farmers understand the land in farming akin to the eighteenth century views which Thomas describes (1987: 255-258). In this early-modern period Thomas shows how ideas about the separation of nature and culture in farming came to establish neatness, the way of indicating this separation, as the location of all which was aesthetic in farming. This was the beginning of the era of planting parks around country houses (see also Darley 1978). Significantly, this period also saw organisation to better profits as part of farming (Tribe 1978). As Thomas says, the key to this feature was fertility. Neatness and symmetry demonstrated the fertility of the land, its fulfilment in being utilised, compared with the sterility and uselessness of the mountain landscape

26. "Gay" is northern dales dialect for "very".

(1987: 258). These ideas prevail in the dales where the fertility and control of the land are still problematic, certainly more so than the arable south and east with its better soil and flatter terrain. This is why reeds or boggy ground have the power to offend and why farmers take deep satisfaction and pleasure in 'clean' and 'healthy' land, finding it beautiful. This beauty can then be transferred to the act of working the land, so a scene in which all farmers are out in their tractors mowing or silaging, especially after a period of inactivity, is part of an aesthetic for farmers. The needs of the farm as business enterprise produce an aesthetic closer to the eighteenth century than that of urban dwellers since industrialisation, for whom wild nature is beautiful (Thomas 1987: 268, 269).

Within farmwork land is more than commodity or means of production. It is also an important concept through which farmers think about their work and skill and that of other farmers and in which ideals about work are expressed. In farmwork, business and nurture interact to produce complex valuations of land as a central feature of farming and farmers.

FARMWORK AND ANIMALS

If land is made ambiguous by the fact that it focuses both business calculations and notions of nurturing and perpetuating something which is natural, then so too are animals and in much the same way. Though animals are property, they are means of production which to an extent produce the product of lambs themselves while farmers try to minimally intervene (cf Gray 1984a).

Farmers exploit animals, feeding them and injecting them to be more valuable within the farming enterprise. In 1987 and 1988 a part of the controversy about the use of the hormone bovine somatotropin (BST) in the farming press focused on the degree to which humans should exploit

animals (for example *Farmers Weekly* 11.11.88: 8), a question which takes into account the suffering of animals as unacceptable (Thomas, 1987).

Farmers' attitudes to their animals are rendered ambivalent by the influence of both the modern, largely urban, concern for them as sentient beings with separate lives of their own (Thomas, 1987: 166-191) *and* the exploitation through making a living from them which the same writer locates in England's rural past. These influences can be rendered into relations of nurture versus business, and once again *both* are part of the place of animals in farmwork. The care of animals and the degree to which farmers are sensitive on this issue vary with personality and circumstance. Further, the contributions of the orientations of nurture and efficiency to the work involved in keeping animals are different in different kinds of animal farming. Dairy cows for example in many ways represent something quite different from the wether lambs which are sold as meat lambs at about four months old. The latter are uncomplicatedly a product for sale though there is still the anomaly that they are products which are also feeling creatures. Farmers *do* see these lambs in terms of the money which they will bring in, much preferring to get gimmers which are worth double the price.

But this is not all. Lambs also represent hours and months of skilful care and work so pride attaches to them too, often expressed in aesthetic terms. The pleasure here is enhanced by the pleasurable anticipation of good prices (and good reputation) in the autumn auction mart sales. The flock sediments experiences of the past; the particularly good autumn or winter which resulted in record lambing rates, the terrible spring when lots of lambs died. This is the totality of experience of farming, uniting care and business.

Animals can also be seen as "workers" and here the bonds between farmer and animal can easily transcend any business motives. Sheep dogs which become part of farmers' own identities, working only for him and living

in memory when they are gone, may be kept long after they are useful. They are endowed with personality by farmers, become adjuncts to the farmer himself and some parts of farming, especially sheep operations, depend on them. Dairy cows and ewes are also workers but with a different relationship with the farmer. They are further removed from him than dogs. Not adjuncts, their efforts are nonetheless necessary to farming. Cows and sheep too are seen to have personalities, and familiarity with the stock is part of the skill of husbandry, an essential part of the care necessary, not just to maximise returns in milk, calves or lambs, but to do a good job. Farmers remember yields, which cow has difficulty calving or lambing, what illnesses cows have had and remain prone to, whether they have had heifers or bull calves, how long they have had the animals and where they got them from. They have their favourite cows, tups and maybe even ewes, and will even express regret at parting with these animals at the end of their *useful* lives. They may reminisce about past yields and calves at this time; may even speak of the animal's end in terms they use for humans, like he/she "is going home". But most assuredly they will sell when it can no longer return them a profit. They would contemplate no other course.

Farming is for profits, but although this underpins the whole enterprise it is not always apparent in the idiom, or the organisation in which the daily routines with animals are carried out. Here farmwork is simply presented as what is necessary for the health and well-being of the animals, the dependence of profitability on good husbandry uniting stewardship and business. With their animals as in every other area of farming, farmers must turn their hands to many kinds of jobs; they vet them, deliver the calves and lambs, and even create devices to aid in the animals' care. Though the latter are often cost-saving measures, there is also pleasure in problem-solving.

Animals and work with animals do not, as many offcomers would suggest, mean only one thing, money, to farmers.[27] Nor can it be said that farmers take the opposite view. Rather animals and livestock work should be seen as representing, embodying 'bundles' of ideas and symbols which mean that they are many things at the same time. They do embody money, both as investment and as future profits. But, in degrees depending on the personality of the farmer, they also represent husbandry and its elements of hard work, skill, knowledge, past history, personal relationships, reputation; part of the pleasure of farming and the countryside.

FARMWORK AND THE FARMER

One of the major complaints which dales farmers had to make about the presentation of work in *Emmerdale Farm*, was that the farmer characters did not work hard enough or long enough, certainly not in comparison to them. The hard work of farming is something which farmers stress. Part of their petit-bourgeois identity (Newby et al 1981: 65), hard work also provides an explanation for why they think you have to love farming to do it - "you just couldn't take the hard work otherwise". As mostly single farmers, they feel that the running of the farm depends on their own hard work, an expression of independence. This emphasis on hard work in farming tends to minimise the importance of farming as business. Many are offhand about the business specifics of their enterprise[28] but can give detailed information about the

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27. Many offcomers and tourists express dismay at the ways in which they see animals treated, some even characterising it as "cruel". Here they operate very much as people for whom animals are largely "pets", with sentiment above all else, something which Thomas identifies as an idea of the modern era (Thomas 1987).

28. This offhand attitude is manifest in resistance to exercises like time lines recommended by banks. One farmer I found who had done this said he would not repeat it as it was useless, he had not referred to it again. This is of course part of why farmers are accused of business illiteracy by some in the business world.

hours which they work each day in each season, what work they did, how long it took them and what their tasks will be next week, weather permitting. The *work* of farming is stressed, and only their wives will express this need to work hard in terms of its negative effects on the men; how they have "bad backs", fall asleep in their chairs at night or are too tired to go to a social event.

This necessity of hard physical work to run the family farm follows from the kind of enterprise that it is, the farmer often being owner and business manager as well as worker. He is exploiting himself and this has no bounds. One farmer showed his realisation of this when he explained that he could not expect his hired hand, a young man, to work the kinds of hours which he himself puts in, given that it was not his farm. Although technology and improvements in buildings and plant have taken a lot of the hard work out of farming, it still remains very physical work, especially where livestock are concerned. Carrying bales of hay to feed the sheep, often over gates, the lengthy walking of the flock back up to the fell tops, catching full-grown ewes and dragging them to the dip, pulling a lamb out of a ewe or a calf from a cow in a difficult birth and loading bales of hay onto the waggon to be taken into the "hay mew" are just a few of the tasks of farming which require physical strength and stamina[29]. Hard work becomes one component of who a man is, a part by which he is judged by others. The notion of "hard worker" also resolves the clear economic differentials which exist in a group of peers who espouse egalitarian values. Ever alert to someone's pretensions to be "better", the wealth of a large farmer may be commented on, but these comments are likely to be followed by "but he's a hard worker, mind",

29. Whole areas of dales farmers' non-work culture can be seen to be associated with their need to perform hard physical labour each day. For example, simple, "no nonsense" but sustaining meals based on meat are perceived as preferred by males, part of what is necessary to give them the energy to do hard work (cf Bourdieu 1986).

implying that it has been through his own efforts rather than any privilege that success was achieved. Thus this notion of "hard worker" is a cornerstone of dales farming egalitarianism, legitimating and encompassing economic superiority.

Today, technology enables much farmwork to be done by one man on his own. During the day farmers meet other farmers often. They value and at times depend upon these relations, but they also say that they like working alone. It forms part of the independence of farmwork and reinforces the individualism of dales egalitarianism. Though technology has reduced the physical hardness of farmwork, "hard work" remains an important part of farming partly *because* it now means that one man may do all of the work on a farm.

One of the consequences of the association between farming and hard work which is sedimented in the farmer's very being, is that it serves to reinforce the idea of farmers being *men* and to exclude women from the ideals of farmer-ness, though not necessarily from farmwork. One female farmer who took over the farm on her husband's death was told that farming would be too hard for her, that despite her undoubted knowledge and her experience (she was a farmer's daughter and had also farmed with her husband) she would never be able to do it. She did, but her task was not made any easier by the attitudes of the other male farmers, nor by the fact that, unlike them, she still had to do the female work of the farm. Interestingly, she had so internalised the ideals of maleness and farming that she felt that having to ask her father and uncle for help at times publicly indicated her inabilities as a farmer. Yet male farmers quite regularly ask each other for a hand, and not just with those seasonal tasks which require extra labourers. For this woman, gender transformed the common need for a little help into incompetence as a farmer, though when it came to the her stewardship based ideal of maintaining her farm for her son, she was intensely conscious

of the double standards being applied to her by farmers who wished the same thing for their sons. On the other hand, interestingly the idea that farming is about hard work and dedication also operated over time to produce admiration for this woman farmer, since she achieved that which the other, male, farmers had thought impossible.

As Bouquet (1982) and Little (1987) have pointed out, women's work on farms is first and foremost about the reproduction of the farm family, the basis of the farm. As happens elsewhere, in the dales this work which covers a wide range of activities is not considered to be important, certainly not farming, even by the women themselves often. Little sums this up when she considers the findings of Whatmore's study of farm wives. She says:

> ..the extension of the 'domestic duties' of the farmer's wife frequently overlaps into the sphere of production (especially in times of 'emergency' such as lambing or harvesting). Again, such tasks, however vital are rarely recognised as equivalent to the work of the farmer. The farmer's wife is expected to undertake all her domestic duties (including many such as answering the phone to merchants, chemical company representatives, etc., which under other circumstances would be considered the *job* of a paid secretary) and to be available to lend a hand with the work on the farm - rarely with any formal recognition in terms of wages (or a real share in the business) (Little 1987: 337).

All of this is true in the dales where this role of farm women is generated by the power relations between men and women and justified within the production process through the ethos of hard work and the association of farming with outside, not inside work (Chapter Four). Women too are valued as "hard workers" but their work context alters the content of the concept, so that it is how they keep their houses, raise their children and operate within the community which is the main focus of this ideal for women (see also Bouquet 1982, for this association).

Women thus tend to do more actual farmwork than is usually acknowledged by either them or their husbands. Either this is because the

work, though essential to the running of the farm is done inside the house, maintaining it and the family or doing business tasks like the VAT records, ringing the vet or the fertiliser company, checking something with the MAFF or making an appointment for the annual health inspection. Or it is because their farmwork is irregular, helping out in an emergency or in seasonal work like lambing and haymaking. Women take part in farmwork according to their personality, the needs of their family, their background, the size of the farm, the presence of hired labour, involvement in other occupations or degrees of diversification on the farm (cf Gasson 1980: 171-175, Bouquet 1984). The wide variety of situations and pre-dispositions of the women produce a wide variety of involvements in the regular work of the farm. At the very least, they will be a sounding board, the person with whom plans are discussed, though their opinion is not necessarily listened to. There *are* some who have little to do with the farm, yet even *they* may be drawn into the running of the farm through partnerships, which mean that the running of the house is implicated in the conducting of the business. For example, the buying of household equipment may be co-ordinated with other needs of the farm.

The ideal of hard work to a certain extent stands outside the business impulses of farming, though it is made necessary by the fact that the family farm is a particular kind of capitalist enterprise, and like all other aspects of work, farmers' end result and therefore purpose, fits within the aim of maximising profits by limiting the cost of inputs (for example hired labour by doing the work yourself). Hard work becomes a part of the dalesmen's husbandry through its application to what they see as nature. In this application there exists a bundle of other attributes and ideals which cluster around the notions of skill and expertise in farming to influence work tasks and farmers' thinking about them.

Farming skill and expertise is associated with husbandry rather than business; animal and land care, knowledge of soil and weather, sensitivity to

things going wrong with animals, the balancing of stock and pasture. However, there is skill involved in the entire ensemble, so that the taking over of a farm and through ignorance allowing it to run down as a farm business also involves ideas of lack of skill and expertise.

Although skill and expertise are presented as absolutes, farming is a very varied activity so that farmers are differentially skilled and will have particular talents which lend them expertise in some areas of farming more than others. Some may be particularly good with sheep, others with farm machinery. To an extent their particular preferences are part of this expertise. Dales farmers also engage in what is sometimes called pluri-activity, doing other kinds of work associated with farming as well as running their own farms, in order to maintain their income levels.[30] It must also be noted that all farmers are not by any means excellent and do not have a special area. Like any other work, some are good, some even bad and lots are somewhere in between. How farmers farm depends in part on their interests and personality, history, how they were trained by their fathers.

The notions which dales farmers have about their ability or expertise to do the many jobs of farming are interconnected with some other important ideals of being 'on the land'. The most important of these is that farming cannot be taught, rather a person must be born to it. This puts the expertise in farming into a very different category from that of almost any other work; again it involves notions of the interconnectedness of farming and nature, drawing the farmer himself into the latter. It is essentially a stewardship ideal, drawing on the concept of adaptation to suggest that generations of breeding are needed to produce a person who is able to cope with the

30. Today many farmers do transport work, stone-walling, contract out to make silage or to wrap silage bales, things which may involve high investments in machinery, but which are an alternative to expanding the farm or altering labour arrangements. This is an extension of the multifacetted nature of farming and is a way in which farmers can retain independence and capitalise on those activities at which they excel.

rigours of the farming life. This is a very common idea in farmers all over the country and can also be found expressed in English literature[31]. A powerful notion, it is connected with the way in which farming is an all consuming activity for farmers, and further with the fact that farmers will tell you (and others corroborate it) that they are only happy on the land. Farmers *do* leave farming, seldom once they are out of their twenties (cf Newby 1979) and, if forced to leave for economic reasons or retirement, will get back onto the land if possible or will retain a small piece of land and enough animals to keep an interest in the industry.[32] Many a retired farmer too, will keep for himself a particular task, like feeding the calves. He will still be found daily pottering around the farm and will certainly go to the auction mart each week.

A word of caution is necessary in accepting the power of the dales farmers' idea that you have to be bred to farming. They certainly do hold this view but they also say that with enough interest a person can take up farming. They do not very often send their sons to agricultural college but they will occasionally take on students to work for them. Further, in the issue of diversification in 1987, they did allow the possibility, indeed the necessity, of learning about other enterprises if alternatives were to be gone into. Some of the resistance to diversification though was precisely on the grounds that

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31. In her first novel about farming life on her beloved Yorkshire Wolds, Winifred Holtby who was herself a farmer's daughter expresses this in its ideal form in a conversation between her heroine Mary Robson and her husband John:

> Bert Armstrong came for a bit of advice about harvesters. He's not a bad sort of boy, John, but I think he finds the responsibility of farming a bit too much for him after his father's death." "Ay. It's not in the blood you see. Old Armstrong was a good hedger and Thatcher, but his son's not bred to be a farmer (1984: 222).

32. One man in Wensleydale who sold his farm on the death of his parents with whom he farmed, not only kept a few acres to continue to produce some sheep, but also bought processing machinery which enabled him to make big-bale silage. In these ways he continued in agricultural activities, though he no longer was technically a farmer.

they were sheep and cattle men and could not be expected to be anything else "just like that".

Two final points must be made on the bundle of ideas in dales farming which have skill and expertise at their core. First, the term, "proud farming", which is used for farmers who, in the relationship between reputation and husbandry, carry nurture ideals to extremes. Up to a point the adjective "proud" is positive (cf Hartley and Ingilby 1965: 11), though as an ultimate standard in husbandry, not everyone strives for it. It also represents the point at which the nurturing and striving for reputation through the quality of stock may come up against efficiency and "common sense". A proud farmer could also be one who would value (and pay for) conformation in a tup above his actual performance in siring lambs, something which may be perceived by other farmers as irrational. This assertion of rationality is another mechanism by which status through reputation for stock breeding is controlled, and which brings the pursuit of farming back to its aim, to produce the goods. It brings into line the business and husbandry concerns of farming, although as in the case of the facial markings of the lambs, anomalies still remain. "Proud farmer" becomes a criticism, although the aesthetic element in farming (the pleasure which all farmers take to some degree in a job being properly done) means that not all farmers agree on its content. A farmer who has himself been dubbed a "proud farmer" may use the term derogatorily for another, implying that his emotion and pleasure in his husbandry, in the conformation and condition of his animals, is the reasonable striving for the best quality possible. This reflects the ongoing contestation among farmers about farming, which is such an important part of being a farmer in the dales.[33]

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33. Such debates were particularly provoked by the huge sums made in pure-bred sales. In 1987 a record 30,000 pounds was made by a Swaledale tup. Part of the debate over this involved speculation about the amount of (undisclosed) luck which was involved in the transaction. Dales farmers' arguments about the sense of such pure-

The other element, fate, also expresses a limit. Things do go wrong in farming, either through human miscalculation or because of what most would call "natural" causes. The seasons and the weather, the terrain and the general climate all represent some limits to farming in the dales, as anywhere. Indeed, farmers use technology and skill to overcome this limit as much as possible. They build sheep-sheds, dig drains, build fences, move the animals to sheltered pastures in the very bad weather and feed them when grass is scarce. Farming as husbandry is precisely about strategies to both take advantage of the physical world and overcome its problems. Yet still things can go wrong and these become incorporated in a general understanding of farming in which the unexpected predominates. Despite all efforts to the contrary animals may sicken and die, fall into the beck, be struck by lightning. The water supply may freeze, snow bury the flock, the tractor break down or it may rain on the day harvesting or clipping was to begin. Since even human errors, like letting the gates get so bad that a beast can get out, can result in a situation which looks like it derives from more than simply human agency, things that go wrong come to be seen as "bad luck". In public at least a farmer will be quite fatalistic about this (though wives attest to gloom as the reaction in the privacy of the home), and a part of this fatalism at least will be expressed as "that's farming". This links up with their perceptions of farming as tough, needing adaptation to make a go of it, perceptions which lock farming within nature in very powerful ways. It makes farming more than business but even here there is a financial calculation, and maybe an appeal to the insurance company. Reactions to things going wrong also express the way in which farming is simultaneously

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bred prices were echoed in the national press (see for example *Farmers Weekly* 16.10.87: 7, 33).

conceptually located in both the economic field and in ideas about nature and nature's relationship with the man-made, social, world.

BUSINESS AND STEWARDSHIP AS CONTRADICTION

Generally then, in their everday working lives, farmers consistently accommodate the needs of business and nurture. They do not systematically experience this as contradiction until they are forced into confrontation with other views of the countryside and farming which contest their own constructions. Then business and nurture in husbandry become metonyms, tropes which focus on only part of farming in order to refer it to another related entity (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 35). Metonyms facilitate part-whole reasoning (Fernandez 1986: 44), so that what farmers are doing is focusing on particular aspects of what they do in order strategically to represent the whole(Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 35). This use of metonym has political significance. In the nineteen eighties, the ESAs prompted such strategies as farmers used the metonym of 'farming is business' to explain why they could not comply with conservation oriented demands like delaying cutting grass for hay until July. In the upper dales confrontations mostly involved the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

A considerable percentage of the Pennine Dales area is contained by the National Park which means that since 1974, planning permission for farmers has been administered by the National Parks Authority (NPA).[34] The Yorkshire Dales National Park is 98% privately owned (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987: 106) and dominated by farming. Though the twin objectives of the national park authorities are "conserving and enhancing the 'natural

34. For the detailed account of the formation and operation of the National Parks see MacEwen and MacEwen 1987.

beauty' of the national parks (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987: 59), given their limited powers, this means that a lot of the work involves sensitive negotiation with farmers. The objectives of enhancement and conservation most often produce conflict and the need to negotiate with farmers when planning permission for some farm improvement[35] is sought.

In having to apply to the NPA to authorise farm developments, farmers in the dales may *personally* confront discourses which contest their own understandings of the accommodation of farming as business and as stewardship in farmwork. Through such confrontations, the practical and business needs of farming finally emerge as contradictory with the needs of the environment, as defined by officials of the NPA. At the same time, the authority which they take for granted as creators of the landscape is questioned, indeed taken over, by bureaucrats with whom they often feel very uncomfortable. They are required to operate through forms and procedures with which they may also feel uncertain. They will therefore deny legitimation to NPA personnel by calling them "townies" or "offcomers" (see Chapter Seven) or by recounting stories of ignorance of farming practices, especially local ones.

Officials of the NPA decree as "ruined" and "not worth saving" precisely those tracts of land which farmers would see as best cared for and fertile. Land which has been intensively farmed, fertilised and reseeded has from this perspective been taken too far away from its original state of nature, so the authority allow farmers to farm it far more intensively than land which has been left alone. It seems that both farmers' and the NPA's views are underpinned by the same concepts about untouched nature and fertility, but their needs place them at odds with each other and produce different

35. The very system of grant aiding capital works on farms in which farmers apply for improvement and development grants leads farmers to conceptualise what national parks personnel perceive as environmental disasters as "improvements".

constructions. This is expressed in terms of the aesthetic too. The officials often perceive as "dreadful" and "ugly" precisely those parts of the landscape which the farmers admire; the pastures and fields extending far up the fellsides, which introduce a sameness rather than diversity (cf MacEwen and MacEwen 1987). In 1987 and 1988 the farmers were only being reconciled to the authority's position by the promise of payment to leave the land alone. That is, it was producing "nature" rather than fertility which was to become lucrative, the land thus becoming a source of wealth in a different way.

The difference in the construction of what is ideal in the landscape and the authority of national parks' officials to define conservation and enhancement at times produced confrontation. Thus one farmer's application to site an all purpose building in a 40 acre field and near to the road, was opposed on the grounds that there were no other buildings nearby so that it would spoil the environment. The official had strong views about the aesthetics of the situation and was sure of his ground.[36] The farmer on the other hand, wanted the building with land for his dairy operations - at the time his buildings were in the farmyard with no land attached. The roads intersecting his land meant that he had to walk the cows on the roads to pasture twice a day, a time consuming and potentially dangerous operation. With power and water already on site, his business management interests made the field a better location for his dairy operation. He had envisaged the new building then as the first stage in a relocation of operations which had become necessary because of the age of his current buildings and was trying to rationalise the whole enterprise on a new and more appropriate site. The trouble was, that his business driven choice contravened conservation ideals of the NPA. For him, the scenery which was so vital an

36. This same official had confided that the difficulty of his job was that such objection to placement was so often a matter of taste, but in this instance the lack of any other buildings gave him certainty.

aspect of the landscape for the official, was only of minimal importance, certainly secondary to his business needs. Ownership rendered all of his land equally exploitable and only considerations of enterprise management dictated the suitability of a particular site.

In this context, any accommodation between environment and business was undermined for this farmer and he protested against the official's opposition, in terms of business. Faced by a definition of conservation authorised by the official's position (in turn authorised by training and experience), the farmer did not argue in environment and aesthetic terms, but rather in terms of business through which metonym he represented the whole of his enterprise. The farm as business not only relocated him at the centre of the situation, authorised by his unique control and knowledge. It appealed to discourses about efficiency and profit with which farming had been imbued since World War Two and accorded with the Thatcherite ideals being stressed for the restructuring of agriculture (Chapter Five). In other situations with the NPA, farmers made this tension between business concerns and conservation clear when they protested that they would ideally reroof a fodder shed in slate or save an old barn, but they just could not afford it.[37] Slate and stone could not compete economically with iron and cement.

This is only one story among many, but it serves to demonstrate how the accommodation which farmers feel they can make daily between business and conservation, here of the land, becomes tension when they are forced to confront discourses in which contesting definitions of conservation are located. The authorisation of the NPA definition by government legislation gives the relations between farmers and the officials

37. Usually at this point they would point out that they were not unaware of the virtues of conservation and preservation in the specific instance and assert, "After all, this is our home, *we have to live here.*"

an uneasiness. Some farmers avoid the whole situation by working within their prevailing conditions, but the drive to improve efficiency and develop new methods for most (including the diversification being urged in other government arenas), means that at some time they must confront these other understandings of what *they* perceive as basic elements of farming. It is in the confrontation between the NPA and farmers that accommodation is transformed into contradiction and produces the possibility of change as people act to resolve it. Already, farmers were beginning to accept some of the authority's definitions of enhancement and conservation of environment when they entered into management agreements to alter practices like only cutting hay in July or not cutting silage, to repair walls, paint buildings, at a price. In turn this provided the beginning of new constructions of farming and farmers themselves, though in the late eighties this was still a highly contested area.

The transforming of accommodation into contradiction in confrontation with contesting constructions of the environment in the dales, provides a point of contrast between the dales as constructed through the experience of farming and that constructed through the principles of television drama production in *Emmerdale Farm*. In the latter, the contradiction at the heart of the serial's construction of environment and conservation issues is not experiential and relational, but rather built into the structure of the farming world. Thus, the serial polarises the business/stewardship relation through its opposition between NY Estates and Emmerdale Farm, reducing the ambiguity and turning accommodation into contradiction. This has consequences for the presentation of the politics of farming in the nineteen eighties, but also enables the serial to use farming and the rural metaphorically to explore the forces of the wider British society under Thatcherism.

EMMERDALE FARM AND THE ISSUE OF CONSERVATION

Ever since the serial's inception, the environment was an issue through which production personnel explored what was happening in the countryside. Indeed, the serial's creator explained that he had made a conscious decision to use the environment to connect *Emmerdale Farm*'s fictional television dales with the rural lives of the dales farmers of Yorkshire, to ensure that *Emmerdale Farm* operates to an extent within the concerns of the world. He preferred this to the use of social issues. The serial's ongoing exploration of the environment did more than only bring environment issues into the limelight. Rather, these issues provided metaphors and investigation points for what the creator called "the problems of the modern world", which in the terms of this thesis involve the political climate of the nineteen eighties.

By 1987 the serial had covered many environmental issues in major stories; pollution of the waterways by industry, the plight of the peregrine falcon, badger-baiting, organic farming, intensive pig units, noise pollution with gas-gun bird scarers and dangerous crop spraying practices. In 1987, the major environmental story was the issue of the nuclear waste dump (see Chapter Seven), but there were many other story strands which focused on the multifarious issues of environment and conservation: the horrors of intensive poultry farming, economic cut-backs producing bad land management practices, the clearing of land are just a few.

By the nineteen eighties, the dominant mechanism through which *Emmerdale Farm* explored these issues of the environment and conservation was the opposition between the family farm and agri-business. This opposition focused on these as two different kinds of enterprises, based on nurturing or stewardship and as primarily business. The former is embodied and positively valorised in Emmerdale Farm and the dominant

stereotype of rural place and the latter in NY Estates in which farming is constituted and negatively valorised through progressive time and change (Chapter Four). Thus the environment debate itself, with its multiple discourses constructing different kinds of rural and farming life, was partly constitutive of the rural in *Emmerdale Farm* through differently inflected and valorised constructions based in stewardship or business ideals. Through its presentation of the environment through farmwork constituted within this opposition, the programme both explored specific environmental issues and was able to extend these into more general areas, penetrating the consequences of the development of capitalism in Thatcher's Britain, in the context of the countryside.

Farmwork represented a major element in the serial through which this contradiction was drawn, elaborated and the interrogation of wider British society made. Therefore, rather than concentrating on the actual specifics of the environmental stories included in 1987, the next section will tease out how, the presentation of farmwork served to establish Emmerdale Farm, the family farm, within ideals of stewardship and opposed this to a totally business oriented NY Estates, which represented the dominant form of farming enterprise, agribusiness, to which environmental problems were attributable.

THE PRESENTATION OF FARMWORK IN *EMMERDALE FARM*

For farmers farmwork is not just central to their farming and their identity; it is a unique kind of work which separates them from urban non-farmers. For *Emmerdale Farm* production personnel too, the depiction of farmwork is a central element of their construction of rural place in difference. Its specialness provides a major element in the dominant rural stereotype of

the serial (Chapter Four). Thus the producer's idea of the serial's rural location as enabling by providing a way of exploring issues of life and death was related to the idea that *farmwork* itself involved difference.

For the producer, there was strength in being able to give significant time to farming. Again he contrasted *Emmerdale Farm* with *Coronation Street* and said that although the latter was set in a northern, *industrial* city, work was marginalised in the serial's presentation of urban life. He pointed out that the serial had no factory when it began, and that although it now did, little of the drama made factory work a dominant element of the characters' lives.[38] It is the petit bourgeoisie who dominate *Coronation Street*; the small shop-keeper, the local newspaper editor, the garage. Work never takes the central place it does in *Emmerdale Farm*, something which derives directly in his thinking, from the centrality of work in dales farming itself. For him, a rural serial was inconceivable without giving significant attention to farmwork, and this was, in turn, a major and positive feature of such a serial. In his view, the urban soap opera like *Coronation Street*, through its very construction, denies the central significance of work and operates with the kind of opposition which posits work against leisure, or at least locates the important things in life, social relationships, outside of the workplace.

The producer also thought that the rural was enabled by the way in which farmwork seems to be essentially interesting to an urban audience. Here he, and other personnel, were of the same mind as the many people who open their farms to the public, who pay to watch the routines of a farm or to be on a farm at lambing, or indeed the people who have opened agricultural museums, hold ploughing competitions or walling contests. Underpinning this is an aesthetic of farmwork; a perception that farmwork is

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38. Longhurst also makes precisely this point when he argues that the clothing factory in "Coronation Street" functions more as a living room than as a work place (1987).

in itself interesting and pleasurable to watch. Again difference is the basis of this view. The articulation of nature, outdoor work, animals and actually producing something valuable which people use, food, in the tasks of farmwork not only make work on the farm distinctive, but also contribute to its aesthetic quality. The only problem, this producer felt, was that *Emmerdale*'s farmwork was done by actors, so that instead of being able to show the job being done properly, they had to use simulation or stand-ins or even just come in at the end of a task, implying that it had 'really' been done. He found this disappointing and frustrating, since he felt that if they could only get the actors doing the job with the sureness and grace of the experienced farmer, then the camera could hold on the activity for several minutes which would firmly entrench the aesthetic element of work in the programme. Farmwork would actually become a significant visual *for itself* (something which *does* happen at times despite the farming inadequacies of the actors), rather than its more usual use as a major context of the social or a generator of the storyline in a rural location. It would also aid the varying of pace which is so important in mood setting in drama, since its effect would be to slow the action down and to provide reflective moments.

There were other aspects of the producer's regret that showing farmwork being done "properly" was not always possible in the serial. Essentially these concerned the needs and demands of the genre (Chapter Four). In particular they concern available recording time and the operation of "television time" in the stories. "Television time" means that even the routines of the farm must take place in relatively short time spans compared with dales farmers' available time. Further, the major device of gossip needed to further story lines often involves several people doing the task of

one or means that farmers will be seen standing around talking (even in the pub in work hours!) when they would not usually do so.[39]

The producer had touched on some of the objections which farmers make to the portrayal of farming in *Emmerdale Farm.* Though there was always an appreciation of the differences between farming as they did it and farming as constructed in a soap opera, even those farmers most willing to make allowances at times criticised the serial for showing a procedure being done wrongly or without dexterity. They expected no exact correspondence between the actor farmers and themselves, being rather persuaded by the idea of specialisation bringing skill in different areas, but tended to feel that over time the actors should have learned something of farming[40] and if they had not then their advisers should have set them right. Some things were unforgivable, for example a farmer holding his sheepdog on a lead.

Farmwork in the serial tends to be far cleaner, warmer and generally less arduous than the hard physical labour which farmers see as central to farming as work and to their own identities as farmers. Actors are usually protected as much as possible from the harsher features of farmwork, especially from the worst excesses of the weather. They never have to, indeed could not, perform an entire farmwork procedure with all of its personal discomfort (or indeed satisfaction) and are generally loathe to get too dirty. Indeed it could cause problems for continuity or wardrobe should they get as dirty or wet as farmers do. Actors' job satisfaction comes from an entirely different quarter from that of farmers, and is only peripherally bound up in doing a farm job well.

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39. It is interesting to note that farmers do stop to chat, but that this is mostly included in their understanding of work. In this there is a recognition of the grounding of farming in social relationships which are central both practically and symbolically to their constructions of farming.

40. They pointed out that it was practice and long years of experience which produced their own dexterity, and that even when they came to a job they did not do regularly, they were often "rusty" at first.

When it comes to urban based actors creating farmer characters, typification becomes very important, and in the case of *Emmerdale Farm*, this tended to reproduce a view that farmwork is central and that farmers work all of the time, one which was also part of dales farmers' understandings about themselves. Television personnel and dales farmers are thus united in constructing the rural in difference through farmwork. Farmwork is central to the total authentication process, operating at both levels of authenticity to establish the action, and the serial, as rural not just at the level of verisimilitude but also in terms of the way in which the rural is valued and constituted in the wider British society. There was seldom an outside scene on the farm in which the director did not give Jack a bag of sheep nuts or show him feeding the heifers, have Jackie and Jack treating cows, show Matt mending the Landrover, drenching the calves or moving sheep, have all three doing the milking or just be moving purposefully from one building to another.

Farmwork, as shown in *Emmerdale Farm*, comes to be seen as constant and regular and there is a strong identification between farming as a unique and special way of life and farmwork as quite specific work. Indeed, to a large extent in *Emmerdale Farm* farming *is* farmwork, the thing which sets the rural apart from the urban (Chapter Four), though it is also generally much more simple both in the range of tasks and their complexity compared with the dales. Further, farmwork is, despite its high profile, less the reason for existence for the serial's characters than for dales farmers. There are other facets of their existence which are equally important, perhaps even more so, in defining who they are within the community and family.

The major difference in the two constructions of dales farming through farmwork is the way in which the accommodation between nurture and business made by dales farmers in their everyday lives, is transformed into contradiction through the polarisation and personalisation of the family farm

and agribusiness. As the dales farmers also experienced the two imperatives in farming as contradiction, or at least tension, when they came into confrontation with views of farming and the countryside which contested their construction, so too is *Emmerdale Farm* a fiction which is produced in dialogue with nationally available discourses about conservation and the countryside. In these discourses stewardship and business were often presented in contradiction. The serial does two things. It presents farming as a tension rather than an accommodation between business and stewardship. In doing this, it transforms what were metonyms in dales' confrontations into metaphors, freeing them from the specific confines of the structure of farming and releasing them in a far wider conceptual field. The relations between "metaphorical entailments" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 9) meant that through these farming metaphors, *Emmerdale Farm* could explore a far larger context, British capitalist society.

The operation of the polarisation of Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates as two different and opposing kinds of farming means that farmwork tends to be portrayed as fundamental, the taken-for-granted underpinning of farming as a way of life, applied largely to Emmerdale Farm. Indeed it is the predominance of farmwork in the establishment of Emmerdale farm *as* a farm and the Sugdens and Skilbecks as farmers which contributes to the creation of the morality through which the family farm becomes something more than just a capitalist enterprise (Chapter Four). In contrast NY Estates draws less on work and more on money as a metaphor for business. Though the elaborations are cultural and related also to the genre, the contrast between the two is based on the serial's correct identification of the two kinds of enterprise being located in two different sets of social relations. Emmerdale *is* a family farm using family labour whereas NY Estates uses wage labour. Thus, although labour is essential to the running of each enterprise, it takes different forms. What we have here of course, is a

difference contained within capitalist farming; between owner occupiers as members of the petit bourgeoisie and agribusiness as capital intensive, big business, even multinationals. The elaborations suppress this difference of big business versus the petit bourgeoisie[41] (a highly political opposition in Thatcher's Britain - see Chapter Eight) and set up the opposition with different significance so that politically significant moral judgements can be made.

In this way the two different impulses in farmwork of business and stewardship related to nurture are separated and attributed as typifications to the two different kinds of enterprise. The *physical* work of farming of the dales is attributed to Emmerdale rather than NY Estates where there is a tendency to explore work through the problems of management and organisation. To emphasise the point that business rather than nurture is the underpinning of such an enterprise, when farmwork is shown it is often work in intensive pig-units or with battery hens rather than the kind of ongoing care-oriented milking or feeding of sheep which provide the farmwork situation for Emmerdale as family farm. Conversely, at Emmerdale little attention is paid to organisation of work, overall farm management and farmers' ever-present business calculations. Rather this aspect is suppressed so that it is work routines which signal farming and the usual lack of calculation or reflexivity about them make them appear to be almost *natural*, certainly fundamental.

There are other factors which contribute to the presentation of farmwork as an almost natural activity, certainly one which is more basic and less alienated than other kinds of work in modern society (Meakin 1976). All

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41. Newby et al (1981) found hostility towards City investment in land which expresses part of this opposition as it was picked up in *Emmerdale Farm*:

> Small farmers often appeared to be genuinely shocked at the thought of impersonal institutions, bureaucratically controlled, being allowed to purchase land for which they had no real love or feeling (1981: 53).

personnel operate with an image of expertise as an essential feature of a farmer so the tendency is to create regular farm characters as only good at their work. Complete knowledge and skill are assumed simply to be part of what farming is, so that things tend only to go wrong as a response to a situation which is outside of husbandry or an exploration of character which is generated by the drama of the programme. The production team assumes that farmers do their work well and, even where a knowledgeable member of the team knows this is not true, this knowledge is not reflected in the portrayal but only operates in the behind the scenes drama over making the television programme.[42]

Such an assumption about farming being complete knowledge and skill motivates members of the production team. They make the assumption of complete knowledge and skill and therefore use Arthur Bell and the hired animal carriers for information which they in turn assume has absolute veracity. In treating these people as experts they neither allow the possibility that they may be wrong, nor that there may be another, different point of view which is equally valid. On at least one occasion this lead to conflict between the team out on location and the production office from whom the details of the script came, when the action of the script (later proved to be quite correct) was altered on information from Arthur Bell. As members in a system of specialisation the technical facilitators readily relate to farmers as experts.[43] Thus Arthur Bell for *Emmerdale Farm* has come to hold his own specialised position within the crew which makes the programme. But I think that there is

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42. Indeed first order authentication dictates that actors should try to do tasks well in order to establish that they *are* farmers. Certainly dales farmers criticise the serial when a job is done badly or wrongly, so this feature is built into the very authenticity principle of drama for both audience and producers.

43. Each person in a television crew has his or her own skilled task and union rules mean that no-one may do anyone else's job. The making of television programmes about a plethora of life's activities also depends very much on finding the right expert to give the information required by the producer and director in order to make the programme.

even more which is taken for granted in the attribution of expert status to farmers by the team, and this itself becomes a part of the portrayal of farmers and farming in *Emmerdale Farm*.

The producer's above thoughts on farmwork demonstrate his perception, one common in modern industrial society, that farmwork is different from other forms of work; that it is somehow more fundamental (Thompson 1967: 60). The farmer too, as the man of the soil, is also seen in this way so that his knowledge about his job has a quite different status from the way in which other work is learned. This parallels the dales farmers' own convictions that you have to be born to farming, that it is "in the blood", but the end result for *Emmerdale Farm* is to show farmers who are completely in tune with their work and their, natural, surroundings. Farming in *Emmerdale Farm* simply *is* doing farm tasks well, unless overlaid by a further moral dimension so that doing the work badly, particularly harming animals in the process, is used to connote someone as bad. Thus the routine presentation of the rural through farmwork in *Emmerdale Farm* manifests the ideology of skill and knowledge which farmers espouse without demonstrating the differential abilities of farmers to fulfil this ideology. The Emmerdale Farm farmers, especially Matt Skilbeck, are in fact "proud farmers", without the dales element of ambiguity. The most overt signs of this are Jack's painstaking building up of a pedigree Freisian milk herd and Matt's prize winning flock of Mashams. Thus, farming well is presented as natural, an unreflected upon and unlimited part of farming, of the farmer, and this idea is in turn reinforced by the perception that farming is a way of life rather than simply an occupation.

The attitudes about farmers and farmwork which are demonstrated in the construction of the Emmerdale Farm farmers owe much to strains within English thought and literature, with which production office personnel particularly are well versed (see also Chapter Seven on community for this).

In English culture, ideas about work, nature and the relationship between these two have been important since the Industrial Revolution (Meakin 1976, Williams 1985). Depictions of farming in even a soap opera like *Emmerdale Farm* must be located within these developing ideas as in turn the ideas involved in the presentation of work in farming in the serial become part of the ongoing exploration of people and work in twentieth century Britain.

Nature is as crucial to *Emmerdale Farm*'s presentation of work as it is to the dales farmers' own social constructions of themselves through farmwork. Milking is the dominant motif here for the serial (Chapter Four) and it is part of the family farm. If one considers the morality and healing attached to wild nature with industrialisation (Drabble 1984, Thomas 1987: 260) there is also a sense in which the Yorkshire Dales setting is significant to the serial's presentation of work through the family farm. Domesticated nature, that which is seen to have been tamed and altered by humans retains, as the countryside, some of this moral power. It seems likely that if one considers the English countryside as a whole, that those areas like the Yorkshire dales and the Cumbrian lakes which are perceived as less tamed than the softer landscapes of Surrey or Hertfordshire (cf Shoard 1987/88), are seen as retaining their moral properties in less diluted forms. If one considers this in tandem with ideas about alienation in work since the Industrial Revolution, one can see that farmwork, especially in an area like the dales, comes itself to be imbued with morality and further that this morality is itself involved with ideas about the aesthetics of work, focused on Emmerdale Farm, the family farm.

In his book *Man and Work*, Meakin explores the kinds of ideas about work which arose in response to the radical changes of the Industrial Revolution (1976). In particular, he focuses on the feelings of alienatation within which many writers have recorded their responses to the increasing technology and rationalisation of industrialisation. He notes that since the

nineteenth century, these responses have been explored through the positing of ideal work relationships through which people would be able to achieve personal fulfilment while achieving a vision of a different kind of society based on a different relationship between humans and work (cf Thompson 1967: 60). In an age in which he says that the idea of work is in crisis with much emphasis being given to the need for work satisfaction and the importance of freedom and creativity in work, he sees alienation combining with "the fashionable concern for the environment" to produce a particular kind of response to the ideas of progress and the industrial milieu. The ideas projected in *Emmerdale Farm* about the essential differences between the family farm and the agribusiness estate can easily be located within such understandings at least at one level, and that this should be so also has a class dimension as Meakin identifies:

> In England we have reached the paradoxical state in which guides to non-mechanized subsistence farming may appear (amongst the motor-car advertisements) in the glossy magazines of the affluent, middle class (Meakin 1976: 6).

In 1987 the critiques of industrialisation and environmental damage by capitalist industrialisation had taken on a somewhat different form as it well might in a society in which unemployment rather than fulfilment in work is a major issue. The producers' comments indicate that the idea that there is a more moral form of work which unites human beings with nature in a more meaningful kind of activity still existed in English culture to be explored in the serial.

Creativity as opposed to consumption is at the centre of this ideal of work as a moral category and Meakin traces a long history of the significance of criticism of the ugliness and destruction of nature which are perceived to be the outward and visible signs of the ethos of progress and the degradation of work as the essence of mechanisation (see for example

D.H.Lawrence). For many writers (Cobbett, Ruskin and Carlyle) these criticisms are played out against a vision of a better (Golden) age, usually the Middle Ages, but a common working life ideal is also often that of the farmer, usually the peasant. Nonetheless, the family farm has in modern times retained much of the freedom and independence, the creativity, the fulfilment and thus the moral value which so many writers have craved but found destroyed in forms of industrial work. Along with ideals of community, farmwork, working *with* rather than to destroy nature, has formed the basis of the nostalgic reaction against urbanisation. Indeed ideals of work are central aspects of many of the understandings about community (Meakin 1976, Thompson 1967).

Despite the importance of technology to modern farming, farmwork as the basis of the family farm retains many of the features of Friedmann's 'natural milieu' which he contrasts to the 'technical milieu'. As the above discussion of the dales demonstrated, tools used in farming do not eliminate the human element of production nor can they completely destroy the farmer's relationship with what is perceived as nature; they cannot protect him/her from the elements though they can introduce modifications and some protection which are part of Friedmann's 'technical milieu' (Meakin 1976: 8,9). Farmwork in England in the nineteen eighties is ambiguous. It mediates between the two milieus having features of each, which is why a serial like *Emmerdale Farm* is able to include the contradictory impulses of both, tending to separate the two out into two different kinds of farming representation. Both Emmerdale and NY Estates are still farming enterprises and because all farming fits between the two milieus rather than within one only, there is no clear correspondence between Emmerdale and the 'natural milieu' or NY and the 'technical'. That said, it is still clear that there is a greater emphasis on the humanisation, the dependence on nature and the moral value of the 'natural milieu' in the presentation of farmwork on

Emmerdale Farm. Further, at times the criticisms often voiced of the 'technical milieu' have formed the basis of stories focusing on the kind of farming being done at NY under the constraints of agribusiness.

Though farmwork is the basis of the representation of farming through the dominant stereotype of rural place, establishing both difference and moral value, in one story in 1987 the production people of *Emmerdale Farm* quite consciously explored the question of good and bad farming, creating a character, who only appeared in two blocks of programmes who was a very bad farmer. In this story, a man whose land bordered on Emmerdale's, though higher up the fell, was discovered by Matt to be no longer able to look after his farm. Sheep were dying, walls and fences falling and everything was in an appalling state. The moral element of this was raised through an old story that this man had murdered his wife, and as the narrative unfolded, Matt came to fear that the story was true. Thus the issue of morality in bad farming was reinforced by the stronger element of what else Metcalfe might do, particularly to Dolly and Sam who used to visit the old man. This story also reinforced the automatic good farming, the nurturing, of Matt Skilbeck, and his wife Dolly; the former for Metcalfe's flock and farm and the latter for the man himself. Through his relations with these good, caring, farming people, ambiguity was introduced into the moral theme, raising the possibility that Metcalfe was not a bad person, only old, alone and having given up the struggle to live. The resolution came with the old man's death and his bequeathing of his farm to Matt, who clearly could save the farm although he could not save Metcalfe.

In this story the possibility of a small farmer being bad was raised, as it has been at other times in the past, serving to press home the ideas that the Emmerdale farmers, as stereotypical family farmers, are good farmers, nurturing of animals and people and so caring that they feel impelled to right wrongs which they see, especially where animals are suffering. Thus it

coincides with the very common view in English culture that people who live on the land and make their living from it are generally better than other people (Shoard 1980, 1987). The aberrant figure of Metcalfe cannot destroy this illusion - his brief appearance rather reinforced it as it established the farmers at Emmerdale as the norm.

Animals are an important element in the depiction of farmwork in *Emmerdale Farm* (see also Chapter Four). This is partly because of the centrality of animals in the serial's general understandings about farming, which derive from wider cultural typifications about the crucial ingredients of farms in Britain. These ideas about the centrality of animals to farming also come together with the aesthetic elements of work which we explored earlier in this section; perceptions about the beauty of animals (especially the young) and the attractiveness of pictures in which farmer interacts with his or her animals provide the rationale for using animals to create visually interesting and attractive footage in the serial, even where the point of the scene is located in human dramas. The compulsion for using the camera to record the beauty of the countryside (a different aesthetic though from that of the farmers described earlier) is stronger in some directors than others, but the creation of attractive pictures is generally one factor in television production, part of the directors' craft. It is a part which in *Emmerdale Farm* is reinforced by the fact that the serial *is* set in beautiful scenery, something which is not lost on the audience who often write to the producers to thank them for showing the beauty of the Yorkshire dales.

Although the scenery of the dales establishes the land as an important feature of farming in *Emmerdale Farm*, this operates more as background, to set the rural location, than as a focus of farmwork and something actually created by work. It is thus *scenery*, the visual, rather than a living landscape, a very urban view and experience of the countryside (Lowe et al 1986). In 1986/1987 even the preparation of the land and the sowing of the barley

was not shown, and the constant vigilance and care of the land was only represented by one scene in which Jack was shown cutting the reeds in a boggy part of a pasture. It was through animals; the routine milking, care of calves, sheep, geese and turkeys; that the ongoing tasks of farmwork were shown and farming was explored in both its nurturing and business aspects. The construction of the activity of farming in the serial largely works through the establishment of a series of discontinuous farming *moments*, often repeated, and animals are one of the major foci of such moments. It is these moments which are the basis of the presentation of daily and seasonal work routines to underpin the idea of farming authenticity through which the ruralness of *Emmerdale Farm* is established (Chapter Four).

Animals are central to the presentation of farmwork within the creation of farming moments in many different ways. They are the basis of the producer's claims that only a rural serial can achieve the depth of exploration of life and death. He followed up the comment by recounting the details of one story run in 1987 about the death of a cow, and the way in which this had been treated to explore how different from a city person's a farmer's reactions could be to such an event. Implicit in his comments, and his contrast of *Emmerdale Farm* with *Coronation Street*, was precisely the issue of business versus nurturing forces in farming. Although Jack's emotion in the story had more concern than simply that he was losing money, the producer had wanted to show how the loss of an animal represents money to a farmer.

The routine presentation of the care of animals is central to the constructing of the family farm metonymically as stewardship. The nuclear dump story of 1987 really began when Jackie fell into an uncapped mine shaft being tested for dumping when trying to save one of his ewes in the snow: the classic image of shepherd risking his life for his sheep. Also based in this idea of farming as nurturing is the way in which animals, especially

cows, are used to express the continuity of farming and to explore the ties to the farm as both place and as daily routine which are exerted on farmers once they accept responsibility for animals' well-being. These points is made both through routine work tasks like milking, and through the unusual, which often focuses on the care of animals. Having to turn out at night reinforces both the idea of dedication to that part of farmwork which is the care of animals and the way in which farmers are tied to their farms, a point which several members of the production staff see as setting farmers apart from many other occupation groups. In the nuclear dump story this point was explored as Matt of all people, the epitome of the caring farmer and shepherd, neglected his responsibilities during lambing in order to campaign; and so lost a ewe and her lamb. His anger and self reproach were important affirmations of him as really a good farmer as befits a regular farming character in the serial. That such a thing simply would not happen, especially during lambing, is interesting though not the issue for the producers. Their exploration of farmwork was focusing on what they saw to be other truths about farming. Further, they were using the incident dramatically to build up a situation in which things going wrong in a variety of arenas served as metaphors for the disruption in the entire community which the nuclear dump threat represented. They were able to use this device precisely because of the nurture which is an intrinsic part of the stereotype of the family farm.

The Matt incident provides an interesting contrast to the farmwork of the dales farmers. The dales farmers note incidents like this one involving Matt as being ridiculous. Lambing perfectly provides the accommodation of business and nurture which is such a feature of dales farmwork. It requires all of their knowledge and nurturing skills, yet at the same time, in working to ensure that the maximum possible ewes lamb successfully, they are

maximising this year's income.[44] Thus *they* prepare for lambing precisely as a time when they will simply not be able to get away from the farm, day or night. It is one of lambing's essential features, a time when the farmer's care can mean the difference between life and death for the lambs *and* the ewes, a failure within both stewardship and business terms. The tension in the Matt story was between the morality attached to nurture in farmwork and that of caring for the community. Thus although care and loss of stock are central to both depictions of lambing, the orientations and purposes of each affect the outcome and the possible meaning, particularly in the valuation of nurture in the construction of farming.

Animals have also been the means by which NY Estates has been constructed as different from Emmerdale Farm over time, and within this general contrast have often been the focus of the setting up of agribusiness in a negative way. Given their significance to the dominant and positively valorised stereotype of rural place, animals are a very effective medium through which to explore the possibility that large corporation profits and care of animals are incompatible. This is particularly potent for a largely urban audience, many of whom oppose exploitation of animals in ways which are seen as cruel (Thomas 1987[45]). The particular story in 1987 concerned battery chicken farming at NY Estates, and it was done through the character of Kathy, Jackie Merrick's girlfriend. Kathy hated working in the poultry unit and eventually resigned, preferring to be unemployed than to participate in what she saw was an inhuman form of farming. The story unfolded through chaotic scenes in the unit with Kathy surrounded by

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44. Indeed, as one farmer explained, it is not just this year's income which is being maximised. The loss of a ewe in lambing as in the Matt story also means the loss of all future lambs which could have been expected from her.

45. The calls to clean up the image of farmers in the farming press in 1987 also included the need for farmers to not be constructed as cruel to animals by urban people. Part of farmers' own opposition to BST used precisely this argument.

thousands of screeching birds[46] and her increasing depression was brought out in her routine interactions with the other characters. With her association with Emmerdale (she became engaged to Jackie in December), Kathy acted as critic of NY and such methods which maximise profit but minimise humanity and, through her interactions with the Sugdens and Skilbecks, enabled *them* to re-affirm in many discussions their care and different orientation within capitalist farming.

As well as actually featuring as the content of the serial's characterisation of NY Estates as an agribusiness farm, there are some animals, significantly not used in farmwork, which make the contrast between NY and Emmerdale in a different way, while also incorporating another possible, class, dimension into the exploration. These are horses, a common feature of the portrayal of NY but never of Emmerdale. In noting this it should also be pointed out that horses are seldom seen on dales family farms. At NY Estates, horse riding comes together with things like southern, educated accents and the hunt[47] to create a set of images of class which counter the egalitarianism of the family farmers as represented by the Sugdens and Skilbecks. There are ambiguities which enter this depiction, usually through the particularities of the characters involved, making it an exploration rather than static typification. At times the writers and story editor have deliberately taken the horse-riding, grouse-shooting, hunting and fishing, sophisticated gourmet image of the upper classes and have debunked it through the character of Alan Turner, manager of NY Estates. There is a personal dislike of what are seen as "Tory cultural values" in this, but ambiguity is introduced even into NY Estates.

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46. The scenes were so strongly depicted that the production office even got letters from people who disapproved completely of battery hen units, complaining about their inclusion in a light drama programme.

47. Fox hunting in the uplands of the north of England is actually done on foot rather than on horseback.

Joe Sugden, as befits a character who mediates between Emmerdale and NY, also rides though has been given many opportunities to espouse the values of egalitarianism which run counter to the upper class image. And of course he is Northern, Yorkshire to be specific, and a small farmer's son. The latter became an important source of egalitarianism for him on the several occasions in 1987 when he confronted upper class characters. At such times he identified himself as 'just a farmer'. The egalitarianism which is expressed through *farmwork* in the dales, thus overcoming some of the clear inequalities among the farmers, is also a strong feature of the family farmer in *Emmerdale Farm*. However, it is established through different relations and images which conform more to the kinds of understandings about farming villages seen as communities based in particular kinds of class structures which arose in the nineteenth century and which many people still hold today (Newby 1987: 76-78). Rather, through the overlaying on the rural of the metonyms of stewardship and businesswork, farmwork is central in the separation of agribusiness from the family farm.

In chapter Four we saw how *Emmerdale Farm* separates male and female farmwork, with outside "real farming" work being male and inside work female. In Annie Sugden and Dolly Skilbeck, *Emmerdale Farm* creates the storybook farmer's wife who cares for the children, has the meals on the table when the men come in from the fields, works tirelessly for the community and when necessary helps with lambing, harvesting, haymaking. It is also these women who feed the poultry, sell the eggs and prepare birds for sale at Christmas. In the way in which the portrayal of farmwork utilises gender the status quo which Whatmore reported is never explored. Indeed, it is expressed even more forcefully since the portrayal lacks the diversity with which farming people in the dales have to cope as wives work off the farm or participate in farming activities to a variety of degrees. Rather, it is in the portrayal of the non-farming women that the serial explores the possibility

that women can hold good and responsible posts which do not make them adjuncts to men.

In the late nineteen eighties, *Emmerdale Farm* acquired a female auction mart manager and auctioneer, Sandie, and a female vet, Ruth. The production office did this quite consciously, with the intention of introducing stories about strong women with lives of their own who experience opposition from men. Both operate in what are perceived to be male dominated areas and this became part of the importance of the characters to the dramatic exploration of the social in the serial. For the producers, both Sandie and Ruth stand as representatives of the gender roles and power relations in the whole of British society, and their inclusion, which in many ways runs counter to the kinds of work women *do* do in rural society,[48] must be seen in these terms as well as in terms of the producers' perceived needs to include strong women in soap opera. Thus it is the general domain of work that the role of women is explored in the serial, with farmwork reinforcing typifications and the realm of work outside the farm, though still in associated fields, confounding them. The television (male) producers were no more capable than the dales farmers of conceptualising farm women's roles in any other than idealised ways.

Finally, it is clear from this discussion that the reputation of the farming characters is not socially constructed and negotiated, emergent from the way in which they do their work and their interactions with their fellow farmers. Again this makes the television farmers different from their dales counterparts. For the Emmerdale Farm farmers, reputation is a given, a *personal* characteristic rather than a social relation which is essential to them as nurturers and good farmers. The social element of reputation in the

48. This is not to say that there are no women vets or auctioneers, only that they are few, and to comment on the way in which the serial established its strong, independent women *off* of the farm.

serial comes rather from the carrying over of the moral dimension of the Sugdens and Skilbecks as good farmers into their caring roles at the level of community in which they are all leading citizens, variously taking part in church and local institutions. Indeed, the story of Metcalfe confirms that this connection between reputation in the farmwork and community sphere is usually an isomorphic one: good farmers will be good people and vice versa. Indeed it is only at the level of the community that any ambiguity about the local reputation of the Emmerdale personnel arises, usually voiced by people who are ambiguous or bad themselves. Consequently the content of any exploration of reputation focuses on issues like affairs and divorce, in which the significance of the Sugdens and Skilbecks as farmers is diminished, although this status as nurturer always exists to rehabilitate them when they fall. This aspect of rural life and its television presentation is considered in more detail in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION: EMMERDALE FARM AND THE MORALITY OF FARMWORK IN A POLITICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

In a letter to the *Farmers Weekly* replying to a complaint about farmers, one reader wrote:

> ....The modern farmworker is a well trained and dedicated person, capable of anything from the setting up and operation of expensive machinery through to stripping it down to repair, welding and fabrication, tending livestock, calving cows at some Godforsaken hour of the morning, when most folk are tucked up in bed...Your trouble is - you watch too much Emmerdale Farm (*Farmers Weekly*, 28.10.88: 8).

For dales farmers the depiction of farmwork in *Emmerdale Farm* was one of the most contentious areas of the serial. They often complained about the way in which a character had done a task, or the fact that the television

farmers just did not seem to be busy enough compared with their own working days. The above letter takes up some of these kinds of criticisms and was part of a correspondence in the paper which revealed that farmers felt that the difficulty, sophistication, arduousness and importance of their work was simply not appreciated by the general, urban, public. The correspondence located a general lack of appreciation of the rural in a misinterpretation of farmwork by urban people and the above letter identifies *Emmerdale Farm* as one source of information for this inaccurate picture. Thus the serial was part of the discourses through which farmers engaged with and defended themselves against, urban criticism of farming in the context of an environment debate.

Some of the differences between farmwork as constructed by dales farmers and in *Emmerdale Farm* have been discussed but what are the consequences of such differences when the major issues of the environment and conservation are explored through the serial's representation of farming and work? The letter's accusation that *Emmerdale Farm* is responsible for misunderstandings about the rural and farming must be located in discourses discussed earlier, in which farmers stressed the difference of farming and the appropriateness only of farmers to care for the countryside. It stresses difference and is underpinned by an urban/rural opposition with *Emmerdale Farm* firmly being placed in the former. I fully agree that *Emmerdale Farm* is minutely involved in the politics of the environment and the attendant struggles for control in the countryside. The preceding analysis though suggests that the serial, rather than questioning farmers' control of the countryside, as the letter suggests, coincides precisely with the political positions of the NFU and the CLA. At the same time, it mounts an attack on the rationalisation and bringing farming under the control of the market being encouraged under Thatcherism. How is this so?

The analysis of farmwork in both the social constructions of the dales farmers and the construction of the presentation of farming life in *Emmerdale Farm* reveals a very interesting and politically important process of transformation. Using the same factors of land, nature, animals and work the serial renders farming more "natural" (in terms appreciated by urban people) and romantic than social by altering emphases and relationships. It is this transformed image of farmwork which angers the writer of the letter, and indeed the dales farmers themselves at times, from the perspective of pure verisimilitude. The portrayal of work, something so central to their own understandings of who they are, tends to be viewed by farmers for its correctness, since they see this as being vital to the now very important image of farmers which is projected to a wider, unknowing, audience. If though, one considers the presentation of farming in *Emmerdale Farm* from the perspective of the ideological underpinnings of farming and the political positions which these imply in the environment debate, the depiction of farming in the serial looks different.

Farming was understood through an accommodation of the exploitation for profit of the land and its conservation, construed as business and nurture (stewardship) and united in farmwork. Business and stewardship are metonyms each of which use only part of what farming is to represent the whole, but in work their partness and separateness are obscured, indeed dissolved. It is only when farmers confront constructions of the countryside which contest their own and within the public, political representations of farmers, that the availability of the two metonyms operating simultaneously produces tension. The latter representations are in turn often the result of the separation of the two metonyms by a non-farming public in debates about the countryside.

Farmers as nurturers are seen as doing work which is *real*, qualitatively different and often better than the kind of work others do

(Shoard 1987). Thus they, and their way of life are valued. But at the same time the public criticises farmers. They do this by focusing on farmers as businessmen, especially within the conservation, overproduction and health debates. Here the metonym of business is used to value farming negatively. Predictably, farmers combine both metonyms in defending themselves. Although their own reconciliation of the contradictions between the two ideals is to describe what they do as a 'way of life' rather than a job, in answering public criticism of the consequences of their way of farming, they make two kinds of replies. One counter is in terms of work and here they will talk about the hardships of farming, the early hours, the working in all weathers or the being tied to the farm (see the correspondence in reply to B Nowlan's letter in the *Farmers Weekly* 21.10.88). The other kind of answer is to say that farmers have the same kinds of constraints and problems as everybody else, that they cannot be expected to be less concerned by economics than any other people running a business (see Hew Watt's letter in the *Farmers Weekly* 21.10.88). That is, farmers present themselves as being both *different* and the *same* as people in other occupations. This unity of contradictions which we find in farmers' public and private constructions of themselves vis a vis others is reflected in *Emmerdale Farm*, though once again not in any simple mirroring way.

In representing farming through farmwork, *Emmerdale Farm* uses the conventional opposition which it has constructed between family farm and agribusiness to reify what for dales farmers are metonyms. Thus while caring and business are accommodating in dales farming, both interacting to form a complex whole, the representation of farming in the serial is transformed through the separation and concretisation of stewardship and business. They are treated as morally and structurally different forms of farming in the serial. The outcome is that, through its personification in agribusiness, NY Estates, the business defence of farming which farmers themselves use, is

disqualified in the serial, since the criticism of that orientation has an integral part in all the stories and thus the overall presentation of farming, through its operation as the central motif of the negative secondary stereotype of rural place. Importantly such criticism also implicates, in the wider political arena, the whole Thatcherism style of capitalism which in the late nineteen eighties was also being manifest in the countryside. The need for farmers to be entrepreneurs, faith in financial incentives to solve both environment problems and the economic problems of agriculture, the stress on efficiency and acknowledgement that individuals will need to lose their farms to rationalise the industry; all of these featured in Government statements (for example NEDO 1987) and had their echo in industry policy under the conservatives.

The disqualification of NY has further consequences. It actually makes the business defence superfluous, since by making the criticism and channelling it towards NY Estates only, the serial leaves Emmerdale Farm to stand as a representative of farming which is an moral alternative to NY, farming which is nurture not business. Stewardship thus, by being separated from business in the serial, rehabilitates capitalist farming which stands condemned only through NY and agribusiness. Even where business concerns do form part of the stories for Emmerdale Farm, the very presence of NY Estates, coupled with the location of Emmerdale as a family farm within other, very different kinds of values, transforms and softens these concerns. Thus Emmerdale Farm as the valued capitalist form of farming in *Emmerdale Farm* fits the image of farming being favoured by the NFU and the CLA. It affirms this image which is so enabling and authorising of farmers within the conservation debate, reproduces it and gives it further meaning. In a further metaphorical shift in the relationship between NY Estates and Emmerdale Farm which means that as Emmerdale stands for the *rural*, NY comes to represent *urban* forces in society, the rural is constructed in *moral*

difference which suggests that indeed farmers *are* the best people to have control of the countryside.

In many ways it would have been surprising if the image of farming in *Emmerdale Farm* had not coincided with the presentation of farming in ideal terms by the NFU and the CLA. The cultural underpinnings of the serial once more combined with the logistics of the serial's construction, almost demand that this should be so. Though the producers have no brief or interest to pursue the NFU case, they are very aware of the problems of agriculture. As soon as these issues enter through the ongoing concern with the environment, the addition of a moral dimension which is so much a feature of soap opera means that the relevant stories will work through the opposition between NY and Emmerdale.

Once NY Estates was introduced into the serial to keep the picture of farming in the late 1970s up to date (and being old fashioned is a severe and always feared criticism for the makers of continuing serials since it is felt to be directly related to audience size), the presentation was irrevocably cast in an opposition between the family farm and agri-business. In turn this meant that it had to be the family farm which had good, yeoman, custodian of the countryside values ascribed to it, exactly the image encouraged by the NFU and the CLA (Shoard 1987: 251, Newby 1985: 67,8). And further, if most farms are indeed owned and run by the family farm unit, as they are (Whatmore et al 1987 a and b), then it follows that the countryside is in good hands. This perception of course ignores Shoard's point that though small family farmers are in the majority, they do not control the majority of land (1987: 145).

No conspiracy theory about the conscious perpetuation of a 'dominant ideology' is needed to explain how a serial like *Emmerdale Farm* can serve the political concerns of bodies like the NFU so well. The yeoman farmer image is really the only one available for Emmerdale and its occupiers in the

context of a long running continuous serial which seeks to draw an audience in through dramatic involvement with characters whom they really come to care about. The alternative images of greed or the rural buffoon and boor are just not appropriate to the development of a long running narrative about a farming family, though they do adhere to NY, helping to construct its negative image. The resultant image of the family farm means that the portrayal also supports farmers' own claims that they are the only ones who can look after the countryside; not only did they shape it, but it is only they who are best placed and knowledgeable enough to nurture and preserve it. It ignores the ways in which economics constantly intrude into even this claim by farmers; the growing idea that farmers will have to be paid to act as conservationists on their own farms or the long running debate in 1987 over whether it was large (prosperous) or small (struggling) farmers who were better placed to act as conservationists of the countryside. Rather *Emmerdale Farm*'s picture of the family farm is reassuring, drawing on the farmers' own strategic use of the caring, stewardship metonym to construct a total form of farming which as "a way of life" somehow defies purely capitalist "business" categories to render capitalist farming moral and acceptable.

The next chapter picks takes up a different area of morality in the construction of the rural, the community. Through this it considers the third issue of the changing demographic structure of rural areas in the late nineteen eighties.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEPOPULATION AND COMMUNITY IN *EMMERDALE FARM:* THE POLITICS OF RURAL DIFFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

In exploring how *Emmerdale Farm* makes a rendition of one specific and named part of British society, the last two chapters have focused on two dimensions in the construction of 'rural crisis' in Britain in the late nineteen eighties; overproduction and the environment. The exploration of each of these themes traced some lines of transformation between the dales construction of overproduction and the environment and that of the serial *Emmerdale Farm*. These transformations had political consequences for the serial's participation in debates about what the countryside should be and who should control it. Further, in various ways the morality which was integral to the transformations, extended the serial's interrogation of British society, beyond its rendering of the rural, and into Thatcherite politics, the attempted forging of a hegemony based on a new common sense about how the world is and should be. *Emmerdale Farm* articulated power struggles which were specifically about the countryside with wider political processes.

The last two chapters have done more than articulate local and national politics. They have demonstrated how the political as process is multifacetted, multi-stranded rather than consistent and totally coherent. Essentially about relations of power and domination and manifest in inequalities over rights and resources, politics focuses on different, but interconnected, relations in different arenas. The chapters have thus explored politics as struggle, as contention and have shown how this involves transformation between arenas of struggle. *This* chapter explores

the third dimension of rural crisis, the depopulation of rural villages and towns. In critically examining this dimension, it argues that inscribed in it, and at the heart of depopulation as a political issue, is the concept of *community*. Thus, the various discourses which constituted the debate over depopulation of the countryside tended also to be engaging in a debate about rural communities, what they were, their desirability and how they should be protected. Central to *this* debate was a rural/urban opposition, which underpinned a power relationship between the rural and urban sectors of British society, both structurally and symbolically. Thus the chapter explores both the concept of community and the rural/urban opposition as they operate to authorise different versions of the depopulation dimension of rural crisis. It further demonstrates the consequences of the urban location of television workers and its significance for representation of either the rural part or the British whole through *Emmerdale Farm*'s rendering of the dales. The concept of community located within the rural/urban opposition is central to the transformation which occurs in the political process of representation through the serial.

The continuing serial *Emmerdale Farm* is an interesting example of television's presentation of the rural through which to consider the problem of depopulation and community because here there is a twist, for there is no rural depopulation in the serial. This is highly significant in the serial's construction of a rural place which, unlike the dales of immediate physical experience, can stand for the whole and in criticism of it. One of the reasons for this absence is the centrality of community in the serial's construction of rural life, a consequence of *its* construction within a discourse of difference which opposes the rural to the urban. This meant that in 1987, rather than depopulation itself, it was depopulation's focus of *community* which was explored in *Emmerdale Farm*, through the people's fight to prevent the dumping of nuclear waste in their valley. The chapter will show how the

transfer of the issue into a different context highlights some of the political questions of power and community even more starkly. Despite this, the resolution which is a necessary part of the genre of the continuing serial, is subversive and a source of transformation with considerable political consequences.

The chapter begins with the nationally available discourses as they constructed depopulation and authorised particular social groups in their struggles for control in the countryside. In particular it relates these discourses to a wider rural/urban discourse through which the rural is defined in opposition to the urban in British society. Through this discourse is constructed a concept of *community* which is at odds with that of dales people, though both constructions are significant in the depopulation debate. The chapter uses *Emmerdale Farm* to explore the difference and to trace both in the discourses through which depopulation was constructed and contested, and considers the significance of the specificity of the serial's own constructions.

DEPOPULATION AND DISCOURSES OF DIFFERENCE

The dimension of depopulation was directly related to those of overproduction and the environment in the discourses which constituted the overall debate about rural crisis. It was a major factor through which various interest groups attempted to give a moral dimension to their discourse, authorising their claims to define the problem, *and* the countryside, by stressing concern for rural people.

The very intensive agricultural methods which farmers had pursued since World War Two not only had environmental effects but steadily replaced labour with capital, displacing people who had to go elsewhere for work (Lowe et al, 1986). This trend was exacerbated in many areas by the

agricultural recession as farmers sold their houses and their land was amalgamated with the holdings of surviving farmers. In 1987, with the Government determined to end the level of overproduction by altering land use patterns, rural depopulation represented one strand of resistance by farmers who claimed that proposed policies would aggravate the situation still further. The Yorkshire Dales is a good example of some of the rural population problems of the late nineteen eighties. It is largely a Less Favoured Area (LFA) under EEC policy, which means that farmers are eligible for extra support (OECD 1987: 50); support now widely recognised as a social payment, precisely to help maintain threatened rural communities by keeping farmers on the land.

THE YORKSHIRE DALES AND DEPOPULATION

In 1987 the Yorkshire Dales manifest a prevalent pattern of demographic change which represented, not just depopulation, but also repopulation by what are called "offcomers". The falling indigenous population prompted by intensification of farming producing fewer jobs and farm amalgamations had left many villages very depleted, a trend exacerbated by the buying up of housing by urban (and some local) people for holiday homes. So profound is the trend that one entire dale in the high dales is today unpopulated as farms have been bought up either by local farmers or by absentee farmers to be tended by other locals.

At the same time that the indigenous population was decreasing however, the dwindling population has, in many villages, been increased by urban immigrants who choose to retire to the countryside, set up business there or just escape from the city (see also Newby 1985, Pahl 1965, Forsythe 1980, Chesshyre in the *Observer* 2.8.87: 14, for some other regions). Locked into the perception that the rural is a different, better place, these immigrants

have responded to the dominant idealisation of the rural from the perspective of the city, a viewpoint which they help perpetuate:

> Whenever we listened to the radio, or read a newspaper, or heard of the crime, the vandalism, the strikes, and the other troubles that seemed at times to beset the whole country, and then looked out of our cottage windows, at the peaceful village, the thatched roofs, the windmill, the water, and the birds, we counted our blessings, and said a prayer of thanks that we had taken the plunge and left the city, and settled down in a remote village that was so small that it was very seldom shown on any map

and:

> We earned far less money than we had done in the city, but we led a life that was far, far richer. We knew contentment, and valued it. We had our problems, of course, but they were small, human ones, and on a scale that we could cope with. Apart from the slower, more old-fashioned way of life, there were the characters of the village (Douglas 1981: 7, 8).

These kinds of sentiments about a rural idyll, the relationship between countryside and city, are a dominant strand in the politics of depopulation of rural Britain.

In many areas, especially in the south-east of England (Thorns 1968, Newby 1985, Strathern 1981), such immigrants might remain locked into the urban conurbations for employment, commuting each day to the city and their work,[1] but much of the dales is too remote for this to be a major trend. Even here, urban immigrants do not have the same dependence on the area as the local inhabitants; their income is often derived from urban sources as are their lifestyles and their needs. In summary, the pattern is characterised

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1. The pressure on villages in the south and southeast of England has been so enormous that part of the solution to overproduction announced by the Conservative Government in the Alternative Land Use for Rural England (ALURE) package in 1987 was to loosen the restrictions on agricultural land to enable its development for housing and businesses. In these areas the form of incomer settlement is mainly residence and business rather than holiday homes.

by a falling rural population and an influx of urban people into the countryside which is producing both depopulated "ghost villages" and village populations in which the percentage of urban incomers is rising.

The Yorkshire Dales is a very popular tourist area in Britain.[2] The attractiveness of the dales to tourists has to be seen as significant in the trend towards the buying up of housing for holidays and retirement and this plays its part in the pattern described above. Some villages in the Yorkshire Dales have been radically altered by this trend as most of the houses have been bought by "offcomers" or by local people to hire out for holiday accommodation. The most noticeably affected are those in which the majority of houses are now owned solely as holiday houses. There are villages, such as Sedbusk in Wensleydale, in which only one farming family remains and only two other houses are lived in all year round. This is a particularly visible effect of the changing pattern of settlement.

There are many other effects less visible to the tourists on their annual holidays. As the village population becomes smaller and more temporary, village facilities like schools,[3] chapels, shops and post offices have been closed (cf Newby 1985, Forsythe 1980) and with them, and the intensification of farming, have gone jobs for local people. Incoming people have often retired so have no impact on the closing of facilities like schools for example, but they may sometimes help to keep other facilities (cf Forsythe 1980) and may indeed place a strain on some services like medical services. Transport services have been cut back in almost all rural areas (cf

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2.. It always has been so, especially for the people of the north, but its popularity has been greatly increased by the BBC series *All Creatures Great and Small* which is actually made in Wensleydale and which attracts hundreds of tourists to the area each year, even from the United States of America.

3. Ronald Blythe's nostalgic article on the systematic closing of village schools is indicative of the significance of this for country people. He also identifies attending the village school as the very basis of a sense of belonging when he says, "Just those six years of walking and talking along the road to the school establishes in a child an image of belonging which will last for life" (*Sunday Times* 10.5.87: 27).

New 1987, Little 1987: 338, Turner 1980) and the boosting of the population by urban incomers has not improved this problem since such people seldom use public transport.

Often dales people will understand the situation in ways which do not blame the incoming people themselves but which still have an urban/rural orientation which stresses inequality. They blame the "authorities", often an amalgam of the various levels of government, national and local, but always located in the towns and cities so far away from where they live, for taking away 'their' school or bus or hospital; for the fact that within a welfare system they perceive rural areas as being serviced so much worse than the city. They often comment that city people "wouldn't stand for it".

DIFFERENCE IN THE NATIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF DEPOPULATION

Like the dales farmers' representations, most constructions of the depopulation dimension of rural crisis had at their centre an urban/rural opposition. Implicit in this was the notion of *difference* which was also so important in the issues of the environment and overproduction. Like conservation though, the whole depopulation problem was informed by more than concepts of difference. Rather, the demographic trend described above owed much to discourses of difference which constructed the rural *in terms of* the urban, in the rural focusing on what the urban was not. Criticism of demographic trends and the policies which were deemed to have exacerbated these trends too, drew on some of these ideas.

In August 1987 the BBC's *Brass Tacks* held a studio forum on the issue of depopulation of the countryside. It set the scene by showing a village in the Lake District in which over 66% of housing is owned by urban outsiders who only visited for holidays. Participants in the sometimes heated discussion which followed represented a side range of people involved in

the depopulation situation, villagers, the tourist trade, estate agents, urban people living in villages and groups convened to provide housing for local people in the countryside. Two things were most noteworthy. First, the polarisation around the issue by those appealing to "the market", to the "laws of supply and demand" to establish the desirability of selling houses in villages, and those appealing to notions of "community" as the essence of the rural village which depopulation was destroying. Various speakers used in turn these political discourses to authorise their position and their right to define the problem. Second, even those taking the former stand wanted to live in villages because of their difference. Indeed, they were able to do so, and had the effect of pushing up prices (the "laws of supply and demand"), *because* they were urban. As far as they were concerned, the economic inequality between city and country (Chapter Four) was irrelevant. Cash was the only arbiter. Both positions owed much to the discourses of difference in which the rural is defined always in a complex and continually negotiated relationship with the urban. Indeed, they were constituting several aspects of the discourses about the rural through their very actions and arguments.

The discourses constructing the rural from the perspective of the urban located and justified various contesting positions in the depopulation debate. In terms of the content of depopulation also, the discourses underpinned the practice which was dominant in the construction of rural crisis; the buying of housing by urban people. This was the subject of the *Brass Tacks* programme and it featured in all other media which highlighted the problems of rural people as the demographic structure of villages changed (for example Frater 23.8.87: 48; *Guardian* 26.10.87: 4; Hague 3.11.87: 4).[4]

4. The problem continues, indeed has become unmanageable in some parts of southern England (Ascherson 1990: 9).

By 1987 demand for houses in the country by urban people had pushed housing prices up to a point where often locals, perhaps on agricultural labourers' wages far below their urban counterparts, could not afford to buy them. Dales people complained of this trend for the way in which it deprived their young of the opportunity to buy housing in the local area, forcing them into dwindling, local authority housing or out of the village and its environs. Further, the trend produced landscapes in which, though the land was still farmed, the houses were increasingly owned by incomers from the cities, either as permanent dwellings or as holiday houses. As an example, in an area no bigger than a square mile in Upper Wensleydale, where once the four farmsteads operated as the foci of family farms, in 1987 only one had this function, the other three having been bought by urban people, two for holiday houses[5] and one as a dwelling but with the barns converted into tourist accommodation.

This situation was prevalent throughout the countryside, particularly in popular tourist areas. Though newcomers may construct their image of the problem as helping to maintain villages which were dying from depopulation and lack of financial input,[6] for local people there is an element of predation in the trend:

> Trying to protect homes and accommodation for the local-born population at prices they can afford in competition with well heeled

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5. The outbuildings of one were still used by a local farmer.

6. This view was expressed in the *Brass Tacks* programme. Such allegations were roundly criticised by Margaret Capstick, a Research Fellow for the Centre for North West Regional Studies at the University of Lancaster in a letter to the *Farmers Weekly*. She said:

> ...it is completely untrue to state that second homes are solely those decaying, refurbished houses which local people would never have been able to rehabilitate.
>
> In the Lake District and many other attractive parts of the country, second homes are the very village houses which would be suitable for young, local people (5.6.87: 45).

> offcomers seeking holiday cottages, second homes or retirement retreats is a perennial problem (*Farmers Weekly* 15.5.87: 47).

Predation by incomers here is countered by the *right* to that housing by locals with an unequal relationship between the two, locals and incomers. It is part *of* the construction of that relationship.

The dales people had different experiences of this problem which coloured their construction of it. Some, who perhaps did not have children wanting to settle in the dales, did not even perceive a problem, but rather noted how holidaying urbanites and resident incomers have brought business and custom to the dale. This was the view of several market oriented incomers in *Brass Tacks* too, who claimed that local builders were getting rich on the work provided by incomers renovating houses. Some dales people *had* gained from the trend themselves, buying up cottages to let for holidays or acquiring the land of a farm which has been divided to sell the house to incomers or for a holiday home separately from the farmland.

On the other hand, the trend in the dales as elsewhere,[7] had also reduced the number of farms available for young people and often, even the land has been priced too high for their means. In some pockets of the dales, *all* of the farmhouses sold separately from the land have gone to offcomers, and usually at prices the local population considered absurd. Part of the attraction for these people was that much of the northern dales area is in the Yorkshire Dales National Park (Tourism and Recreation Research Unit of Edinburgh University 1981: 34), something which Cole also stressed for the Lake District:

> Farmers' sons, forest and farmworkers never have been able to afford the prices being realised. Local residents have seen too many instances where properties have gone to outsiders at astronomical

7. This is a major lament of farmer/presenter Tony Harman in the 1987 BBC four programme series, *Seventy Summers: The Story of a Farm.*

> figures, which reflect view and location value in the national park rather than bricks-and-mortar value to someone with a job in the district (*Farmers Weekly* 15.5.87: 47).

It was not just affordable prices which influenced the way in which locals perceived these incoming people but also a completely different way of looking at the world, of valuing things. Dalespeople felt that house prices should reflect their value as material objects. In contrast, as well as having far more available money, the urban incoming population was buying a retreat from the city which provided ownership in the English countryside; a highly valued haven constituted within the rural/urban discourses of difference. On the basis of these two different constructions arose misunderstanding, with offcomers at the least being perceived as "crazy" to pay such prices or being resented because local young must fall back on the dwindling stock of public housing available.[8]

Rural people too operated within discourses of urban/rural difference and power to construct *their* versions of depopulation and crisis. Ignoring their active participation in the process of intensification which displaced rural labour, farmers linked depopulation to environment in order to attack planners and legislators for the problem. This was another aspect of the discourse in which (urban) based planners and bureaucrats were accused of wanting to turn the countryside into a museum. The tenor of these accusations is clear in this extract from a letter in the farming press:

> Planners have refused to allow people to earn a living in country areas. Small-scale building, which provides local employment and which people want, is refused. The setting up of new businesses, the expansion or relocation of existing ones, is refused.
> ...People have a right to use their land and property, subject to the law, as they wish and not as the bureaucrats see fit.

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8. The Conservative policy of allowing occupants to buy their public houses benefits the older population already in residence (see Bower and Lewis (1987) and Richmond (1987)), while the young are forced to live with their parents or even leave the village.

> Please do not let planners continue to increase unemployment (*Farmers Weekly* 3.7.87: 72).

Here again, arose the tension in farmers demanding control of the countryside by virtue of property ownership, this time legitimating their demands through appeals to the needs of the community and people. In doing this, they often stressed the 'changing' nature of the countryside as a man-made, social, landscape. The continuity of the environment aspect of the countryside (the concern of "planners and bureaucrats") was in this way constructed as in contradiction to the continuity of its people and their relations. The demand for loosening of restrictions, enabling "a creative countryside with alternative land uses and jobs in the rural economy"[9](*Farmers Weekly* 2.10.87: 15), claimed authority for rural people to decide how the countryside should be. Within the farming lobby, farmers' pursuit of profits and efficiency as a major factor in rural depopulation were largely suppressed, though this provided a strong strain in the discourses of the conservationists who recognised the rural environment as a human landscape (MacEwen and MacEwen 1987, Lowe et al 1986). There were exceptions, the above writer for example, who asked, "Are we more "efficient" than Europe because we have so de-populated the eastern side of our country that you have to look hard to find anybody working in the fields at all?" (*Farmers Weekly* 2.10.87: 15). So there was some contestation, but even this questioning of "efficiency" was only part of a larger argument, which coincided with Thatcherism, demanding the loosening of restrictions in the countryside and proclaiming an ideal of "letting entrepreneurial talents free in the countryside".

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9. In this article the writer Huw Watt is responding with approbation to the definition of the desirable countryside made by the new Minister of Agriculture, John MacGregor.

The appeal to difference at times became even more pointed. Part of the political motivation for planners preventing the diversification felt necessary to retain rural people was understood by some to be the complaints of "townies" (*Farmers Weekly* 5.6.87: 46) or "nouveau villagers" who had to understand:

> ..that there is a price to be paid for a country life-style. Extra traffic in and around our villages may be that price. If not, then every farm shop and tourist orientated venture stands the risk of closure the moment it becomes popular and begins to attract an appreciable flow of traffic" (*Farmers Weekly* 8.1.88: 3).

In these kinds of attacks urban incomers were being accused of wanting to change the rural, to somehow make it fit the idyll of the rural/urban discourses rather than the "realities" of farming and country living. Difference underpins both conceptions of the rural, but in the tensions between change and continuity here, the discourses are revealed to be constituted in contestation over the rural, what it is, *how* it is different.

Finally, some rural versions of the problem, like the BBC programme, *Seventy Summers: The Story of a Farm*, make explicit some of the power relations in which the rural/urban discourse constructs the rural according to *its* needs (Chapter Four). The farmer "telling" the story, Tony Harman, also employed a rural/urban difference which drew negatively the latter in relationship with the former when he asked, "Who changed the countryside?" He apportioned blame to *both* farmer and urban worker wanting to live or take leisure in the countryside, but the sub-text of his commentary was not just difference but the rural/urban power relationship in which urban people have achieved a hegemonic view of the countryside which obscures what is happening and at the same time influences those happenings. In this kind of situation, the reaction of many rural interest

groups was to demand further grants and development policies to keep the rural communities alive.[10]

"Community" is the central concept in this entire debate. However you look at it, it is either what constitutes difference, however contentious, making rural residence attractive, or is the mechanism of authorisation or process through which the proposed solution to the problem will operate. In the dales though, it is also a political process of resistance to the hegemony of the urban incomer. There was something of this meaning in some contributions to the *Brass Tacks* forum, in which one woman countered the attacks of three incomers who were arguing that the market should decide who owned housing in villages by stressing that her family had lived in her village for generations and that she was representing the local people of her village and four surrounding ones. Here a concept of *community* imbued with localness was empowering of her protests.

For dalespeople there are two idioms in which to comment on the many changes in the population patterns in their villages and towns. These also assert difference and are generated in a dialogue with the terms of the rural/urban discourse. Where they have lost and been subordinated to urban people materially, they claim dominance and control symbolically through language and conceptualisations which privilege dalespeople. The first of these is the use of the term "ghost village" to refer to villages dominated by holiday homes and only fully occupied for a few weeks each year, generally in summer. Those villages which are dubbed "ghost village" in the dales will often have lost not just their population but also their chapel and school, those foci of identification which help distinguish between villages. Sports

10. Something along the lines of COSIRA, tourist development grants, diversification grants, ESAs as only some of the battery of measures which are available for rural people, all of which make assumptions about the "community" as the focus of the countryside.

teams work in the same way and many dalespeople recall times of intense rivalry between their football team and those of neighbouring, more distant villages.

In these recollections, distinctions within an overall dalesness are made as each village is held to be a specific entity. This is what happens when people speak of "ghost villages". What they are now is partly formed by what they are perceived to have been, and through this important ideals of the interconnected concepts of "neighbouring" or "community" are articulated. One man recalled that in the past he never visited a village, now a "ghost village", without seeing people about and that they would always stop to chat, even though he was from another village. A builder remembered the same village in the days when it was 'alive' by speaking of how even if he was working on an empty house, a neighbour would always ask him in for a cup of tea, but now he can work there and see no-one. Many people have stories of the pretensions and stand-offishness of some "offcomers". It seems to be a fear even when it does not happen. The removal of most of the farming families from another such village was important to another person; it meant that the village no longer had a purpose which was sensible, since holidaying can not be this. But the thing which most people mentioned at some point was the absence of children; for them the removal of the heart and the continuity of something which at times they spoke of as "community". Children playing in the streets, going to school is a sign of health for the entity, regardless of the differences between people. It is part of the very construction of community for these dales people and with them gone the village is just buildings; a physical village still, but not a community - appearance rather than essence.

In this context it is interesting to note Howard Newby's comment that the idealisation of the rural from an urban perspective precisely transforms the countryside from an environment in which rural people live and work as

part of modern Britain into "a purely visual phenomenon" (1980a: 324), a construction in which quaint, old buildings and faces "with character" have a place but the ordinary looking people who inhabit modern rural England and their new farm buildings do not (see also Chapter Six on National Parks). Thus urban people who buy up housing in rural villages, rendering them into "ghost villages", are living their ideal image of the rural, though in the terms of the dales people they are destroying the 'real' village in which "community" is possible. Since village as "community" is another crucial element in the idealisation of the rural in opposition to the city (Chapter Four), the "ghost village" construction denies to urban incomers the right to call their haven authentic.

The second idiom of "local" versus "offcomer" or "incomer" is far more prevalent than that of "ghost village", penetrating almost every area of people's lives. In the distinction between "local" and "offcomer" or "incomer" is dissolved differences *between* locals. As a particular symbolic construction of belonging, the distinction can be said to be a concept of community in Cohen's sense (1985). It is associated with the distinction made between "home" and "away", the latter being interchangeable with "off". This is suggestive if one considers Davidoff et al's argument that "home" and "village community" are used as analogous ideas, in ways which suggest shelter, separation from an outside (1976: 140). The outside as an object of suspicion is still a part of this construction of community in the dales, where any thefts tend to be blamed on people from "off" or "away". Such ideas of trust and localness may also be articulated at the auction mart where, as one farmer explained "us locals" could buy stock they had not planned on buying so had come without their cheque books, but the mart would insist on getting the money of "chaps from away" before even the stock were loaded into their vehicles. He went on to say that in the past dealers from off had been known to swindle the auction mart by taking stock

and never paying. It is not necessary for this to be so of course (though this man had worked for the Auction Mart for five years); what is important is the content it gives to the categories of "local" and "off" and for the way in which these are used to establish identity and belonging. Locals are constructed as trustworthy, and offcomers, even people from other dales who are perceived to be different (though not as different as non-dalesmen), must always be at least a little bit suspect. It is from this kind of outside that the problems of changing demographic structure come to dales villages.

At first sight the distinction between "local" and "offcomer" or "incomer" is fairly straightforward; certainly as it is used as the basis of one construction of "community" for the dales people. In this construction a line is drawn around certain inhabitants who are dubbed "local" excluding those denoted as having come from the outside, from "off" or "away". It is a construction which stresses three things; dales born and primary location, relatedness as a basis of association and a major principle through which the happenings of the village and area are understood, and identification with place which spans generations. Different relationships underpin other kinds of constructions of belonging which these same people hold, but the above three constitute the relation of community on the basis of the "local"/"offcomer" distinction. There are great ambiguities in this construction of community, ambiguities which belie the ease with which people categorise various individuals and their families. As a symbolic construction it has great emotional power and, given the trend in the dales for urban people to move in as permanent immigrants or the owners of holiday homes, becomes an expression of an urban/rural relationship in which the dalespeople define themselves as a community in ways which mitigate at least a little against the powerlessness which they can feel when faced with poor facilities and high housing costs.

The word "local" may be used to identify people over a fairly wide area, even beyond the parish, though the parish tends to denote the bounds of localness (cf Alderson 1980). Thus the use of "us locals" in the Auction Mart will include farmers from villages in the immediate area, the distance varying according to parish boundaries. During the "back-end gimmer sales" when farmers and dealers from great distances come to the sales, it could be even more inclusive, covering regulars from adjoining dales or even further away, especially if the person to whom you are speaking has land or knows people well (particularly kin) that far away. The clearest definition of "offcomer" identifies buyers from Lincolnshire, Wales or Cheshire. These are clearly "chaps from off" as are immigrants from Manchester, Leeds, Durham or London.

Most "offcomers" who actually live in the dales villages tend to be very conscious of this status, being quick to point it out. Their children or grandchildren may, growing up in the area, achieve it and over time, their good-will in living in the village or town will make them more acceptable, particularly if they behave in ways expected of them. This basically means what the locals call "joining in", which includes acts of neighbourliness and not trying to "take over" in the mistaken belief that rural people cannot organise themselves (cf Forsythe 1980). And even "offcomers" to an extent become "locals" with the tourist trade - the coming of the "visitors" constructs them as such as it alters the significant construction of community. Now it is they who are privileged because of local knowledge, can talk of the strange habits of the "folk from off", can complain about the differences which they bring to the village and the availability of its facilities, but they can only do it in this context.

One possible interpretation of the "offcomer"/"local" dichotomy is that dalespeople are asserting some kind of "knowable community" (Chapter Four) which excludes the newcomers at some level. Dalespeople do

perceive "offcomers" bringing with them an element of anonymity, of non-relatedness, which they also associate with cities. As people who they have never known, "offcomers" also provide people in the village whom they may never get to know. So it is with cities, anonymity being one of the reasons they give for not liking the urban environment. It is not just urban people for whom the rural is constructed in terms of urban/rural difference. For "offcomers" too, the concept of "knowable community" has great potency, and they express endless fascination for the multifarious kinship relations which link many inhabitants or may say that they wish that they could be "locals" too.

In the dales the "local"/"offcomer" dichotomy empowers dalespeople since the incomers so often move to the country precisely in order to be part of an ideally conceptualised "knowable community". Not only can dalespeople conceptually exclude non-locals through this distinction, but they can use it and the symbolic community which it constitutes to fuel some forms of resistance to change in the dales. One example of this has been in relation to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Within the dalespeople's constructions, the "National Parks" are bureaucratic (always relegated to outsider status since it is from the outside that bureaucracies derive their power), peopled mostly by "offcomers" who know nothing of local conditions and customs. In these constructions, knowledge through higher education is opposed to the local knowledge of experience (something basic to the farming dalespeople as we saw) and the NPA personnel who are authorised by the former are criticised, denied legitimacy, through the latter. It is the NPA here who are accused of trying to turn the dales into a museum for tourists. Dominant is the idea of people from "away" (often assumed and not always correctly, to be urban people with no understanding of rural life and needs), to forge the dales according to their (archaic) image of it, a process in which the dalespeople see themselves as largely impotent. The concepts of "local"

and "community" enliven an ongoing resistance to a process which is seen to originate from the urban outside and at the same time serve as the idioms through which the process is understood and expressed by the dalespeople. Thus they are implicated in the power relationship between the rural and urban in upland Britain in its specific dales manifestation.

The symbolic construction of community, here focused on the 'local'/'offcomer' dichotomy, is political, explicating particular sets of relations which codify the distribution of rights, privileges and resources. *Community* constructed in this way is a political concept, constituted on the basis of contested relations and not some organic given produced by geography. This provides a major difference between the dales of the dalespeople and of *Emmerdale Farm* within which "community" is constructed quite differently though no less politically. There is a transformation at the level of the political, between the two constructions of "community", which has crucial implications for the overall assessment of how the fictionalisation of rural life in Britain participates in broader political processes. Depopulation was not an issue for *Emmerdale Farm* precisely because of this transformation, though the serial's presentation of community was nonetheless political and in ways which were relevant to the issue of the changing demographic structures of rural Britain. The political process whereby the symbolic expression of belonging was reconstructed into an organic and spatial community which confirmed the thrust of urban/rural discourses, reproduced some of the cultural underpinnings of the depopulation problem *and* the debate which focused on it.

EMMERDALE FARM AND COMMUNITY

Serial personnel were particularly sensitive to the urban tendency to romanticise rural life, and, given their operation within a definition of good

drama which focuses on the personal consequences of economic and political issues, they never ignored the farmworkers and family farmers. Theirs was a peopled countryside, unlike some strains of discourse about the rural from the perspective of the city. Further, in some ways, the reflexivity about their own culture which is part of drama production meant that they were very conscious of some of the mystifications involved in popular conceptions about life rural. On some occasions they tried to avoid these, at others they rendered them problematic at the heart of the narrative. One such element of the rural was that of *community*, and in 1987 one of the aims of the nuclear dump story was to explore the nature of community in the rural and to explode some of the idealised misconceptions popularly held. This ultimately raises the question of why so much of the programme falls into the conventional constructions of rural difference, despite intentions and however sensitively handled. Personnel were never critically aware of the entirety of the discourses through which the rural was constructed in opposition to the urban. They certainly never articulated their scepticism in the manner of analysts like Newby or Williams. Indeed, they reflected many of the features of the discourses about the rural. Thus we have already seen the dominant stereotype of rural place fully immersed in the terms of discourses of difference. At the same time, they rendered *some* features of these discourses problematic, using the processes of drama making to be reflexive about their society. What is interesting is that it was *community* which they problematised; why this should be so and the consequences of their particular kind of interrogation needs to be explored. We shall see that the interaction of reflective and reflexive processes is significant for the serial's ultimate consideration of the people who live in the countryside, the very broadest statement of the demographic issue.

THE ABSENCE OF DEPOPULATION IN *EMMERDALE FARM*: CHANGE AND INCOMERS

Depopulation was never an element of the construction of community in *Emmerdale Farm* nor indeed any other part of its rendering of rural life. Rather, the structural elements of depopulation; urban/rural difference, idealisation of the rural from the urban perspective, the power dimension of this relationship, particularly the operation of community were all parts of the serial's construction of the rural world of *Emmerdale Farm*, but were not focused on the issue of depopulation. This had major consequences for the functioning of the serial in the wider arena of British politics.

There are production and genre reasons why depopulation can never constitute a significant element of *Emmerdale Farm*'s representation. Drama needs populated, not "ghost" villages. The serial also lacks tourists (only an occasional mention is made), something which Newby points out as consistent which the idealisation of the rural. It goes along with showing clouds and snow but rarely rain and mud (1980a: 325). Tourists would undermine the construction of the rural in which the cultural particularity of the rural is in farming not urban visitors, despite the increasing importance of the latter in many parts of Britain.[11] With tourists, as with depopulation, the genre too has an effect. The community basis of soap opera means that it deals best with discrete groups of closely interacting people, explored in depth as individuals, rather than largely undistinguished and temporary hordes of tourists who interact largely with each other and others like them as they see the sights. Of course other characters are brought into the serial regularly, but part of the production's understanding is that the audience

11. Indeed, one dales local, a builder, even described tourism as having its place in the marking of changes in life by season, with the atmosphere of his village and environs in summer being as much created by tourists as by haymaking.

does not like the serial to move too far away from the regular characters whom they feel they know and in whom they take a keen interest. Further, the temporary appearance of these additional characters only serves to reinforce the construction of a core group of people who remain, to live together over time; a version of a "knowable community" based on place. The operation of the serial form thus feeds back into the unintended creation of an idealised rural based on an interdependent community and interesting "characters", no tourists, council houses or industry; the kind of construction we have seen criticised for its consequences on the lives of people living in rural areas (Chapter Four).

There *were* some urban people included in the serial in 1987, notably the two offcomers, Henry Wilks the retired industrialist, and Alan Turner who managed NY Estates Home Farm. These characters signify far more than depopulation and changing demographic patterns. Turner and Wilks mark the eras in which they came into the serial, just as the difference between them marks the structural changes in British economics and politics which have occurred in the last fifteen years. Wilks is a retired Bradford mill owner, who like many others in the early seventies, fled the city for the peaceful and pollution free country. He bought into the farm and pub with the capital from his industrial past and in doing so became a member of "the community". At this point the actual structure of the working countryside remained unchanged by the kind of input that Wilks represented. Alan Turner is located differently in Beckindale. He signified big business buying into agriculture, the transformation of the industry into agribusiness. Significantly in the serial he is an Oxford educated Southerner, which identifies him with the centre of finance capital as well as resonating with the emotive idea of the dominance of the South over the North. Turner as outsider coming in signified real change for Beckindale, and in doing so highlighted the element of rural continuity.

Turner and Wilks were not used to establish the "offcomer"/"local" type of construction of community since they tended to operate as if they had always been there. The nuclear dump story did create just such an opportunity but the need for resolution in soap opera again meant that the issue disappeared after it had served its dramatic purpose. It did not therefore provide an *ongoing* definition of community and political process as in the dales. With conflict resolution, community subsided into its more ideal form once again.

For the serial in 1987, the rural/urban power relationship underpinning rural depopulation did not manifest itself through depopulation and the associated problems for rural villages and towns. Only once in 1987 was the shortage of housing for the young mentioned as a very minor element in the story of Jackie and Kathy's engagement. No other consequences were dramatised. Further, because of the absence of tourists and offcomers generally, the "locals"/"offcomers" relationship has no central place in the serial, so cannot highlight or allow the exploration of the urban/rural power relationship *within* the rural. Rather, in the serial urban power is *outside* the rural, external to the already constituted community (so has no place in its constitution). In the long-running story about the fight to prevent the dumping of nuclear waste, which was very much about rural/urban power, the village was portrayed as being subjugated and threatened from an external, urban source. This was totally appropriate to the inside/outside logic of soap opera.

Emmerdale Farm did tackle the general issue of a rural village being locked into a power relationship with urban Britain, seen as somewhere 'out there'. This polarised city and country even further. In using the issue of nuclear waste, it was hitting head-on a strong element in the relationship between city and country in Britain today. As an earlier form of energy, coal, tended to mean the exploitation of the rural environment and social structure

for fuel to maintain the homes, businesses and factories of urban Britain, so too does nuclear energy fit into an urban/rural relationship in which the rural is seen as the servant of the urban. Thus in 1986, when the Thatcher government proposed four rural sites for the possible dumping of nuclear waste, it was saying that the countryside was the appropriate place to dispose of the waste of a form of energy which was being used to service the city. The general argument was that since there were fewer people in the country, this would make dumping safer and easier.[12] Thus the urban/rural power relationship both generated and was built into the proposal, and just in tackling the story, *Emmerdale Farm* brought this aspect into the serial, becoming a crucial part of debates about what it is to be rural in modern, industrial Britain.

THE NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP STORY

In the dump story we have the co-existence of naturalism and realism which Williams envisages (1977: 71, 72). Not just in reproduction of surface appearance, here meaning involves looking beneath the surface, as the techniques and conventions of soap opera drama were used to acknowledge the social and historical constructedness of social arrangements and to try to problematise the "apparent reality" (Williams 1977: 72). Insofar as they actually generated the content of much of the storyline, the intentions of the production office were significant (Williams 1977: 68-74).

The production team, especially the producer in 1987, located the nuclear dump story in what they expressed as an opposition between the

12. Interestingly, in a documentary about the struggles in Fulbeck, Lincolnshire, to prevent such dumping, one villager proposed the North Yorks Moors as a preferable site for dumping since no one lived there at all, he said.

rural serial[13] and urban serial[14] in Britain. The producer therefore operated with two broad categories of continuing serial, which were based on a distinction between the rural and urban as locations for action and drama, offering two different kinds of worlds. He said that he thought that the ruralness of *Emmerdale Farm* had been highlighted and reconfirmed by what he saw as the rise of "urban soaps", especially *EastEnders*, a rise which he described as a "watershed in British television". Further he felt that the proliferation of urban soaps had served to make the specialness of the rural as a location for a continuing serial more pronounced, something which he felt to be in the experience of all who worked on *Emmerdale Farm*.

For the producer this specialness of the rural location had two important consequences. He characterised the "urban soaps" as being social issues oriented, using the "problems of modern life" to generate stories; an approach which was criticised time and time again, by various personnel, as being false and superficial. The producer's characterisation of this was expressed in terms of *Emmerdale Farm*'s approach when he said, "We don't introduce a gay vicar with aids". Now, as we have seen (Chapter Three), this social issues approach which is so vilified in *Emmerdale Farm*, arose from a criticism in the 1970s that soap operas did not reflect "reality", that the diverse problems of modern urban and industrial living were never part of life in most soap operas. Indeed Julia Smith's and Tony Holland's stated object in creating *EastEnders* was to precisely make a serial which showed the problematic side of life in the East End of London and the survival of the people despite this (Smith and Holland 1987: 19).

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13. There were two rural serials in 1987, of which *Emmerdale Farm* was the older, higher rating and the only one shown in prime time in England.

14. There were four and at this time *EastEnders* was winning the ratings battle with audiences of 16 million viewers.

Emmerdale Farm's producer in 1987 saw the orientation around the social problems of the urban environment in most continuing serials having an interesting focusing effect on community, which was part of a reaction in perception to post Industrial Revolution society. Here he was reflecting on the cultural location of the rural as a critique of the urban. His critique of the urban soaps was based on his perception that their producers used the ideas about the nature of and relationships between the rural and the urban to redeem the latter by imposing *community* on it; and certainly Smith and Holland often use the concept of community in describing the history of the programme *EastEnders* (1987: 16, 19). Thus he, and other personnel of the rural serial, saw a soap opera like *EastEnders* recreating the *village* community around Albert Square and they criticised this re-creation in terms of inauthenticity. One editor even went on to say that they did not have to create an "artificial" village (community) because they "already have it".[15] It was part and parcel of the rural (Chapter Four).

These views represent one way in which community was envisaged in the serial's production. It was somewhat at odds with the protestation that the notion of a village community was an idealisation not to be found in "real" (their term) villages. This latter view was touted many times and underpinned the intentions of the dump story. Clearly the potency of the rural village as a social form so very different from the urban could not be ignored even by

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15. Smith and Holland would disagree that community is not to be found in the East End and argue that the serial is based on their perceptions, based on research, of particular areas of the East End. They say:

> This was the sort of area where you parked your car on the outskirts and came in on foot, where you kept your hand on your purse and your wits about you, where you learned quickly not to ask uniformed policemen for directions, because you immediately became 'a marked man'. But a familiar atmosphere was still intact. There was a feeling of community and a sense of territory, a look on people's faces that seemed to be saying: 'Hurt one of us, and you hurt us all' (1987: 16).

This characterisation of community as the "old urban working class community" (Williams 1985: 297) has nostalgia, the emotional response to change, in common with the idealisation of the rural.

people who were themselves striving to add depth and alternative understandings to the more stereotypical constructions of village and community. This notion introduces the second consequence of constructing the rural serial in opposition to the various urban ones, on the grounds of difference, specialness, of the rural in Britain.

Difference was not just something with which production personnel operated in their own terms; they also attributed it (correctly) to the constructions of the rural made by the public at large and their audience in particular. The producer felt that the public expected a drama set in the rural areas of Britain to raise questions relevant to the countryside; questions like what is the countryside for? how should it develop? what is happening to it? how do the people who live there cope? how do they operate within and think about what is going on? In some of these questions are embedded the urban centred concerns of a public for whom the meaning of the rural is different from that of the people actually living and working in the countryside. Others imply a genuine desire to understand the actual experience of the rural by the people who live and work there, understanding which goes beneath surface appearance.

This ambiguity goes right to the heart of representation in the construction of rural life in the serial, which at times can be located squarely in those aspects of the rural/urban discourse already discussed as empowering the urban to define the rural in urban terms, but at other times seeks to do far more and construct rural life in terms which are derived from the experience of farming people themselves. Reflexivity and reproduction of stereotype are both part of *Emmerdale Farm*'s representation. The serial makers simultaneously explore the full diversity and complexity of cultural and social experience as constructed by people in their social relationships *and* restrict it within the bounds of their own cultural understandings based on idealisations and stereotypes. This is exactly the fate of "community" in

the serial, and it is to this which I now turn as it related to and was constructed in the nuclear dump story.

The nuclear dump story was actually conceived by the producer and story research was done in the village of Fulbeck in Lincolnshire which was widely publicised in 1986 and 1987 for its fight to prevent the dumping of nuclear waste in *its* environs. The actual telling of the story was devised to bring up some of the above issues about the countryside, as well as to explore questions about community in rural life. In talking about the need for the programme to be reflexive about the cultural typification of the English village and community the producer stressed that community in its ideal sense does not exist. He pointed out that in *Emmerdale Farm*, they did not have people meeting in the streets all of the time; in fact may show empty streets; saying that people may not get on in villages or may not have spoken for weeks. This is not always borne out by the dales experience, where an important part of living in the villages is greeting each other even in passing, an event which may happen often when one actually lives in the village. He was right though that at times when routinely people are doing tasks in house and on the farm, the streets of a village may be all but deserted.

The producer was showing an intense awareness of the pitfalls of idealisation of community and village, and replacing the idealisation with his own version of authenticity, based on "reality" as he understood it. He did this to give point to the concept of community as they were hoping to explore it through the story on the nuclear dump. Here their idea was that community as a structure and a feeling may only become active when threatened from the outside.[16] They saw the issue of the dump forcing the people of

16. The depopulation issue absent from the serial of course provides just this source of unity at all times in dales villages.

Beckindale to ask themselves not only questions about the countryside but also questions about themselves as a community; are they in fact a community? what do they want of their community? where are they going? The producer went on to say that in the story all the Beckindale villagers ask these questions in different ways and have different kinds of positions on the subject, even when they are opposing it. This approach to community then was to provide both the drama *and* the authenticity for the serial's exploration of the issue. In saying this it did not matter that the dales itself was not a proposed site for dumping, only that it was an issue of importance for the *countryside* in Britain generally and one which specifically allowed their concerns about non-idealised community to be explored.

The story about the nuclear dump was very long-running, appearing first in February and not being finally resolved until August. This is not to say that other stories did not arise also to dominate the stage during that time. They did. But it is to note that this kind of a story was quite unusual in soap opera and the length of time for which the story ran was part of this unusualness. Indeed the very length caused debate among the crew and office personnel, with many people holding that the period was too long to sustain the interest of the audience. In some cases it was clear that *their* interest had certainly waned and this seemed to be the criterion on which they judged the audience's continued engagement.[17] The story was quite detailed, incorporating many of the general details of local political struggles. At some point most issues and points of view were represented to become part of the serial's dramatisation, and positions were shown to alter as the struggle escalated with the development of the narrative. The issue was

17. Their own reactions and feelings, but also those of family and friends, to a particular story or character are the dominant forms of "feedback" for personnel. Schlesinger found the same thing for the news and attributes it to notions of professionalism (1978: 134).

certainly not taken lightly and great efforts were made to give the broad issue of resistance to nuclear dumping depth, sensitivity and substance. No argument based on notions of 'bias' or 'dominant ideology' in television could possibly account for the full complexity of the story, though the production office did receive a few complaints of bias, or misrepresentation, one from NIREX (the nuclear industry body) itself.

THE NUCLEAR DUMP STORY: THE BEGINNING

The story began quietly with strange men doing what looked like survey work up on one of the moors which Emmerdale Farm leased from NY Estates for their sheep. It built when Jackie fell down a mine shaft which they had left uncapped, arousing the ire and suspicions of Jack. Then a short period of uncertainty was ended with the announcement on radio, which apparently had been foreshadowed in a Sunday newspaper[18] that Beckindale was to be a site for a nuclear waste dump. This lead to the forming of a local steering committee under the auspices of the Parish Council (to make it a "community" not an outside affair) and a village meeting with local MP (a female whom the production personnel saw fitting into the SDP-Liberal mould) and spokesman for the unnamed nuclear industry body responsible for dumping the waste. The vicar Mr Hinton was a prominent figure at this stage, as was Dolly Sugden, and the protests were strictly within liberal ideals of debate, representation and rationality. Together Dolly and Mr Hinton ran the steering committee, organised a petition (drawn up by Henry Wilks), went to see their Member of Parliament, organised

18. Leaks in the Sunday papers had been highlighted on a couple of occasions in 1987, the most notable one being the announcement of the ALURE package before the Conservative government was ready. The allusion therefore has the connotations of a proposal which has a great air of secrecy about it, possibly even something which is not quite right. Certainly this is how NIREX responded to this element of the story in their letter of complaint to Yorkshire Television.

demonstrations and liaised with the nuclear industry to get representation at various meetings. Dolly was less convinced about peaceful methods within the system than was the vicar, but was prominent in all of these activities nonetheless. Annie also took part a great deal at this stage, which at Emmerdale Farm left only Jack who stood aloof, declaring that meetings and petitions were a substitute for action and would get no useful response.

The village as a whole was generally very visible too, even though the usual spokespeople; Hinton, Wilks, Dolly, Turner had already emerged, all for slightly different reasons. This reached its height when the contractors arrived to establish the site for testing and the whole village turned out to prevent them gaining access to the fell. This represented the end of the beginning, the point at which what they had feared began to happen. As the story developed, it served to overlay the Sugden family onto the village, so that it really fell into three separate stages as the story was taken up each time from a different angle. As each of these stories focused on different members of Emmerdale Farm, I call them Jackie's story, Matt's story and Jack's story and in each of the stories (as indeed in the beginning of the story) the bounds of action within the law was a major theme.

JACKIE'S STORY

Jackie's was a story of youth and impetuosity. Jackie had been a fairly laconic member of the committee, laconic because his character was more one for action than talk. Therefore when it came to first blows up on the moor, it was Jackie who was in the thick of it all. Thus Jackie's story coincides with the end of the initial period of trying to find out what was happening and the beginning of the action. The roots of his part of the story were actually in the peaceful methods of the first stage and his story raised the issue of whether violence or law breaking for the cause of protecting the community can be

justified. The village had been warned that the contractors were going to arrive any day to fence off the area of the site and begin testing for the site's suitability for a dump. Thinking that they would arrive on Monday, all were in church (chapel has only once featured in a story in the serial, and no main characters attend any other than the church) when the contractors arrived and began the ascent to the moors. Luckily for Beckindale the ungodly Seth Armstrong and Archie Brooks were there to see what was happening and warn the villagers. Then as the church bell tolled in the time honoured manner of warning of danger, death or disaster, the entire congregation left the church and rushed up to the moors. Jackie and Kathy arrived first, so were in the front of the crowd which confronted the contractors. They tried to reason with them in terms of this being *their* community too and what about their children in the future, but were met by more pragmatic arguments about needing money to feed their children *now* and that meant doing this or any other job. The contractor abused Jackie whom he characterised as a well off farmer's son who could afford such sentiments and shoved him aside. This was countered by a punch from Jackie. The ensuing scuffle was broken up by the local policeman who arrested Jackie and also Kathy as she tried to prevent Jackie from being taken away. This incident led to the retaining of a solicitor by the steering committee (aided by the Friends of the Earth), some dissension within the community about the reasonableness of Jackie's actions and the effect such publicity would have on the public perception of their struggle, the acquittal of Kathy and the verdict of guilty but with a suspended sentence for Jackie.

MATT'S STORY

Matt's story was next and was also appropriate to his character as an altogether quieter, less excitable person than either Jackie or Jack.

Appropriately Matt's parts of the story all focused on sheep and the intimate knowledge of the land which shepherding gives. In the early part of the story Matt had taken Emmerdale's sheep back up to the fell in defiance of an order to quit and had pointed out to the interviewing journalist the symbolic value of sheep for an agricultural community which could not afford to have pastures tainted by nuclear poisons. In the second attempt to get the contractors onto the fell, Matt had helped to block the various routes with his flock. Then, in the second major telling of the story he was central in devising a strategy to get rid of the now erected fence. The story turned on the ancient common right of estovers, the rights which various landowners had to cut bracken on the fell. Having failed to find an ancient footpath which went across the fell and which would have been illegally blocked by the fence, Matt remembered these common rights and was a major organiser of the protest by the holders of estover at which the fence was cut through and pulled down. The protest resulted in court injunctions on Matt, Jack and Turner to keep away from the fence and the fence was re-erected. Matt's story therefore set the scene for the next and final stage, Jack's story.

JACK'S STORY

Jack had from the beginning opposed peaceful and orderly action. He had scorned the efforts of the steering committee, especially as they involved talking to members of parliament and the nuclear industry, holding meetings and peaceful protests and organising petitions. The focus of his fight was Robert, his son, a stand made more poignant by the fact of his wife Pat's death so soon before. He advocated action, and up to the beginning of his part of the story he constantly met every effort of the committee, which he refused to join, with the demand for more serious action, even if it broke the law. His position was that rather than concentrating on gaining public

sympathy, the community should be making the effort to test for a dump impossible for the nuclear industry to sustain. Though he took part in most protests he continued to brood about the dump and his hatred grew after the court injunctions until finally he took the landrover and pulled down the fence. He was jailed for seven days for contempt of court, the police taking him from his home as he was playing with his small son, the symbol of his fight. His action precipitated great trouble in the village as the escalation into premeditated unlawful behaviour created a chasm which had its most intense expression at the press conference on the fell after Jack's arrest (YTV was the television company covering the story from the beginning). At this conference Henry Wilks' carefully worded support for Jack's action despite its illegality was countered by Turner's condemnation of it and his assertion that most people in the village felt this way too. As usual the fight surfaced in the pub, with Turner being cold shouldered and accused of destroying the public unity which they all saw as essential. Wilks summed it up:

> Jack was trying to show the authorities that they've got a fight on their hands. The one thing the past week has shown is that the fight's between people in the village, not Beckindale united against the nuclear industry.

Turner continued to defend his actions by explaining that as a "community leader" he had to act "responsibly" and the situation had not been resolved when Jack was released from prison proposing a community based campaign of rolling arrests and imprisonments as all of the villagers defied the law. Again this caused dissent, but the full ramifications had not been reached before the announcement was made that the whole proposal to dump waste in Beckindale was off. The story ended with a village street party and Jack and Turner tentatively shaking hands amidst the revelry.

THE RESOLUTION

The producer explained that finding the end point of the nuclear dump story had been quite difficult for them, because issues like this usually go on and on "in reality" (his words). He said that they had already had to cope with this problem in searching for authenticity and had done it by stretching the time scale compared with usual stories and by making the action more intensive than it would have consistently been in a place like Fulbeck. Ultimately their solution was simply to stop the story with nobody quite knowing why. He said that their idea was that the end was not really a victory because of this non-resolution. What they were trying to say was that it would falsify this kind of a situation to imply that the struggle of a few people had really altered it. He said that this would have, "done less than justice to the issue and would have been to to peddle complacency".

The producer thought that one aspect of this resolution was interesting because of the way in which their planned story ending coincided with how the actual end to the dumping issue had happened. The announcement was made on Friday 1st May, 1987 and the producer said that he had been struck by the news footage of the reaction to the end to dumping at Fulbeck. He said that the pictures at Fulbeck had showed just what they had envisaged for the end of their story (and indeed some of this footage was viewed by the directors actually recording the end of the story for background information). Speaking of the footage in which Fulbeck people were celebrating in the streets, he said he felt that people looked stunned, even resentful, as if they felt they had been picked up, pushed around and then the whole thing was over without them being any the wiser about what had happened. This then was the way they had conceived of the end and their reading of the Fulbeck footage confirmed this approach as it became 'the reality' which informed the serial's construction of the resolution.

There was one regret which the producer had about the need for a definite resolution and therefore a quick end to the issue which he saw as an imperative of the genre of the continuing serial. He said that they could not show how the struggle affected people's lives, which he believed would have been changed in radical ways.[19] His theory was that the audience had got tired of the issue and so they had to move completely onto new stories and issues without being able to show radical changes in their characters and relationships (the scripts did tilt at this idea in a speech by Henry Wilks) or to have the ongoing post-mortems which would have happened in Fulbeck. This in part explains the almost incomprehensible patching-up of relations between Jack and Turner *at* the celebrations, something which would have taken far more time or may not have happened at all. And as was said earlier, this reasserts a more ideal concept of community as a status quo which is re-established after months of struggle and schism, thus coming to encompass the other elements explored in the story. The problematisation of the concept of community was contained within a few months of 1987 and itself ultimately encompassed by the more idealised form which prevails as one important component of the continuing serial. The cyclic tendency of soap opera prevented Beckindale from being a community "in becoming" as cyclic time in the serial's dominant stereotype did the same thing for rural place (see chapter Four). Exploration begun in aims extending beyond idealisation and typification ended in the bearing of familiar cultural constructs, here simplified and sedimented in the form of the third stereotype of rural place, based on village.

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19. This echoes the major criticism which the serial's creator had of the dump story. He said that things would have had to have changed; relationships, alliances, behaviour, stories which would have been told in the pub night after night. For him, this "reality" should have been reflected in the aftermath of the struggle.

This process of transformation from typification of community to multifarious and problematic community engaged in a struggle with outside urban forces and then back again meant that some of the components of the former could still be found in the latter. Three of these will be considered; the relationship between family and community, leadership and business. Each is politically significant, some confirming stereotypes and uncritically reproducing idealisations of the rural, others deepening or problematising meanings conventionally produced.

The overlaying of family (Sugden) on village in the story through the focus on the three men of the family in the three main parts of the story, utilised the more usual relationship between the family and community in the serial's construction of the village and the third stereotype of rural place. Family in fact is the model on which the ideal of community is based; community is an extension of family. This accords with the idealisation of community discussed by Davidoff et al who argue, "The very core of the ideal was home *in* a rural village community" (1976: 140). This aspect of the village has even in the past provided the additional characters for the stories; characters were brought in as relatives, usually of Annie. One director expressed his incredulity at this and was glad there was less of it as a technique now, but the proliferation of relatives interestingly corresponded more to the situation in the dales than the current one where the Sugdens' extended family is mostly made up of extremely good friends who have 'become family' or 'like family'. Thus the family/community complex in *Emmerdale Farm* is a simplification of the dales village in which there do exist extended groups of people who are all related in some manner.

Strathern calls these "core" families (1981) and every dales village would seem to have some families, the names known to all, who fit her definition.[20]

The serial simplifies this core to one family only and transforms ties of friendship into relatedness to establish a community with ideal ties of obligation and protection. This is an idealisation which is reassuring to urban viewers since it makes it possible for urban incomers to become part of community. Such a model also extracts continuity for community from the Sugden family who have farmed Emmerdale for hundreds of years and who provide also the next generation in Sam, Robert and Jackie, with the promise of even further generations with the marriage of Jackie and Kathy. The community is the family writ large, even to its divisions (here between Jack and Joe, who refused to enter the struggle against the dump) which are at the end of the day never as important as the strong ties which bind people together (Even Joe gave Jack grudging respect when he was arrested).

Leadership is a component in which elements of the usual construction of community were reworked and given other dimensions by the exploration of the issue of community in the story of the nuclear dump, while at the same time carrying the ideal into its problematisation. One of the things which this story served to do was to establish the grounds for the appropriateness of incomers as leaders by considering the cases of two 'good' leaders, Henry Wilks and Donald Hinton and one 'poor' one, Alan Turner. In doing this, the serial used elements of the cultural constructions of the urban/rural power relation. Only Turner's leadership and participation were questioned in the dump story, admittedly only by Jack who already disliked him. Importantly, the terms of this questioning were precisely his commitment to the village community as an incomer. It was Turner through

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20. Just which families of course changes over time according to a number of factors. For changes in one upper dales parish, see Alderson (1980).

whom the ambiguity and contradictions of the incomer were explored. Not that Turner was without merit and humanity in the story. He had both and furthermore, was the one person whose standing was high enough to be on first name terms with both the vicar and Henry Wilks. Alan Turner's leadership style has always been pompous and arrogant and this has served as a basic critique of him as a *type* of incomer. This was epitomised in one scene in which he is shown addressing the agricultural workers from his horse, a powerful image of class difference which is derived from the high/low distinction and strengthened by the upper class associations of horse riding itself.

In the dump story, Turner assumed a leadership role fairly ineffectively and ultimately disastrously as he publicly criticised Jack's actions and demonstrated the disunity of the community. He saw this as the appropriate role for his class and his position as Manager of NY Estates. His urban-style consciousness and pursuit of his position are reminiscent of the kinds of things which Forsythe reports as creating such resentment in the Orkneys (1980). He is precisely the self assured, self-satisfied kind of incomer rural people resent. Further, his assertion of natural leadership for the urban, educated employer in the rural community is typical of the way in which the dales people represent the behaviour and motivations of those offcomers to whom they most object. The dump story was part of an ongoing criticism of this feature of the moving into the countryside of urban people, and the point is partially made by Turner's ineffectualness. Yet even Turner's position here is ambiguous. He did take a leadership role in the campaign as an extension of his position at NY and he always functions as if he belongs to some, never seen, upper class of the country (he is constantly writing letters to the Master of the Hunt or the Sheriff of the County), but he *is* part of the community as it is usually constructed and within that he *is* a leader. The dump story enabled

the production personnel to explore this ambiguity and to establish both the sources of his legitimacy and his illegitimacy as a leader of the community.

In Henry Wilks and the vicar, Donald Hinton we have legitimate incomer leaders, but the sources of their legitimacy are different. Through these two characters, the serial can be said to be thinking about what is constitutive of urban/rural relations. Henry Wilks has been a leader in the community almost since he appeared in the serial. This partially, but crucially derives from his position in Emmerdale Farm itself and then extends out into the community from there. Henry is a share holder in Emmerdale Farm, having contributed money to save the farm in its early struggling days. He has also been considered to be a leader in the community as generally constructed; is a church warden and member of the Parish Council. When it comes to the question of how his leadership is legitimated despite his incomer origins there is one speech during the dump story which is illuminating. This speech was in reply to a comment by Alan Turner which went:

> I've been here five good years, can't see myself going anywhere else - or wanting to. If Beckindale isn't my home, I don't think I've got one....

which is itself a legitimation of *his* leadership aspirations and certainly increases the ambiguity of his depiction. In reply Wilks says:

> When I first came here I made a lot of enemies. I sold up the works in Bradford, paid a lot of money for a pretty view. I was going to lord it over everybody for the last few years of my life. Didn't take long for this place to straighten me out - this place and the people in it.

Here we have a picture of Wilks as a incomer with many of the ideas and attitudes which cause offcomers to move into the dales or the Orkneys or any other rural area, and then try to change things, operating with notions of rural

people as backward or ineffective. As such he was not a legitimate leader. But his experience of living in the dales changed him. The above passage seems to be a clear statement within the discourses of difference as we have seen them operate to construct the rural as a place of regeneration and morally superior to the urban which it serves to criticise. Wilks is transformed by the rural, by the countryside (he is a keen bird watcher and nature lover) and by living in a rural community with superior people. His leadership is thus encompassed by the rural which legitimates it and raises it to a higher moral plane. In this legitimation by the values and influence of the rural it seems to me we have precisely that function of ideology (I prefer his original 'representation') which Ricouer presents as the second, and necessary, function of ideology (1986: xvi, 181-213). But this is a transformation which does not entirely make Wilks a rural person, a dalesman; it is for his *urban* qualities that he is valued as a leader, for his experience in organisation, the control of people and money as an industrialist and financier.[21] This is what makes him a leader, its encompassment by the rural is what legitimates it and is therefore crucial to his construction. He is in fact, an urban ideal, the regenerated urban man who retains his urban know-how and style but is rehumanised and revitalised by his rural surroundings.

If the source of legitimation of Henry Wilks' leadership is the rural as constructed by the urban/rural discourse, then that of Donald Hinton's is that of an associated social structure often understood as 'traditional', of which the vicar is one of the few remnants. The vicar was a central part of the old order (Harris 1974, Newby 1987, Strathern 1981); his authority was embedded in it and even today the vicar is a person of some power in many

21. Many stories have focused on Wilks' financial expertise as members of the community consult his advice or even rely on him to actively solve financial and business problems. Even when Emmerdale was trying to decide whether to expand their way out of trouble during the recession, it was Henry to whom they turned, something which earned the serial the derision of farmers who stressed that it would be bankers, agricultural advisers or other farmers to whom *they* turned for such advice.

dales areas as in other rural regions. As Strathern reminds us, although he can no longer "fulfil his structural role" (1981: 52) because of the passing of the old structure, he serves to remind people of that order and therefore provides continuity.

The Donald Hinton character therefore draws on this position in his presentation as the natural leader of the campaign, particularly in the early stages where guidance and action *within the law* were needed. One dales church minister spoke to me of how accurate he found Hugh Manning's portrait of Hinton to be, and part of his case was the vicar's role in the campaign, something he said he would definitely have wanted to do himself in the same situation. Interestingly, while this minister was impressed by the verisimilitude of this part of the anti-dump campaign, the minister of the chapel in the same town was disappointed that only the church was shown in the stories and any role for the chapel was left out. His disappointment was fuelled by his own involvement at Fulbeck. This continuing absence of the chapel reminds us again of Newby's characterisation of the construction of the rural ideal, in which he says chapels do not have any part (1980a: 324). It is the church which takes its place in the rural power structure, not the chapel; the church which offers the vision of the timeless social world, not the chapel. And it is the church which locates Hinton as a legitimate leader in Beckindale and transforms him from an outsider into an insider. He is the one outsider who does not have to rely on years of living in the community to prove himself as happens in the dales. His authority and leadership go along with his position and the continuity of the church in the countryside. His role in the community is confirmed rather than altered by the issue of the nuclear dump and his central role gave the church a far higher profile in local events in Beckindale than is found in the dales where congregations are decreasing for both church and chapel. His part of the story re-established the centrality of the church in the life of the village community,

something which is as much bemoaned by the clergy in the dales as it is in Strathern's village of Elmdon (1981: 53). Thus it too, brought the community closer to the ideal than the actual.

Turner, Wilks and Hinton are all incomers, but it is the farmers at Emmerdale Farm who provide the local leadership, both in the ideal form of the community and in its multifacetted construction in the dump story. As a farming family which has deep roots in the area they could be said to be a "core" family which has been influential for some time. Indeed, they are some of the few "locals" in the serial; even NY Estates' most prominent agricultural workers include a Scot and a Geordie. Annie is also a church warden, and Jack is often referred to as "one of the community's most respected citizens". Jack himself tells Matt that "people listen to you". They conform to the solid, respectable member of the community status which provides credentials for influence. And since there is an action component in leadership and the family focus of the serial means that a great deal of the action is located in the family at Emmerdale Farm, the family is drawn into the story in initiating roles. Overlaying this and drawing on notions within urban/rural difference, they are farmers, landowners, and because of the construction of a farming community in which they are the sole representatives of actual farmers, they alone can claim whatever superiority pertains to the image of the yeoman farmer which they carry. As *family farmers*, they represent the moral category of farming rather than any other. It is interesting here that, of the Sugdens, it was agribusiness connected Joe who did not oppose the dump, thinking that it represented progress.[22] The dump's rural against urban orientation confirmed and strengthened the moral dimension of their leadership roles and their central position in the community.

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22. Joe's opposition to the campaign was a matter of interest to several cast members who finally asked the actor involved just what Joe's position was. The above is the explanation they were given.

The serial's construction of business as bad was confirmed in the dump story which used many of the same elements as in the past (Chapters Five and Six) but gave these a new dimension. Business as both outsider and predator was confirmed through the initial conspiracy of silence between NY Estates and the nuclear industry. In the very first stage of the theme's development, as the situation was being built up, the story centred on something odd happening on *NY land,* with both Joe and Turner knowing what the strange men were doing but keeping the rest of the village in the dark. Jack was particularly vocal at this stage, as was necessary to keep up the basic oppositions between him and Joe and him and Turner which have their focus on agribusiness versus the family farm. The alliance between two representatives of industry, both of which were located outside of the dale, whose purpose was to subjugate the dale to their needs and who both can be seen to exploit and deface the countryside, was a very powerful symbol of urban power attempting to dominate the rural. It built on past constructions of big business in the serial, but also made the serial's usual construction of capitalism in the countryside even more sinister, requiring all of the efforts of the whole community to struggle against it. This form of capital did not even provide employment in the dale as NY does. There was an extremely powerful statement of this in the play which Jack wrote to raise money and flagging spirits for the campaign. In this play the village of Beckindale in some future age was terrorised by a nuclear created monster and this character was played by Alan Turner. In this one tiny action were brought together the two spectres of the dale, agri-business and the nuclear industry, the new spectre drawing on the old, taking some of its meaning but extending it not just in size but also in terms of time, as the effects of the waste over hundreds of years were stressed. The construction and role of business and industry in the nuclear dump story therefore used both old and new elements, which had the consequence of also helping to transform

basic ingredients of the serial, like community and family and to give them new meaning and power, even if it was only for a short time.

CONCLUSION

In trying to ascertain how a television serial produces a construction of rural life which at one level at least must, in the terms of production, be recognisable to the public as contemporary rural life in Britain (if not the Yorkshire Dales), this chapter has considered the third dimension of the construction of rural crisis in Britain - depopulation and changing demographic patterns and the effects of these. The chapter identified in these trends a multifacetted urban/rural power relation in which the rural was being transformed by pushes from the urban areas. It showed how in the consciousness of the dales people, an "offcomer"/"local" opposition operates as a symbolic construction of "community". This is a concept through which such trends are evaluated and the urban/rural power relationship which underpins them is resisted. As such, "community" is a political relation rather than the organic ideal place which is a primary element of the idealisation of the rural located in the rural/urban popular discourse.

Though reactive and itself constituted out of some elements of the urban/rural discourse, this dales concept of community has as its centre the experience of dalespeople. In contrast the urban/rural discourse in which the rural stands as a critique of capitalism as the urban is essentially an *urban* discourse, giving to the majority urban population of Britain the power to define the rural in ways which are generated by urban rather than rural life and needs. Both the depopulation issue and the nuclear dump story show how these definitions feed back into the rural via social practices, national and regional policies, shaping it and authorising non-rural people to take control of the countryside. Even rural people's attempts to authorise *their*

positions on depopulation are often locked into these same discourses because they are forced to debate the issue in the same terms by trying to deny some of their idealisations. This is a process of domination through idealisation and typification as the nature and meaning of the urban is sought for in terms of the rural and its ramifications in rural life can be quite profound. The discourse renders the rural peripheral, with the city as the centre. This is in contrast to the spatial perceptions of rural people like those in the dales for whom the dales, even their particular village, is the centre, "home" as opposed to "away" or "off".

With the dales as the centre, dales people consider the rest of the world from the dales out, which means that even other dales and their people, or the upper and lower dale, are perceived as different. This centring of view from *within* the rural is the reverse of the rural as constructed from the urban perspective in the urban/rural discourse which has the city (especially London though other major cities too) as the centre, and the rural is viewed from the outside in. This outsider's view of the rural gives the construction of the rural world a different shape, structure and texture from the dales constructed rural, though the dales people are nevertheless susceptible to many of the distinctions between the city and country which underpin the discourse.

In an urban centred discourse, farmers are constructed and presented in a rural world which is refracted through the urban experience of the world and thus responds to urban needs and problems. If one examines this in the construction of the rural in *Emmerdale Farm*, the refraction of the rural through experience of an urban conceived of as essentially the opposite of the rural has various consequences. In terms of the first dimension of 'authenticity', it can produce a quite different feel in the rural so constructed, even when a great deal of attention is given to verisimilitude. This is something complained about by various advisers to the serial. But more

importantly the rural comes to signify something quite different. By at one level freeing the rural from being just another kind of lifestyle, the rural/urban dichotomy enables the serial to employ the rural to convey other kinds of meanings as the serial too takes its place within and contributes to the discursive practices which help formulate it. In turn this means that phenomena like the family and work take on other dimensions, carrying other kinds of meanings in the serial as in the rural/urban discourse, compared with the kinds of constructions through which dales people themselves live (Chapters Four and Six).

The power implications of the rural constructed from the outside in the urban/rural discourses also alert us to one of the elements of power in cultural representation generally and *Emmerdale Farm* in particular. As we have seen, the idealisations within which most constructions of the rural are generated represent essentially urban constructions of the rural, imposing on the rural urban conceptions of it. There is another dimension to this relation of domination of the rural by the urban. In most presentations of the rural, the rural is constructed by urban based workers for a predominantly urban audience, rather than rural based farmers or workers. In the interrelation between the two, the urban based cultural producers and the rural based farmers and workers, the cultural product, here *Emmerdale Farm* takes as its *object* dales farmers and the rural, but through dramatisation constructs farmers as *subjects*, as meaning generating social agents, within the serial as is in keeping with the operation of drama through the personal (Chapter Three). This is the kind of process Foucault discussed in "The Subject and Power" in which he demonstrates that modes of objectification which "transform human beings into subjects" (1983: 208) are essentially about power, noting the second meaning of the word as 'subject to' someone or something. To make this more explicit in the context of the serial *Emmerdale Farm*, dales people are essentially the *object* to be interpreted

and presented to the largely urban British public in television form by a personnel which is located in the urban.[23] The process crucially involves transforming the characters into subjects within the drama. As fictional farmers they objectify the actual dales farmers. They are themselves objects of creation by urban producers but are constructed through a subjectivity which locates their identity in their essential character, their separate 'natures'.[24] If this is compared with the constructions of their world by dales farmers themselves, *they* constitute themselves as the *subjects* of their lives, social agents, but feel that they are caught in a process of objectification by urban centred power, which is how they perceive their place in the wider reaching political and economic processes. It is this process which they resist when they defy the authority of the MAFF in all kinds of small ways or refuse to comply with the regulations of the NPA. They also resist when they define villages which are largely owned by 'offcomers' as holiday houses as 'ghost villages', so denying to these urban peace and solitude seekers the authenticity of their rural retreats. From both perspectives, the television construction and that of the dales people the source of objectification of the rural is urban.

The television serial as a process then is only part of a relation of power as television makers impose their own understandings of the rural world onto their characters. It is within *this* whole process that the tensions and dynamics of rural situations are explored in the name of 'authenticity' by writers, producers, actors, publicists and television critics employing the

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23. Interestingly, they are also urban dwellers, some of whom actually live in villages around Leeds. At least three of the producers have been so situated.

24. As Williams points out this idea of nature as the essential quality of a person or thing is related to the construction of a singular Nature which developed in Britain (1980: 68-70). Thomas too traces the connection between the notion of self and the development of ideas about Nature and notes how by the nineteenth century it was only within the solitude of wild nature that humans felt that they could be themselves (1987: 268)

discursive practices of the urban/rural discourse. As a construction of the rural which objectifies rural people; locating the rural in opposition to the urban, 'out there' and different; the serial *Emmerdale Farm* was shown to fit into this popular discourse. In terms of the content too the serial also constructs the same discourse, though here not without ambiguity, since the intentions of the programme makers are specifically to counteract the idealisations through which the rural is commonly constructed. These intentions were shown to be seriously compromised in the investigation of the nuclear dump story in which an ideal form of community emerges to encompass the story elements introduced in order explore the relations and oppositions of rural life. Despite its attempts to offer depictions of community which run counter to the idealisations of the 'rural idyll', the soap opera form forced resolution and the return to the idealised form of community.

It is necessary to make a few additional comments on the nature and significance of the differences between the construction of community in the dales and in *Emmerdale Farm* with particular reference to the starting point of an unequal urban/rural power relation. Both are political concepts, but there is a transformation between them which is central to *Emmerdale Farm* as a relation and process of representation.

In the dales, community is many different things; various, overlapping and even contradictory symbolic constructions each of which focus on different experiences of people. Depopulation and changing demographics are part of this experience so form the basis of one construction of community in the dales. In turn, these generate the idiom for conducting political struggles between the dales people and forces which they perceive as being based in the outside, in urban Britain where power is seen to reside. They may, therefore, become highly charged, particularly appropriate to express conflicts which are seen as specifically rural ones. Above all else

"community" is a political relation which to an extent contests the terms of the urban/rural discourse, certainly its basis in power.

The construction and use of community happens quite differently in the serial *Emmerdale Farm*. Firstly, there are no specifically rural realms of experience in which are forged particular ongoing symbolic constructions of community. Certainly, the absence of the consciousness of a "local"/"incomer" opposition as a permanent feature of life does not provide this very common basis of community for the serial. Incomers either signify other social and economic developments entirely or they are integrated in ways which confirm the idealisation of community. The "incomer"/"local" opposition and the related issue of depopulation and changing demographics is a significant absence. Without it or any equivalent relational and symbolic community, the serial is forced to establish community as an organic entity and the soap opera genre further reinforces this form to carry many of the idealisations of community which are located in the urban/rural discourse. It is left to specific stories, like the nuclear dump, to bear the burden of rendering this formulation of community problematic but this intention is ultimately undermined by the need for a quick resolution and the subsequent dropping of the issues which were embedded in the story. Since stories like the dump must draw on past constructions of the community and the rural, the ideal form of community is still carried into its problematisation and ultimately confirms and reproduces the terms of the urban/rural discourse.

There are other limits to the extent to which the serial can make problematic and explore the rural. The unequal urban/rural relationship itself generates the authority for the television presentation to explore the rural outside any strict confines of rural/urban discourse. It is *urban* based television which empowers the personnel of *Emmerdale Farm* to speak at the same time that it disempowers and objectifies rural people. However, it is

only the *content* of the urban/rural discourse which can be rendered problematic, to become the subject of cultural exploration. The structural relationship between the rural and the urban, the unequal power relation between them as manifest in the making of a television version of rural life, remains. It overrides the problematic form of the content of the discourse which attempts to re-empower the rural by questioning its idealisation.

One final point confirms the above argument about the ultimate presentation of community in the serial. As one would expect, the production personnel of *Emmerdale Farm* had to cope with intense publicity and criticism from the nuclear industry over bringing the issue of nuclear dumping into their serial. Some of this correspondence is interesting for what it reveals about the producers' most basic assumptions about *community*, especially for its assumed political neutrality or benignness, rather than the political force it can have in the dales. This is achieved in the serial's thinking, by linking community to the very worthy environment. For example in reply to one viewer's accusations of the serial indulging in "partisan politics", the producer's reply included the sentence:

> In the past the programme has dealt with a variety of environmental issues and with more general questions about the place of the countryside in the modern world, and it is primarily as an environmental issue that we have dealt with this subject, in particular with the effects of the issue on a small farming community (30.4.87).

and to another:

> At the end of the day the story is about how a small community reacts to news which few characters can view with enthusiasm... (7.4.87).

The same emphases can be found in newspaper reports of this story, most of which focused on the significance of such a highly political issue as nuclear

waste dumping becoming a topic in a soap opera. In an interview for the *London Daily News* the producer was reported as saying:

> It seemed a fairly natural turn for us...From the outset, 14 years ago, Emmerdale Farm has dealt with environmental topics; one of our first stories was about industrial pollution. The difference now is that the nuclear waste story is going to be painted with much broader brush strokes (17.2.87: 15).

and an article linking Beckindale to Fulbeck which confirmed the political possibilities of the story concluded that the producer of *Emmerdale Farm*:

> pointed out that YTV's interest was less in the nuclear waste issue itself than in the effect of such an issue on a rural community (*Guardian* 20.1.87: 6).

Thus the concern with community is seen to push the political focus associated with the nuclear nature of the waste from centre stage and to render the exploration more benign. This is suggestive.

In the relationship between the community of the dalespeople and that of *Emmerdale Farm* in the nuclear dump story, is the transformation of a highly political and relational community which exists as only one possible form of belonging, into a geographically based form of organisation in a community made up of types (Chapter Four) locked into an ideal form. This alters the ground of politics of community and with it the relationship between the rural and the urban, from its focus on the distribution of rights and resources for the people of the village against an urban force, to a field in which the significance of the political is *outside* of the now apolitical community, in the urban to which the rural stands opposed. *Emmerdale Farm* then, takes *its* place in the popular rural/urban discourse. It is still highly political, but political as the urban/rural discourse is. As such, it draws on the complexity of the dichotomy which structures this discourse and

produces great ambiguity within it. As Jordanova (1980) reveals, such complexity is generated by its history and because the rural/urban dichotomy is used to think about British capitalist society itself, about change or identity. It even provides a model for the relations between so called developed and undeveloped societies (Williams 1985: Chapter 24, Clifford 1986: 115). Using the city as a metonym for capitalism, for society which is seen as 'modern' and alienating, the discourse which has developed around this dichotomy provides a limited and controlled critique which takes as its focus the striving for identity, and the use of the rural as the opposite of the city extends this identity beyond that of the individual whose essence is renewed by the countryside. For the urban centred discourse appropriates the country *for* the city and in so doing re-appropriates the true English values embedded in this uncorrupted, undestroyed Britain. This makes the rural a powerful ground on which to explore, even through fiction, Britain under Thatcher, though at the same time the location also limits any critique. The final, concluding chapter will bring together the various elements of the serial's interrogation of Thatcher's Britain.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONTINUING SERIAL AS SOCIAL CRITIQUE: *EMMERDALE FARM* AND THE POLITICS OF THATCHERISM

INTRODUCTION

In its consideration of the political significance of representation as both process and relationship, this thesis has explored *Emmerdale Farm*'s rendering of British social life by looking at how the serial took up the three main issues through which was constructed a consensus that British rural life was in crisis in the nineteen eighties. In its consideration of each issue, the thesis illuminated various areas of political significance while at all times stressing the contestation which was a major dimension of the process of representation. This chapter draws together the conclusions of the preceding chapters which of necessity had to fragment the processes and relations of representation to facilitate analysis. It returns to the original question of chapter one, of how even a fictional television programme can participate in broad political processes, here the struggle to forge a new hegemony, to universalise the world-view which underpinned Thatcherite conservative politics. Thus, the attempt to answer this question is in turn focusing on at least some of the ways in which television generally may be significant in the processes of social power (Mouffe 1983).

In Chapter Five it was argued that the mass media was central in the construction of rural crisis for a largely urban population. The issues of overproduction, the environment and demographic change with its sub-theme of community were the major dimensions of this construction. They

became part of the consensus that the English countryside was undergoing change and as highly contested political issues, they focused debates about what the countryside was, what was wrong with it and how it should be. The politics of the countryside thus concerned not just relations of production and consumption, but also various competing visions, which in turn, were related to competing views about the nature of British society as a whole and the future most desirable for it.

In its participation in politics, *Emmerdale Farm*'s representation of rural life was multifacetted. Despite the protestation that drama is not documentary so need not seek verisimilitude, the production office of *Emmerdale Farm* used the issues of overproduction, environment and depopulation to establish their fictional world as a believable Yorkshire Dales, a named part of rural Britain. The serial could not take advantage of what the producer called the "enabling" factor of its rural location, (discussed in the portrayal of farmwork in Chapter Six), without making the effort to construct *Emmerdale Farm*'s fictional world *as* rural. This necessitated operating within the consensus about the rural, which by 1987 came to be partly constituted by these three broad issues. In turn though, this involved the serial in wider political struggles, the focus of which was British society rather than just the rural. From this point of view the rural took on a significance which stemmed from the identification of *difference* which was so important a factor in the contestation over the issues of overproduction, environment and depopulation. To a large degree it was this construction in difference which enabled the rural world of *Emmerdale Farm* to stand as a critique of British capitalist society of the nineteen eighties.

RURAL LIFE AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICS IN THE NINETEEN EIGHTIES

In his article on the dramatic presentation of the police on British television, Geoffrey Hurd picks up Richard Dyer's argument that, "media images are both 'produced by and help produce' the sum of social knowledge with which we map society and make sense of it" (1981: 56). It is precisely this relation which has been explicated in the last three chapters. *Emmerdale Farm* has been shown to draw on notions of the rural outside of the serial, at the same time reworking, reproducing or at times giving new content to them in open-ended ways which also highlight the inconsistencies and contradictions within social knowledge. For Hurd this argument has important consequences for the presentation of a particular part of the social world within the 'social totality'. He says:

> Such a perspective means that the fictional world of the police series must in some way include and handle the contradictions and tensions which are the currency of policing, either by defining them out in such a way that their absence does not question the 'authenticity' of the representation, or by incorporating and redefining them within the structure of the series in such a way that the contradictions are papered over (1981: 56).

In a similar way, *Emmerdale Farm*'s rendition of rural dales life must also respond to the essential contradictions and tensions in rural life, partly because of the issue of 'authenticity' and partly because the serial is forged in an interpretive relationship with other constructions of rural life. Further, it is tensions and inconsistencies which make overproduction and the environment issues and which promote change in society (cf Belsey 1980). Thus they are vitally important, both in analysis and in representation. Overproduction, environmental concern and the changing demographic construction of rural communities all represent contestations of the rural in

Britain; what it is, why it is important, what is wrong with it and how it should be. As such they focus the question of change. This is yet another reason why the major tensions which are part of the very constitution of these issues, the elements which provide their dynamic, are so important for us to understand. To reconstruct the rural through its tensions provides a basis on which to consider the overall political significance of *Emmerdale Farm*'s representation as it copes with these. This chapter considers the issues of overproduction, environment and demography from the perspective of the tensions which make them problematic politically, within the context of the broader political processes of Thatcherism's management of capitalism and the struggles over its legitimacy.

TENSIONS AND INCONSISTENCIES IN RURAL SOCIAL LIFE

All aspects of social life are permeated with tensions and inconsistencies. As an historical process of uneven development, the social consists of conflicting elements, the construction, and therefore the meaning, of which is contested among individuals and groups in society. People lead lives of great complexity, coping with inconsistency and contradiction in a variety of different ways. They may compartmentalise the various problematic aspects of their lives or operate with a variety of meanings which solve or suppress the tensions. These meanings become part of the very constitution of their situation. Thus, in the dales one local builder was able to buy a cottage to let to holiday makers in the season while at the same time complaining that a nearby village was a "ghost village". In talking about change in the dale, many elements of his conversation gave different ways in which he could reconcile this apparent contradiction. First, he did not perceive demographic change as a problem in his village, which he saw as different, still an agriculturally based village with a dynamism which could

contain change. His own son had been able to buy a cottage near his so the concern for the next generation which often drove others to criticism was not a factor for him. Then, as a businessman he thought about change in the dale in terms of the benefits of hard work and investment and saw holiday makers particularly as a crucially important second industry in the dales. Finally, the "offcomer"/"local" dichotomy operated to justify *his* buying of a cottage because he was a "local" which meant that the house was not going out of the hands of dalespeople. This is not to say that all local people would have condoned his action but it is true that "offcomers" buying holiday houses signifies something quite different, much more threatening - irreversible change.

The above example shows how the changing demographics issue involves a tension between perceptions of what is good for the individual dalesman and the needs of the whole dales area. What immediately benefitted the builder was not necessarily advantageous for the dales as an area, indeed could be shown in other villages to have produced precisely a situation which he thought socially undesirable. It is considered desirable for individual urban people to be able to own their piece of countryside or to take recuperative holidays in the peace and beauty of the dales. It is also considered good for locals to be able to make money from this trend (indeed, this is one of the solutions the Government suggested for farmers' declining incomes); in selling their homes on retirement for higher prices, in setting up tourist ventures of their own or expanding their businesses because of the new custom and needs generated by tourism. This conflicts with the needs of others for whom the countryside is home and workplace, who cannot afford to buy houses now priced out of their range, who have to live in villages now only completely inhabited for only a small part of the year, who see their local churches, chapels, schools, hospitals and village stores close because of the depleted permanent population or who cannot easily leave their

village because the bus route has been closed. Antagonisms between "locals" and "offcomers" are partial expressions of the tension which is manifest in other areas too.

Overproduction was also underpinned by a tension between the individual and the larger unit, here understood in the media constructions as the nation. These were capitalist farmers expanding production within a controlled market to take advantage of subsidies, grants and intervention prices; those who survived the squeeze even taking advantage of their neighbours' failures in being able to acquire more land. The process ignores the social consequences of increasing monopolisation of land and farm prices which exclude potential newcomers to the field, as do the increasing technological inputs which reduce the need for labour ignore the upheavals created in local communities where jobs are displaced. The imperative for all individual farmers to maximise production in order to survive as best they can is precisely what, given the particular market conditions operating under the EEC, encouraged the overproduction situation which was so costly for the whole of Britain and jeopardised the economic viability of the EEC. It was this tension, between individual needs and the wellbeing of variously conceived wholes, which made the overproduction issue so complex and so very difficult to solve, especially since it was a political issue as much as an economic one, and even a Tory government with a large majority was not entirely happy about antagonising the farmers in Conservative electorates.

The environment issue even more clearly demonstrated this conflict between needs of the individual and the nation, and here was added a further tension between short and long term gains and wellbeing, even for farmers. For a long time it had been profitable for farmers to exploit the environment to its maximum capability despite their need also to see

themselves as nurturers.[1] It was this drive which pushed production into marginal areas, which justified almost any action of destruction of the environment in terms of productivity and the food needs of the nation. Yet by the nineteen eighties, when the ever increasing production was no longer an imperative, maximum exploitation of the land was now seen as the destruction of a national heritage, an action *against* the best interests of the nation. Now what was good for the individual farmer was out of step with the needs of a nation, *all* the people. The environment debate was often couched precisely in these terms, especially at the national level, and the apparent about turn was a source of anger for the farmers, who frequently noted the tension between their abilities to be profitable, even viable, farmers and environmentalists at the same time. Their solution was to suggest being paid by the state to be the latter, encompassing caring for the environment by business, one form of resolution of the contradiction. Some thought this would turn them into mere "gardeners" which was emasculating; not a compromise, but a sell-out, a denial of their true identity. The problem remained and indeed threatened to worsen if national and EEC subsidies and protections were removed, making some farmers' financial situations even more precarious.

The tension between the needs of the individual and those of the nation formed a significant part of the politics of the countryside in the nineteen eighties, particularly as it focused contestation and struggle on questions of what the countryside was and how it should be. Different visions represented the countryside differently, and in each case a different relationship between individual and nation underpinned the vision. In the politics which was constituted by this contestation and struggle, the tension

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1. This contradiction is so profound that it is institutionalised at the national level in the representation of farming issues in two separate government departments, one for agriculture and one for the environment.

between the needs of the individual and those of the nation also manifest a tension between the economic and the social within the rural. The economic needs of the farmers feed into the economics of the whole area, in custom, jobs, money for development, which can be at odds with the social wellbeing, of the community[2] and again of the whole. In the kinds of economic calculations which they make, it pays farmers to replace labour with machines. It pays them to divide up their land for sale when retiring, selling house and land separately and the land in sections. It has paid them to use nitrates and fertilisers which pollute the waterways and radically alter the environment. But the ramifications of these so called "economically rational" moves can be profound. Jobs are lost in rural areas, young farmers cannot afford to buy farms to get into the industry, whole areas become divided between a few big farmers and social life is reduced to a few weeks of each year when the urban owners of the houses come for their holidays. It is the local populations which suffer from poor quality water and silage effluent spilling over roads. Given the economic calculations which have come to be seen to constitute a substantial part of farming and the way in which farmers construct what they are doing and who they are, farmers have had little choice but to "move with the times" (as they say), but there is a real tension between the social and the economic outcomes revealed in these issues of the rural. This is yet another way in which to understand the tension between business and stewardship in farming which was so prominent in the environment dimension of rural crisis.

The tension between social and economic need and outcome within capitalism was revealed starkly under Thatcherism as both a participant in all areas of action in the thesis and an ever present background to the production of *Emmerdale Farm*. Thatcherism was not monolithic. As both a

2. Here I am using 'community' in its general, normative sense.

political programme to manage capitalism and a vision of the world, it was constituted by contradictory strands (Hall 1988: 85, 86). Some strands come from the desire to reject social democracy, bringing together the neo-liberal call for a small, non-interfering state, the idea that public enterprises are inefficient and the notion that the competitive individual will overturn earlier mismanagement and inefficiency (Gamble 1979: 3, 6). Yet, in the view of Thatcherism, the state still needed to be strong to protect the individual's liberty and property fundamental to society. There was thus no question of dismantling the state, instead changing the areas in which it should be acting, an idea informed by the 'authoritarianism' of the Thatcher position. The state should preserve competition and money itself, but it had no responsibility in areas of growth and unemployment, precisely those areas which most concerned Keynesian influenced post-war and social democratic governments (Hall 1988: 86). It should concern itself with preserving the "individual freedoms necessary for the market" (Gamble 1979: 10, 11). Linked to this, yet another strand was also deeply concerned with law and order type issues and the 'moral agenda' of Thatcherism (Hall 1988: 86, 90, Clarke and Taylor 1980, Riddell 1985: 193), something which appears to contradict the non-interventionist state idea but which is also bound up with liberal issues of the preservation of property and competition and the best conditions for the capitalist market. Further, it was a central aspect of the "authoritarian populism" of Margaret Thatcher which won considerable public support though over time also produced opposition to her rule (Hall 1988: 84-86, cf Jessop et al 1988: Chapter 4).

Thatcherism brings the economic to the fore (at least a particular construction of the economic within capitalism) as the source of the wellbeing of the whole (Krieger 1986). Though there is a very strong moral component in this, I cannot completely agree with Hall (1988: 85) that morality is privileged over the economic (and the political). The most

pervasive statements about morality in Thatcherism were attached to economic goals and programmes of restructuring through the individual (for example Thatcher 1977: 10). It seems truer to both the vision of the world in Thatcherism and the outcome of the Government's policies, to see morality encompassed by the economic in the form of the market, with the morality in the language of Thatcherism mediating and legitimating a highly inegalitarian programme and vision of the world. Thatcher made the economic a moral issue through a petit-bourgeois construction of the market (Riddell 1985: 7, Bechhoffer and Elliott 1981). Thus, Thatcher's neo-liberalism located the successful functioning of the economy in the individual, focusing on individual competition, ambition and drive as the underpinnings of a strong economy (Riddell 1985, Gamble 1981: 150, 1979: 10), and the monetarism with which her Government at least began its period of leadership, stressed the centrality of financial management and control to the benefit of the whole society (Riddell 1985: 109, Smith 1984: 123,124, Hillard 1986: 355). The former combined with the latter to destroy any rationale for the economic support of manufacturing concerns which had underpinned entire communities, particularly in the north and the midlands (Smith 1984, Gamble 1981: 157, 1987a: 16). The increased polarisation of finance and manufacturing exacerbated this trend (Glyn and Sutcliffe 1986, Pollard 1986). As areas dominated by manufacturing declined, the sectors of Britain associated with the former grew wealthier and stronger, the areas on which claims of economic recovery in the mid-eighties under Thatcher were partly based (Gamble 1987a).

The constructions of society built on the individual had other ramifications too, outside of, but still associated with, economic concerns. Here, the tension between the individual and society which had long been an element of English culture and social life was given particularity by its

new political context (cf Bacchi 1990, Naffine 1990[3]). The privileged status of of the market within management of the economy and its implementation as a model at the heart of a vision of society, produced an ambivalence towards bureaucracy and democracy which gave primacy to the individual (Gamble 1979: 10,11). Not only was a strong economy thus understood to be grounded in the actions of the individual, but the liberal, market oriented ideas of 'responsibility' and 'freedom' which were very much a part of the argument about the economy interacted with monetarist concerns to articulate ideas about how people should be cared for in all other realms too (Hillard 1986). Thus the individual should take care of him or herself or, more realistically be taken care of within the primal and morally valorised (Hall 1988: 85) unit, the family. Health and education should similarly, in the name of 'freedom' and 'choice' for all, be paid for by this unit rather than the state wherever possible (Krieger 1986: 98). In this conceptualisation, the individual is prior to the social whole rather than the other way around. Therefore the privileging of the individual is the way to attain health, strength and justice for the whole society. This conflicted with the conceptualisation of the post-war welfare state in which it was the responsibility of the whole to use its wealth and strength to provide for the individual. Under this vision of the social, the National Health system was established, the public education system taken seriously and developments were to be directed at reducing inequalities in society which were grounded in education chances[4] (Krieger 1986, Coates and Hillard 1986). The nation state underpinnings of social democracy were thus overturned by the centrality of the idealised individual

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3. Both Bacchi and Naffine employ the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* to highlight the tensions between individual and community focused approaches to social life which characterise debates about politics in Western culture.

4. This was also the period in which projects like the establishment of National Parks were instituted and the production of food as a major necessity for the whole nation came to be protected from the exigencies of the market under the Agriculture Act of 1947.

constructed in the market (Gamble 1979: 6, 10).[5] Under this doctrine, poverty and consequent inability to provide, was a moral issue, the fault of the poor rather the concern of the state (Gamble 1987:15). This was to obscure the systematic economic effects of Thatcherism to enrich some parts of the population at the expense of the rest.[6]

All of this revealed a deep tension between social and economic need and outcome under Thatcher. The deepening of these tensions was precisely the substance of the attacks on Mrs Thatcher and her Government by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1989. It is only useful to give a few examples here.[7] Under Thatcher, the privileged status of the economic and the individual (as family) produced inequalities between regions and between economic sectors (Gamble 1987a). Further it gave a priority to the reduction of state expenditure in the name of economic management and balancing the books and so sacrificed the wellbeing of the health, education and social needs of a considerable number of the British people, particularly the less well-off (Krieger 1986, Riddell 1985, Gough 1983). The regional and class effects of this were such that an even more divided British society was produced but obscured or excused in the rhetoric of Thatcherism (Leadbeater 1987b, Gamble 1987a). Even within the family the contradictions were manifest, particularly in working class, but also in higher

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5. This is not to say that the concept of the nation did not have a part to play in Thatcherism. It did, providing one of the several contradictory strands in Thatcherism noted by Hall (1988). One does not need to cite the Falklands War to demonstrate this. In agriculture as well, the issue of the sovereignty of Britain provided the basis of an ongoing dispute between Britain and other member countries of the EEC, especially with the approach of 1992 and the removal of trade barriers. Indeed, it was her strong stand on this issue which precipitated the final downfall of Margaret Thatcher.

6. Riddell stresses that the poor suffered most under Thatcherism, noting that there was, for example, higher infant mortality among unskilled manual working people than for professionals (1985: 160). Cut-backs in state expenditure could only increase such inequalities.

7. These examples are mostly taken from the period 1986-1988 which to a large extent coincides with the fieldwork period for this thesis. As such they are part of the political field in which *Emmerdale Farm* was being made.

income families (Segal 1983). The regionalisation of employment meant that the incidence of long range commuting to work, especially from the north, increased, with some breadwinners spending the week in London or the south-east and only the weekends at home with their families (Hogarth and Daniel 1987). Accommodation problems in some local authority areas meant that the homeless, whole families, were permanently housed in bed and breakfast establishments and could be shifted about with little or no warning (Platt 1987a). Unemployment and the pressure to accept low pay[8] reduced the life-chances of an increasing percentage of the population while the very richest people increased their share of the national income (Hillard 1986, Wicks 1987). The burden of women in the home was increased by the expectation that as well as their paid employment and household work, they must now accept the responsibility for crisis care of family members; unless their income was high enough to pay for this kind of help (Segal 1983, Bacchi 1990).

All of this was legitimated by a developing culture of greed and self-seeking (Leadbeater 1987a; Edgar 1987) which, as Hall (1987) explains so cogently, was articulated with Thatcher dominated moral ideas of "personal effort and hard work" to become part of the way in which people lived their lives and reacted to what was happening. It was the struggle over the spread of this common-sense view of the world which formed one major aspect of the politics of Thatcherism. Thus though tensions between social and the economic need underpinned the whole of British society, they were papered over, legitimated and made morally acceptable for many, by the way in which the problems of individuals and groups were constructed.

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8. The paying of low wages and the erosion of working conditions has to be seen as being legitimated by Thatcher's stance on industrial relations and individual responsibility in the economy (see Caudrey 1987).

The tenets of Thatcherism not only set the political and moral agenda, but they dominated political discourse by forcing people to oppose the political programme in their terms. One example will suffice, in the area of housing. Having knocked down high rise flats in the East End, the Dockland Development Company built houses which were far too expensive for the original inhabitants to buy (Platt 1987b). At one level this was a classic example of the kind of redistribution of wealth under Thatcherism which was part of the reversal of social democracy at its heart. But it demonstrated more than this. On a television programme dealing with the social consequences of the development, a stock exchange employee moving into a town house worth a quarter of a million pounds justified this in Thatcherite terms of his own hard work and enterprise which meant that he "deserved" to live there. It was his reward for behaving in a way which Thatcherism assured him was the only hope for a strong economic nation (Hillard 1986). Though such a vision of the world was not hegemonic, universalised to become the world view of even those whose interests it did not serve (Mouffe 1983: 222), it had become quite acceptable to voice such sentiments which celebrated inequality[9] and the programme was partly structured around a rebuttal of the point. As Hall says, privatisation and the primacy of the market had made outdated, ideas of "the public good" and "social need" (1988: 88, 89). At least, it had in some quarters.

Yet while this individualism and striving for personal gain were generated by a particular way of looking at, reifying and privileging the *economic*, it was precisely this orientation which increasingly failed to deliver the *social* goods (see also Hall 1988: 80-83).[10] People were literally thrown

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9. For Margaret Thatcher, such inequality is the true *justice* in society, as even her early speeches reveal (Thatcher 1977: 10, 11).

10. Ultimately, the programme failed to deliver the economic goods too, certainly in terms of the national economy (see for example, Kaletsky 1990), though individuals did very well out of Thatcherism.

out of their homes by the Dockland Development Company which, though it was responsible for "developing" the area, had no responsibility to rehouse the tower block occupants (Platt 1987b).[11] The drive to rationalise and save money, in coal-mining for example, took away the jobs of entire communities of people.[12] Farmers' activities in the name of economics degraded what most in England see as a national resource,[13] yet Thatcher's determination to employ calculations based on notions of 'supply and demand' and the abolition of uneconomic enterprises in farming as in manufacturing, threatened to *increase* the 'industrialisation' of agriculture and its consequences for the environment and for rural communities. Concerned for the profits to be made, Britain accepted the toxic wastes of Europe rejected by all other countries, including Italy which had come to have a reputation for being blase about the environmental and health dangers of such by-products of industrial society (*Guardian Weekly* 11.2.88: 1). Stringent budgeting eroded the National Health Service, and the primacy of economics coupled with ideas of personal responsibility and individualism refocused welfare state ideas about the social needs of universal health provisions onto paying for health care at a market value. The valorisation of and provision for the economic and the social were in tension under the principles of Thatcherism (Riddell 1985: 109).

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11. One television programme in 1987 showed the original attempts to dispossess families just two weeks before Christmas. Because of the symbolic impact of this, the orders eventually extended the time allowed.

12. This destruction of mining by monetarism, as Scargill called it when leader of the National Miners Union (in the BBC's *The Thatcher Revolution*), was also a major strategy in Thatcher's Industrial Relations policy to break or subdue the unions.

13. The section on the countryside in the 1987 report on British Social Attitudes indicates reveals the increasing concern of British people about the countryside, a concern which leads even urban people with no knowledge of agriculture to express an opinion about policy for the countryside (Young 1987: 153-169).

EMMERDALE FARM AS AN ARENA OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE

In 1979, the Thatcher Government came to power amidst what many have called a crisis of authority or confidence (Hall 1987, 1983, Bechhoffer and Elliott 1981: 191). The nineteen eighties was the beginning of the new era of greatness promised by Thatcher, though her Government's policies involved a very real tension between the economic and the social. This tension underpinned much of the contestation and struggle over Thatcherism, particularly the new hegemony which it offered. The political arena was constituted out of a plurality of sites of struggle (Hall 1987: 20) with agents seeking both to affirm and resist this hegemony. This was the general context in which *Emmerdale Farm* was conceptualised and produced. Chapters Two, Three and Four demonstrated the effects of other contexts of the programme, that of production and genre within the process of representation, but even they were contained within an existence in which the personnel were also part of Britain under Thatcher. In nineteen eighty seven Yorkshire Television was developing and implementing its own version of Thatcherite restructuring and productivity,[14] initially through negotiations with the whole staff. Though the various unions represented in the company were not united in their approach to this, essentially the project was one in which the unions co-operated[15] which made a considerable contrast to their strength and influence in the nineteen seventies and the

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14. By the end of the nineteen eighties, various departments in the company were expected to independently earn profits for the company, in much the same way that university departments had been pressured to take on paying work earlier in the decade (cf Klein 1987).

15. The members of the company, many of whom had made a commitment of a different kind to the company by buying shares when Yorkshire Television came onto the market in 1986, participated in workshops to discuss what was happening, to voice complaints about the status quo and to make suggestions for improvement. This was very much in accord with the egalitarian principles of the company in which many members of middle management have actually come from 'the ranks'.

protracted struggles over any changes in work-practices in that decade. Thus Thatcher's principle of restructuring industrial relations through the quelling of the unions was one way in which the serial's personnel experienced Britain of the eighties and expressed that experience in the serial (Riddell 1985: 186-191, Gamble 1981: 145; Smith 1984: 187). The restructuring project and its negotiations became acknowledged story material for the *Emmerdale Farm* team when they were writing stories about the fate of NY Estates and its workers in a time of income and profit squeeze. *Emmerdale Farm*'s production personnel as urban dwellers and workers themselves existed *outside* of the rural (Chapter Seven), and so too, to an extent did their fictional rural life as the rural recession story contained elements of the personnel's own, urban and corporate, experience of Thatcherism.

What of other stories? We have seen some of the political and symbolic processes which underpin them in previous chapters. We have seen how these contributed to the naturalisation of the rural in the way in which they were structured, the stories generated and then resolved. Did *they* also participate in broader political processes, in the operation of and contestation over the political agenda of Thatcherism? If so, how? Is it possible to find in them the tensions between the social and the economic which have been demonstrated in the rural sector and in Thatcherism? What would the significance of this discovery be? What its outcome? Did they too, through their rendering of this tension, have a part to play in the reforging of the cultural hegemony which Hall (1987, 1983) sees as enabling Thatcher's rule? Did they demonstrate any resistance to this attempted hegemony? What are the particularities of any interpretation of Thatcher's Britain which can be found in *Emmerdale Farm*?

Many scholars for whom the political importance of the media is to be found in ideology, would find 'reflections' of Thatcher's version of capitalism

in the serial, but this would be to miss the specificity of *Emmerdale Farm* and its significance as an arena of contestation of the meaning of Thatcherism and its effects on British society. Hall's theory of the reformulation of cultural hegemony stresses precisely this political contestation. *Emmerdale Farm* was an interrogation of Thatcher's Britain, an interpretive process which was, through highlighting the tensions between the social and the economic, also a critique, a set of narratives which engaged with the principles and elements of Thatcherism and, to an extent, opposed them. What is important too though are the limitations, the parameters of this opposition, particularly the way that the exploration of society in the television serial was always limited by the fact that personnel are themselves embedded in their own culture.

Emmerdale Farm as a rendering of British society is already tied to one particular sector of that society, the rural, through which it gives form to the whole. This means that although its interrogation of Thatcherism was in part constrained by this location, it was also enabled by the cultural content of the category of the rural to tackle the injustices and inequalities of Thatcherism, which lay precisely in the tensions between social and economic needs. That is, the conventions of realism and the functioning of the orders of authenticity constrained the serial's rendering of British society by tying its content down to things rural. At the same time, the constitution of the rural within a dialogue with popular images of the rural, that is defined in an oppositional relationship to the urban, already endows it with a critical function, which makes it an entirely appropriate location from which to interrogate and criticise a Thatcher style of capitalism based in and derived from *urban* forms.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN FAMILY FARM AND AGRIBUSINESS

In 1987 the dominant mechanism which drove *Emmerdale Farm* as an interrogation of British society was the oppositional relation between the family farm and agribusiness, between Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates, conceived as opposites. In their construction as opposites, these two already existed in a relationship which was fundamentally a critical and interpretive one; one which was about the relationship between farming and the countryside and about power and advantage in the agricultural sector. Thus, a story like that of recession or the dump, when it involved NY Estates, always had the family farm through which to develop the story in such a way that it implied and processed criticism of NY and that which it signified. Emmerdale was what NY was not and vice versa. Together, both as types but particularly in their interrelation, they formed one major construction of the contemporary rural arena in *Emmerdale Farm*. Indeed, they were dominant in all facets of the construction of that rural. This was a construction formed out of the basic tensions in British rural society today, and we have seen how these tensions were concretised, formalised, by being separated out of the social activity of farming generally and each attributed to one or other of the two kinds of enterprises. This is the significance of the insistence of some members of the production office's that they only needed to represent types of farm with one example. It is though also interesting that they chose 'pure' types of farming and never used the kinds of farmers one finds in the dales who engage in what sociologists call pluri-activities (Gasson et al 1988); the combination of farming with practices like transport, contract silage making or bed and breakfast activities. Rather, within the two and the relationship between them were the inconsistencies and tensions of the kind of dynamic rural society which the serial makers wished to explore.

By containing these tensions and inconsistencies within this relation of opposition, the serial was able to resolve them in ways impossible within the construction of lived experience of the dales by farmers.

As the dominant mechanism in the construction of the rural in *Emmerdale Farm*, it is worth recapitulating some of the elements of the family farm and agribusiness estate as drawn in the serial. These elements are drawn from the discussion of each of the rural issues which appeared in the preceding chapters.

Emmerdale Farm as the family farm is an organism which has at its heart people, family members who are shown to care deeply about each other even where there are tensions between them. Essentially a moral category, the family farm is iconic of the nurture side of farming, both within the family unit and towards its animals and the countryside. They are dedicated farmers who hate to see a farm ill kept or a farming job mismanaged, and although the serial explores the mercenary reasons for such sentiments, essentially it is a humanitarian principle which is dominant. Thus Jack refused to keep pigs in modern 'inhuman' units[16] and attacked NY Estates for its intensively farmed poultry enterprise because of the conditions in which the chickens were kept. Matt grieved over the loss of a ewe and her lamb when he was called to act in the anti-dump campaign and spent hours of his time trying to save sheep on his neighbour Metcalfe's farm when they were being neglected. His compassion for the sheep was also extended to compassion for Metcalfe whom he tried to help as well. Underpinning this humanitarianism is the idea that to treat farming as just an *economic* enterprise is wrong. This is exploitation of animals and it follows by

16. This was the substance of one past story about the expansion and development of the family farm, and only one of the many occasions on which Jack has been established as an exponent of alternative farming methods and an outspoken critic of exploitative and environmentally unsound techniques.

extension in the Matt example, exploitation of humans as well. This critique at the heart of the depiction of the family farm is played out, not without ambiguity, in a relationship with NY Estates. Though nowhere near as economically powerful as NY Estates, indeed having several times stood in its debt over the loan of materials and machinery, it is Emmerdale which holds the moral high ground.

NY Estates appears as essentially an office, as management rather than in the practice of caring for animals or the land. At NY, relations between people are entirely determined by a hierarchy of relationships between people and things. Even Alan Turner and Joe Sugden as Manager and Regional Manager, though more powerful than the farm workers, are themselves subordinated to Head Office and the representatives of the true owners of the agribusiness estate. It is the latter who hold the power to sell the Beckindale estate, so throwing the workforce out of work. The essential dynamic of this enterprise is not about relations between people, or even humanitarian relations between people and animals, but rather is grounded in a view of farming as economics. Thus the unequal relations of the workforce are explored dramatically in the context of an economic enterprise under threat, a context which exacerbated the conflicts between people and threatened the least powerful, the least well-off. This is startlingly evocative of Dumont's characterisation of capitalism as being founded on the domination of relations between humans and things, and that it is these relations which provide the basis of the relations between human beings (1977: 5). As such, it stands in contrast with the characterisation of the family farm in terms of interpersonal relations functioning for the good of the whole unit rather than any one individual.

Both Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates, like the farms of the dales, are capitalist enterprises but, in the stories which interrogated the rural issues of overproduction, environment and demographic change, they were given

quite different characters, so that it was the interrelation *between* them that provided the full ground of the problems with all of their tensions and inconsistencies.

Overproduction as a theme operated entirely on the polarisation of the family farm and agribusiness. The tensions between expansion and needing to cut costs which were ever present for the farmers of the dales were separated out and represented by Emmerdale and NY respectively. Not only were the financial consequences of the recession, of which overproduction was a part, entirely borne by the dales operation of NY Estates which was closed down because of falling returns and poor prospects for the rural sector, but the family farm solved *its* problems of the time by expanding. The relational nature of the opposition between the two was confirmed by the fact that Emmerdale bought some of NY's stock and quota, at the same time becoming a tenant of NY because of the tying of quota to land. Indeed, this put Emmerdale into a power relationship with NY, a feature which became a major component of the story. In this scenario, the motivation for each of the actions, the expansion of Emmerdale and the reduction of NY, also served to point the contrast between the two. All of NY's calculations were economic. Their actions were prompted by the visit of an accountant and the final decision about how the savings would be made was entirely economic. The economic mode of constructing the operation caused though social, not economic crisis. It was the social which was sacrificed. Even Joe and Alan Turner were at the beck and call of largely impersonal forces in the Lincoln head office, and the stories were very much about the hardship, frustration and fear of the workers who had no say at all in what was happening.

In contrast, Emmerdale Farm's expansion, though it had a economic element, was presented as being about the social relationships of the farm family. It was motivated by the need to provide for the family now, the next generation in Jackie and Sam and future generations yet to come in Sam

and Jackie's children. It was thus about providing properly for the family and more, about keeping the family on the land by keeping the family farm together and viable. The emphasis was entirely social and economic calculations were rendered peripheral.

Most of the occasions on which the environment has become an issue in *Emmerdale Farm* have completely polarised NY and Emmerdale. This we saw in Chapter Six, but it must also be appreciated that once again, this polarisation also separates out the social and the economic which may be in tension within modern British farming and society. It is only NY which is ever responsible for environmental damage as a consequence of its normal patterns of farming. In past stories it was NY which was responsible for careless crop dusting which poisoned the playgroup and NY which, because of badly stored pesticides, caused damage to Emmerdale's crops. In the recession story, rationalisation led to cutbacks in labour for maintaining the estate and the neglect of vermin control caused brucellosis in one of the cows which Emmerdale Farm bought from NY. It is NY which intensively farms with inhumane (to the city dweller at least) consequences for animals, it is NY which farms with only profit as the motive. NY is the newcomer to the dale, compared with the family farmers who have been there for generations and who can therefore be seen as the *creators* of the landscape as much as its exploiters, which is the way in which the landscape is thought of in the construction of the dales in the lived experience of the farmers. NY cannot carry this legitimation of its actions in the serial, since the enterprise only arrived in the late seventies. At every level, it is through NY that the environmental issue is set up as having an economic base, and Emmerdale which serves as the counterpoint, providing possible solutions through the social basis of farming.

The depopulation and demographic change issue is far more complex for the way in which the serial's handling of it is itself based in the tension

between the social and economic needs of the area. This is largely because the issue is never acknowledged in the serial. As a negative example which generates the permanent (almost unchanging) population of the countryside; people as an essential ingredient; the serial's construction of the rural entirely privileges the social. Second, the issue of rural demographics is problematic, because the only expression of it which the serial does present, that of community, itself becomes part of the metalanguage through which the construction of the rural operates as an interrogation of the whole of British society in the nineteen eighties. The presentation of community as it confronts the tension between the social and the economic in capitalism, particularly under Thatcher's leadership, becomes part of that interrogation and will be explicated as the analysis develops.

One aim of this thesis has been to investigate the way in which *Emmerdale Farm* participated in the broad political processes surrounding Thatcherism as a management strategy for British capitalist society. So far it has been shown that the serial did engage with at least part of the content of the political ground in British society of the eighties, the contradiction between social and economic needs under Thatcherism which at another level was manifest as tensions between the individual and some wider whole, always underpinned in its conception by a vision of how the world ought to be. The serial did not present these tensions as they underpinned the various rural issues considered in the thesis in any simple, reflective way. There were considerable discrepancies between their expression in the construction of the dales through the lived experience of the farmers and that of the television serial. This is where the significance of the serial's objectification of the dales was important (Chapter Seven). Rather than 'mirroring' dales life in a way which made dalesmen's constructions central, the serial objectified the dales and used dramatic devices, particularly the

Emmerdale Farm/NY Estates opposition, to extend the focus of the serial from the part, the dales, to the whole, Britain of the late nineteen eighties.

The next and final stage of this chapter engages with the direct politics of this as it relates to Thatcherism, its basis and its attempts to legitimate and universalise a particular world view. The section will demonstrate how, through a further set of symbolic elaborations on the family farm/agribusiness relation, the serial engaged more generally with this content and vision of Thatcherism and produced a limited critique of it. As the structure at the heart of *Emmerdale Farm* in 1987, the pinnacle of Thatcher's success, the family farm/agribusiness relation transformed political and economic questions into moral ones. Thatcherism did the same thing, which is precisely the thrust of the struggle to forge a new hegemony through which to authorise its reconstruction of Britain. The serial's tendency to pose questions about the nature of society, how people should relate, what obligations they should have, both consciously and through the conventions of making drama, was exactly the focus of this hegemony. Further, it is the ground of the tensions between the social and the economic and the individual and the whole.

REPRESENTATION AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE

The premise on which this part of the analysis is based is that television can be understood in terms of British culture expressing and attempting to think about and understand itself; a process which is most concentrated as it dwells on the basic tensions[17] and inconsistencies of

17. For cinema, Will Wright (1975) has produced the most complete analysis of the American Western based on this aspect of tensions and contradictions. He sees the Western as a modern myth whose function is to provide imaginative structures within which to resolve the contradictions in American capitalist society over time, particularly the appropriate relations between the individual and society.

society and the possible dynamic of change. Rehearsals demonstrated precisely this kind of reflexivity, this "representing ourselves to ourselves" (Cranny- Francis 1988: 158). In *Emmerdale Farm*, the production personnel were doing more than participating in the contestation over rural crisis, though we have seen that this is clearly so. By rendering British society through the representation of one, rural, part they could also, and perhaps more importantly, be seen to be thinking about the experience of Thatcher's Britain, particularly as it intensified substantial contradictions between the social and the economic under capitalism. The various processes and relations of representation in making drama actually necessitated an interrogation of the social world which directly confronted the precepts of the hegemony Thatcher was striving to achieve.

Emmerdale Farm's version of the world in 1987 included so many elements of what was very much a contradictory set of doctrines underpinning a political project which was nothing less than the total reconstruction of society, politically, economically, socially and culturally; an "hegemonic project" (Hall 1988: 91). *Emmerdale Farm*'s fictional world included in the family farm the petit-bourgeoisie with its independence, freedom and entrepreneurialism which was so important to Thatcher's vision of a vital capitalism. It was pitted against an internationally located big business venture, grounded in finance capital, which in 1987 was rationalising. Then too the family was central, in its most stereotypical form with the mother in the *home* caring for all of the members. Other values, some of them the old "Victorian" values of which Mrs Thatcher was so enamoured, also emanate from the home at Emmerdale; respectability, morality, conventional sexuality (Hall 1988: 85, 90, Krieger 1986: 63). As in Thatcherism, in Beckindale, law and order are ongoing issues, in 1987 arising in the context of the nuclear dump. In *Emmerdale Farm*'s fictional world too, the Church is still alive and well, with even non-Church goers

being closely linked to it in friendship with the vicar and community projects. The centrality of these features does not mean that the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm* is some Thatcherite idyll. On the contrary, it means that through its narratives the serial could explore these elements so vital to the vision of Thatcherism and its hegemonic project. By combining and recombining the elements, the serial explored their significance and meaning, how people live in society, what arrangements are best for the greatest number; it interrogated the vision of Thatcherism and the outcome of its political project. In doing this, it can be shown to be contesting some at least of the principles of Thatcherism; sometimes challenging, at others affirming them or at least giving them substance by attaching them to variously valorised characters.

The starting point is always the rural because of the ways in which we have seen this location drive the serial's representation. In reflecting upon and attempting to understand society, *Emmerdale Farm*'s focus on the rural had certain consequences. In the two major narratives considered in the thesis, those of the nuclear dump and the rural recession which both interrogated the meaning of what was happening to rural society under Thatcherism, *Emmerdale Farm*'s analysis worked through the oppositional relationship between Emmerdale Farm and NY Estates. It achieved further political meaning through the symbolic elaboration of this opposition through which *Emmerdale Farm* detailed and engaged with the content of Thatcherism. These elaborations were part of further symbolic processes in representation which transformed what were originally metonyms of business and nurture into complexes of metaphors, all of which were deeply embedded in the culture which they helped articulate. The systematic relations between metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 8,9) provides a reflexive (as well as reflective) cultural space for television personnel.

The narratives of the rural recession and the nuclear dump firstly introduced an opposition between *inside/outside*, one made dominant by the continuing serial form. Here the fictional world which the serial constructs is the inside (something which accords with the dalespeople's view of themselves) and disturbance generally enters from the outside, to be solved through inside personal relations and forces. The inside is dominant. The story resolution brings order again to the inside which is returned to its pre-disorder state, usually without any major change. In the cases of overproduction and environment a useful contrast can be drawn between the serial and the dales itself. For the dalespeople, the dales also are constructed in terms of inside and outside, though the dominance of the inside is ambiguous and contextual. For them, overproduction and the environment as problems were part of the very constitution of farming and the rural, part of what they are, what is happening. They are part of the inside and interestingly, people often look to the outside for possible solutions. In contrast, in *Emmerdale Farm*'s fictional world, such problems were introduced from the outside. They were not an intrinsic part of the inside. This offers the possibility of a solution where none was possible in the social world, as the outside problem was resolved from the inside in normal soap opera fashion.

As Chapter Four showed, the inside is also rural space and in creating rural place as the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm*, the serial introduces a new opposition which is a transformation of the inside/outside one. This is the *rural/urban* opposition which has so dominated this discussion, as a mechanism by which the construction of rural crisis was often transformed into a politics of difference (Bacchi 1990), which was confirmed in the serial's handling of the issues and in their extension of these into wider issues about British society. In its representation in the serial the rural corresponds to the inside and the urban to the outside from which disturbances, like the nuclear

dump, come. In the context of the nineteen eighties, Thatcherism can be associated with the urban, particularly given the significance of finance and The City in its "reconstruction" of Britain. No longer did the countryside provide the the vital core of political figures (Chapter One). In the exploration of Thatcherism through television representation, this gave the rural a new significance.

The rural as inside would appear to be the opposite of the way in which television production personnel view the rural, which was to objectify it from an urban perspective. In this view the rural is Other, to be objectified according to the needs which underpin its construction. Such a view also underpins the buying up of the countryside by urban people seeking a holiday home or rural retreat. It is the discourses which construct the rural in difference and within which these constructions of the countryside are generated that give the key to this apparent paradox. These discourses, while constituting the rural from within the terms of the urban, propose an idealised rural which is everything which the urban is not. Its construction as Other enables the rural to serve as the site of a critique of all that is considered bad in the urban and by extension the whole industrialised society. In this essentially backward-looking critique of capitalism and industrialism, the country does not just become all the things which the city is not, but it becomes, as Williams says, the repository of Old English values, 'real' England as the place of belonging (1985: 254-263, 275, 281; Wiener 1981: Chapter Four). While it is materially and with serious consequences for the indigenous population, encompassed by the urban, in thought it is encompassing. If in the serial (and in political and economic life), the urban is allied to Thatcherism, this seems to me to provide a point of contestation, certainly reflection, over Thatcherism's own nostalgic stress on "Englishness" which Hall sees as part of Thatcherism's "moral agenda (1988: 90). The Englishness of Thatcherism located in some reconstruction

of Victorianism and particularly racism (Hall 1988, Krieger 1986), both aligns with the symbolism of the rural and departs from it.

The rural in the serial becomes the inside, and the urban, already constituted as disruptive and corrupting, is outside. This accords completely with the discourse through which *Emmerdale Farm* personnel express their ambitions in introducing discord into the serial through narrative. From the beginning, it was an ambition to explore the rural society by looking at how it would respond to what were called "urban problems"; the implication being that there would be a clash. Thus an early story had Henry Wilks as a retired mill owner who had come to settle in Beckindale being accused by Jack of polluting the river beside his mill with chemicals. In 1987, the nuclear dump story was simply the last in a long line of stories on the theme of the disruption of the rural by the external urban, the symbol of industrialised society.

In turn, through the location of the serial in the Yorkshire Dales, the rural/urban opposition is overlaid of another, corresponding opposition, that of North/South. Once again, this opposition is informed by an intermix of sociological and cultural elements. Its content too runs contrary to the usual way of conceptualising the opposition in the twentieth century, for to associate the North with rural ignores the usual stereotypes of Northern industrial cities, mills and mines; the industrial north. This contrast was intended by the serial's creators, so that the serial can be understood to be exploring this opposition, the content and meaning of which has changed over time, as the city/countryside relation also has. Indeed, in overlaying the North on the rural, the serial recalls earlier typifications of the North as wild and rural in opposition to a more culturally developed South (Laslett 1965: 59, Thomas 1987: 258).

Two things contribute to this re-association of the North and rural such that the North becomes metaphor through which to criticise Thatcherism. The

first is sociological and the second cultural. For some time the North of England has been declining, precisely because of its industrial base. Under Thatcherism, this decline was accelerated by the privileging of finance and new technology sectors of the economy and the increasing running down of manufacturing (Riddell 1985, Gamble 1987a, 1981). Many people have noted the widening inequalities in British society, which at one level incorporates the gulf between the north and the south and at another level is expressed through a north/south relation conceptualised as metaphor (Gamble 1987a, Mitchison 1987b: 18). The declining fortunes of the north make it a site of resistance to Thatcherism as the election results of 1987 showed. And in a sense, the industrial associations of the North are becoming weakened, along with manufacturing itself, so that representation through the stereotype becomes outdated. At the same time, it is the South which is most associated with Thatcherism, most implicated in its policies and achievements (Ascherson 1990). This leaves the North 'uncorrupted', able to become the site of a particular kind of critique of modern Britain under Thatcherism. At this level too, it is the Other.

There is another important dimension to the north/south opposition as it has been constituted since the industrial revolution and in employing this, *Emmerdale Farm* working to interpret and interrogate British culture reinforces the component of *morality* which is essential for the serial to generate through a sequence of oppositions, a critique of Thatcher's Britain. The category of the rural already has considerable moral content as we have already seen. Its location in the North, in opposition to the south, strengthens the category by overlaying on it the down-to-earthness, honesty, the salt-of-

the-earth quality and incorruptibility which are associated with the North.[18] Indeed, the nineteenth century stereotype of the 'rude Northerner' (whom the Southerner Alan Turner still constantly expects to find) is an amalgam of the earlier 'wild people' and 'rustic idiocy' of the North (versus the refinement and culture of the South) and the class based nouveau riche classification of the nineteenth century Northern industrialists. The North has always been conceptually constituted in a relationship with the South (Wiener 1981:41), an opposition which has strong moral and critical content as it generates (and is generated by) wider questions of what society is and how it should be. As a moral category, the overlaying of the rural by the North doubly empowers the rural as a site of interrogation, especially criticism, in *Emmerdale Farm.*

So far the series of oppositions elaborates a particular kind of place for the fictional world of *Emmerdale Farm.* These oppositions also inform the opposition between family farm and agribusiness which, in the eighties, was the dominant mechanism through which many of the narratives in the serial worked. Certainly this was the case for the rural recession and the nuclear dump which have featured in the body of the thesis. That the family farm corresponds to the North and agribusiness to the South in the serial is beyond doubt. The centrality of Annie to the family farm alone would confirm this. She is Northern born, displays at all times the honesty and integrity of the north, is hard working and loyal, and was in the early years so tough that her mellowing over the years was a feature commented upon by production personnel and audience alike. Matt is, as was shown in chapter three, her male counterpart with many of the same, Northern, virtues. Over the years

18. Mrs Gaskell's *North and South* is a perfect example of this thinking in which the Northern industrialist comes to represent honesty and integrity in opposition to a snobbery and ineffectualness of the gentry of the south. He is a *man* rather than a *gentleman* and proud of the virtue which this bestows on him (1961).

this Northerness has also been associated in the serial with classlessness, with egalitarianism, and 1987 was no exception. This characterisation follows through in the association of agribusiness, NY Estates, with the South. Alan Turner is the personification of this association. He is a Southerner, Oxford educated, an outsider who brings a class consciousness with him; constantly set up by the producers to be debunked for pretension, pomposity and laziness. His Northern workforce ridicules him and his main opponent among the men is the Yorkshire born game keeper who employs a native cunning in an ongoing class war with him. The construction of Northerness in the family farm takes place in opposition to this characterisation, valorising it both in its own terms and as the inside which is disrupted by forces from, not just the urban outside, but also the South.

The level of family farm/agribusiness is the overt level at which the narratives are played out. Further, it is the level at which the contradiction between the social and economic under capitalism is introduced into the sequence of oppositions. Both are capitalist enterprises, but as was argued in Chapter Six, the working through oppositions in the narrative enables the rehabilitation of capitalism through its social, family farm, form. Though clearly capitalist, the family farm of the serial is about nurture, of persons and the environment. As is true for the family farm of the actual dales, Emmerdale is self-owning and self-exploiting, but the morality of the inside, the rural and the North which elaborate the family farm category in the serial valorise it and establish it as the desirable form of capitalism. As was seen in Chapter Six, the image of the family farm is such that it has increasingly become the representation of farming generally by organisations like the NFU and the CLA. Emmerdale Farm accords well with the image they present. Once again, the serial was engaging with Thatcherism on ground central to the

latter; the moral. While Thatcherism linked the moral and the economic though,[19] the serial separated them.

At the same time, capitalism's economic form in agribusiness, was constantly rejected in the serial as all of the evils of capitalism are focused in NY Estates. What is important overall, is that by 1987 NY Estates encapsulated many of the elements and values of Thatcherism as a particular form of managing capitalism, for which it could be seen to stand. In its fusion of Thatcherism with NY, the serial debated the nature of nineteen eighties capitalism and established its limits. The ongoing story of the rural recession showed the international, finance owned company rationalising labour, replacing traditional forms of labour with other forms and internationalising the basis of it. Profit was paramount and the emphasis was on productivity and accountability, as even the gamekeeper was set to look after the sheep in order to increase his input into the company. Finally, in pulling out of the dale, the company transferred its investment when the level of profit was no longer high enough, with no regard from the Head Office for the human hardship which such an action caused. Every area of the total enterprise had to be highly profitable, so what *had* been acceptable farming in a fairly marginal area was cut for the savings it made in an increasingly competitive market.

Further, the focus of NY was on new styles of management with Joe, albeit ambiguously as Chapter Five shows, personifying the new

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19. Though Thatcherism valorised the moral, it seems clear that its moral agenda was harnessed to an economic one. Both were essential. Consider Thatcher's comments:

> Serious as the economic challenge is, the political and moral challenge is just as grave, and perhaps more so, because economic problems never start with economics. they have much deeper roots in human nature, and roots in politics, and they do not finish at economics...these are the two great challenges of our time - the moral and political challenge, and the economic challenge. They have to be faced together and we have to master them both (quoted in Hall 1988: 85).

In *Emmerdale Farm* by contrast, morality is often dominant, *for itself*. This is a major element of the way in which all soap operas interrogate society.

entrepreneurialism and sovereignty of the free and open market valorised under Thatcherism. Even the law and order issue of Thatcherism was lodged in NY Estates in the nuclear dump story, as Turner opposed any law breaking to achieve the community's ends. In all this, the serial was using one rural enterprise, at a time when the rural sector of Britain was itself feeling the impact of Thatcherite economics as manufacturing had before it, to typify the social effects of such an approach to economics and politics. Implicit in the unfolding of the narrative about the rural recession was an economic critique of the impact of such rationalising pursuits in one segment of a much larger enterprise. NY was shown to be running down; disorder and inefficiency creating problem after problem, even the outbreak of brucellosis caused by inability to control vermin on the estate. The *social* critique however dominated, as the company's indifference to people was explored in many different relationships which focused on the hardships caused to characters. Marriages foundered, personal behaviour changed, friendships were tested, loyalties tried and relationships of authority became areas in which to play out the problems of restructuring the enterprise.

The family farm/agribusiness opposition makes explicit the basic tensions between social and economic need in British society in the nineteen eighties. At the same time, the source of the tension is identified in Thatcherism, itself typified in agribusiness,[20] and it is this which is finally rejected while the family farm redeems capitalism itself, both morally and socially. Thus it is the *social* form of capitalism which is naturalised iconically in the family farm, while Thatcherism is rendered unnatural, immoral. Though undoubtedly a critique of Britain in the nineteen eighties, this is no radical

20. Here it must be noted that the coming of NY Estates to the dale in the late nineteen seventies, though it preceded Thatcherism, did coincide with the turn towards monetarism begun under the Callaghan Labour Government (Riddell 1985: 58) and given extra impetus under Thatcher, post 1979.

critique, but rather a conservative one. It does not propose any alternative social order - why indeed should it? What it does do is to affirm the value of capitalism, legitimating it through the family farm, while rejecting the Thatcherite form under which the tensions between social and economic need, between the individual and the whole are magnified to the point of unacceptability. The tension's resolution through the family farm is of course, only partial. The structured inequalities of capitalism are not challenged and only the question of management of the system is considered. As such the serial can be located right in the centre of the politics of struggle over Thatcherism.

What this analysis shows about television's operation in this very political arena is that there is much room for contestation despite the overall conservatism of *Emmerdale Farm*'s critique. There is no mere acceptance and reinforcement of the patterns of domination of the status quo as the serial moves within the political arena. Rather, *Emmerdale Farm* operates at the level of the debate about what is acceptable under capitalism; what are the orders of priority in such a society to be? How is the greatest good for the greatest number to be achieved? What should the relationship between the individual and the whole be? These are all political questions which constitute part of the common sense about British society being contested within Thatcherism and are addressed as effectively at the level of drama and fiction as at that of news and documentary; perhaps more so.

There is one more dimension to be added to the understanding of the political workings of *Emmerdale Farm.* This dimension locates the elaborations discussed above even more firmly in the terrain of Thatcherism, picking up on its images of the petit bourgeois individual at the heart of this vision of the world as a market economy which is really conceptualised as a system of "simple commodity production" (Gamble 1979: 16-23). Again the serial takes elements of this agenda, like the centrality of the petit-

bourgeoisie, and problematises these and the "moral agenda" surrounding it (Hall 1988: 90) by combining it with historical and cultural elements outside of Thatcherism. In the serial, the family farm does not operate alone to provide the model for society, as sometimes the petit-bourgeois family does for Thatcherism. While the family farm socialises capitalism at the level of the individual, it is 'community' which does the same thing for the collective. Indeed, the community coalesces with the family farm so that in the narratives it is this composite unit which opposes NY Estates, the urban and the outside. This was the significance of it being the community of the urban/rural discourses through which the rural is constructed, which was problematised in the dump story, while other elements were taken for granted (Chapter Seven). It is this community which brings many of the elements of the Thatcherite vision of the world into contention by directly confronting and exploring them.

By itself, Emmerdale Farm as family farm *could* be interpreted as an ideal example of Thatcher's individual, bringing with it the valorisation of nineteen eighties petit bourgeois values,[21] which underpins one strand of Thatcherism. In previous chapters too, I have stressed the petit-bourgeois location of the dales farmers as self-owners and self-exploiters for whom land, as the major means of production, provides an additional element of identity. In the significant absence of the state and the EEC in the serial's representation of agriculture, Emmerdale appears to be independent and hard-working as much as it is egalitarian and non-competitive in any economic way. Again, this classification places Emmerdale Farm in a

21. In the nineteen eighties, as well as long standing values of independence, freedom and responsibility, this world view, influenced by the politics and economics of the nineteen seventies, opposed bigness, in business and in the state, especially when state money was used to save large, overseas owned, companies from ruin (Bechhoffer and Elliott 1981: 188, 191).

position to confront directly the central issues and tenets of Thatcherism with all of its contradictory pulls.

The new conservative politics of the nineteen eighties in Britain gave a new place to the petit bourgeoisie, at least in terms of providing part of a particular vision of the world:

> Much of the newfound enthusiasm for small business among Tories is a matter of political expediency, designed to win back a bloc of votes, but beyond that there is the so-called 'libertarian' philosophy of the new right in which the small businessman epitomises those virtues of independence and parsimony which it commends. In much of the current talk of 'regenerating' the British economy, the petite bourgeoisie are held by many politicians to have an important, even central, place (Bechhoffer and Elliott 1981: 189).

Thus the petit bourgeoisie provide a model for Thatcherism's ideal society made up of individual responsible units. Out of such freely associating units flows the good of the whole, again through morality being harnessed to economics. This is Thatcherism's "popular capitalism" (see also Chapter One) which, linked to individualism and privatisation, posited a totally different kind of society:

> Privatisation continues to valorize the free market as the only source of energy, drive, goodies. It outpaces and makes obsolescent outmoded notions of the 'public good' and 'social need' (Hall 1988: 88).

In the serial, the whole is not constituted in this way, so despite the petit-bourgeois location of the family farm, society cannot be read off from it. Made even more pertinent to the politics of Thatcherism, this location of Emmerdale Farm pushes the explorations of the serial into the morality of the middle class; into questions of how the petit bourgeoisie *does* fit into a wider society and what kind of society should this be; precisely the terrain of Thatcherism's hegemonic project. And here, the differences are significant,

so that *Emmerdale Farm* is no mere exemplar of an ideal Thatcherite Britain, but rather engages with that vision and contests elements of it.

The family farm and its family cannot be seen as a strictly bounded entity. They imply the wider community always and a significant element of its morality is involved in this interconnection. In Chapter Six we saw that the community could even be seen as extending out from the family, through kinship and friendship. Members of the community take part in the farm's activities whenever they are needed. Most of the community's problems are explored through the family and in the dump story the correspondence between things going wrong at the level of farm and community was a quite deliberate one on the part of the production office and their writers.

The community of *Emmerdale Farm* also addresses as central the relationship between the individual and the whole, and reverses Thatcherite notions of the privileging of the individual by proposing the community, the whole, as prior. The community represents the collectivist solution to social problems under capitalism, which was repudiated by Thatcher, but still supported by a considerable proportion of the population; even among those who took advantage of the privatisation programme to become share-holders, small capitalists, as privatisation escalated in 1987 (Gamble 1987b, Kreiger 1986 , Riddell, 1985).

The community of *Emmerdale Farm* is constituted out of all of the individuals in the fictional world. Though made up of various social types, the interdependence of these individuals, their involvement in each others lives and the responsibility which they take for each other, transcend any mere sum of these types. This community, which encompasses even the humanitarian capitalism of the family farm, confirms a timeless dimension already present in the cyclic activities of the farm. This timelessness is in tension with linear time as the 'family saga' produces a forward, developmental momentum and creates the illusion that audience and

fictional characters are living in the same kind of time. The construction of the community which we saw in Chapter Seven provides a returning point after each resolution, dissolving the tensions and possibilities for development provided in each episode of the narrative saga. In this, and every other way it demonstrates the naturalising tendency, stressed by Barthes (1972: 129 - 131). For, rather than being understood as symbolically constituted, contested and having several manifestations as in its construction within the lived experience of dalespeople, "community" in *Emmerdale Farm* as in many other constructions of rural life in the serial, becomes ultimately an organic entity which is naturalised, denying history and social constructedness.

To achieve this naturalisation, community as it is associated with the rural (which also has many of these naturalising features as it is constructed within urban/rural discourses) takes on a timelessness which provides the cyclicity necessary to the soap opera. This means that even seemingly irreversible animosities, like that between Jack and Alan Turner over the dump issue were resolved (with a hand-shake) with the ending of the story and the status quo was resumed. Thus community too, is part of the dominant mechanism of the serial which solves the contradiction between the individual and the whole. As with the opposition between the family farm and agribusiness itself, it too provides the possibility of working with other elements of the serial to generate understandings of the political domain of Thatcher's Britain. In *Emmerdale Farm*, the rural community has norms which are reminiscent of the old moral economy referred to by Thompson (1972: 68, 1971: 79) and Hobsbawm and Rude (1970). This offers a legitimation of property ownership and consequent inequality in the notion of justice; that privilege and position bring also responsibility and that there are limits to exploitation. It presupposes interdependence and concerns moral questions of "what ought to be men's reciprocal duties" (Thompson 1971:

91). The encompassment of the family farm by the morally responsible community in which its members operate would in these terms further legitimate the social form of capitalism represented by the family farm. The members of Emmerdale Farm are imbued with the morality of community which is demonstrated by their caring for their fellow villagers and implicated in the very construction of the community through the extension of the family farm.

What is interesting about these moral economy terms in *Emmerdale Farm*, is that they coincide with at least one critique of Thatcherism, that of Joel Krieger (1986). Basing his analysis also in the contradiction between the social and economic under Thatcher, Krieger argued that Thatcherism represents a change in the moral economy of Britain. He contrasted the primacy of the economic under Thatcher, with the Keynesian consensus of the post-war period. For him Thatcherism meant the erosion of democracy, of egalitarian ideals and civil rights accompanied by the improvement of the situation of the well-off at the expense of those who most needed help. In contrast, when Keynesian assumptions prevailed, governments were judged according to "social rights and democratic norms" rather than just economic performance (1986: 190-191). Now, he said, the democratic vision of a "cohesive and variegated political economy" has gone (1986: 199) to be replaced by an "amoral political community" in which:

> The prerogatives of private capitalist elites are expanded. The safeguards offered the politically weaker groups - ethnic and racial minorities, women - are substantially reduced. Democratic participation has shrunk in some ways to nineteenth century proportions as the dimensions of capitalist power expand commensurately (1986: 199).

The community of *Emmerdale Farm* is the antithesis of this, grounded in a moral economy which can accommodate capitalism through an

encompassment which alters the very constitution of capitalism. This is interesting for the way in which it situates both *Emmerdale Farm* and Thatcherism in English culture and history. Not only do these provide images and models for current social practices and visions, but in a sense both the serial and the political programme are contained by the culture and history in which they appear. Clearly English history has seen a movement backwards and forwards between a moral and "demoralised" capitalism, since Thompson (and Hobsbawm and Rude 1970) locates the "riots" of the eighteenth century precisely in the development of a new economy in which the laws of supply and demand rather than moral imperatives provided for "the common good" (Thompson 1971: 90). While the crowd of the eighteenth century appealed to a previous paternalist model, the serial's moral economy owes much to the welfare state which preceded a Thatcherism which lauded precisely the same amoral "natural operation of supply and demand in the free market" (Thompson 1971: 90), which confronted the earlier crowds.

The community mechanism operating in the serial also has the consequence of producing only a conservative critique of Thatcherism. While it reintroduces the desire for the welfare of the collectivity, the soap opera does not propose state provision for needs. Rather, in the centrality of the most prestigious "core" farm family in the community, the retired industrialist with money and the vicar as those who help the less fortunate, it harks back to a pre-welfare state situation of paternalism and individual (personal) resolution, which in the nineteen eighties introduced an element of naturalisation within an overall reflection on the kinds of responsibilities and rights which people should have (cf Williams as cited in Bechhoffer and Elliott 1981: 192). As such this moral economy model seems to me to be different from what some analysts have called the "moral economy of petty production" (Bechhoffer and Elliott 1981: 190-197). As "an idealised

economic and moral order" (: 191), this moral economy focuses more on desirable behaviour of significant entities rather than having interdependence built into it as *Emmerdale Farm*'s model does. This is hardly surprising given the individualism of the petit bourgeoisie:

> Out of the economic and social relations of the small businessmen they establish a moral platform from which the recent actions of governments and corporations can be assessed. Big businesses can be charged with failing to honour their obligations. They deliberately refuse to settle their accounts on time; they cut off orders or supplies to small enterprises without warning; they act to suppress small business innovation and competition when it suits them. Governments do overstep moral boundaries when they pour millions of pounds into foreign-owned companies like Chrysler, ...when they give employees 'excessive' security through the Employment Protection Act or empower VAT Inspectors to invade the domestic privacy of small businessmen (Bechhoffer and Elliott 1981: 191).

The authors point out that the basis of this moral economy is some idealised free market capitalism of days gone by (1981: 192). This is highly reminiscent of some of the rhetoric of Mrs Thatcher and the rationalisation given for some of her Government's policies, so that once again, *Emmerdale Farm* can be seen to be engaging with the concerns and derivation of significant elements of the Thatcherism dominating the political arena against which the serial was made. It gave form to the elements of Thatcherism and, through morality, produced resistance to them.

This is an analysis of *Emmerdale Farm* which would have looked very different in the middle of the nineteen seventies. Then the narrative structure of *Emmerdale Farm* was driven by different dominant mechanisms, certainly not the opposition between the family farm and agribusiness, because NY Estates had not come into the dale. NY was introduced at the end of the nineteen seventies in order to "bring realism" into the serial's fictional dales. It replaced a traditional landed estate owned by the local squire, which was itself therefore inside, rural and moral. There was no discontinuity between

Emmerdale Farm and the Verney Estate. Opposition then was *within* the family farm, between Jack and Joe, and through their antagonism the serial explored the increasing need to view farming as business. The meanings generated by an *Emmerdale Farm* thus constituted and its contribution to the political processes of a Britain ruled by Callaghan and the Labour Party would have been different, just as the social world to which it was related was different (see Wright 1975).

This is an analysis of television which is responsive to change, unlike so many of those accounts which use notions of ideology, dominant or otherwise. It suggests that the social character and significance of television cannot be treated as a constant. It countenances the possibility of change in the social world which is related to the processes and relations of representation on television, though not in any simple, mirror like or distorting way. Indeed sometimes the relationship can produce quite unexpected results, which express the complexity, ambiguity and contestation of meaning which are major features of television as culture. In this, it is an analysis which opposes any notion of the autonomy of television, that it generates meanings on its own (contra Baudrillard 1983b, Postman 1987), though we have seen that it can produce its own interpretations within the production process.

The argument about the political role of *Emmerdale Farm* in Britain of the nineteen eighties was derived from a close analysis of the relationship between various kinds of constructions of the same social world in an interpretive situation which allows space for contestation and exploration. It shows how different constructions and cultural institutions were used to generate the serial within a whole climate of debate about what society should be. Thus, even as drama, *Emmerdale Farm* did have a part to play in the struggle to reforge a cultural hegemony under Thatcher, a process which was about the terms in which society was to be thought. It is precisely these

terms which the serial debates, itself becoming part of the process of struggle for cultural hegemony which was a vital part of the politics of Thatcherism. But it must not be thought that this argument proposes that *Emmerdale Farm* must always produce the same kinds of meaning, nor that other soap operas contemporary with it, like *EastEnders*, engage with Thatcherism in the same terms.[22] The meanings generated through television and their significance vary with the total context in which the programmes are made and received. As interrogations of culture and society though, they are constituted and limited by the symbols culturally available to them through the kind of fictional world being presented; that is, by the process and relationship of representation.

The final, concluding, remarks extend the findings of this study into the more general domain of culture and politics and attempt to make some more generalised comments about television, power and representation.

22. Indeed, some production office personnel criticised *EastEnders* for portraying what they saw *as* a Thatcherite view of the working class as always arguing and incapable of managing their own affairs; as unworthy and part of the problem. For them, this linked up with the inegalitarian tendency in Thatcherism in which democracy was sometimes portrayed as cumbersome and holding back the real achievers in society (cf Gamble 1979: 8-10, Thatcher 1977: 12).

CONCLUDING REMARKS:
REPRESENTATION AND POWER IN CULTURE

This thesis has sought to uncover some of the major elements of the relationship between popular culture and politics. Rather than theorising this problem in the abstract, the thesis studied one television programme and considered its production and operation within its broadest political context. The relationship between culture and politics was understood in terms of representation; as a process and a set of interacting relationships. Thus, rather than deducing representation, the relationship between television text and social life from the text itself, the study thoroughly described and explored the conditions of production of the social constructions related in the process of representation. In this way, more of the full political significance of the serial could be discovered.

Emmerdale Farm was ultimately best understood as an example of culture expressing and attempting to think about and understand itself, a process most concentrated and meaningful as it dwells on the basic contradictions and inconsistencies of society and the possible dynamic of change. It does this at several levels and the various areas of political significance demonstrated throughout the thesis are all products of this internal exegesis (Detienne 1981: 68), which I have most often referred to as "contemplation" or "interrogation". Though the serial ostensibly, and significantly, addresses rural issues, through these the serial was shown to be contemplating the whole society, its social arrangements and its systems of signification. In this process of representation, the very rural focus for these wider investigations was meaningful. The serial demonstrates movement between different kinds of explanations about society, a process which allows for considerable contestation while at the same time making it possible to perpetuate certain dominant themes.

Television understood as a culture thinking about itself has this in common with a variety of practices in all kinds of societies:

> All societies have created occasions for reflecting upon themselves: regularly engineered crises, collective ceremonies, celebrations, rites of passage, rituals, public performances, and the like; times when the society tells itself who it is (or how it would like to be or should have been) (Myerhoff and Ruby 1982: 3).

Like these occasions and cultural forms, *Emmerdale Farm* engaged in precisely these kinds of interrogations and musings; about what people are like, how they should interact, what capitalist society is, what is wrong with it, what right, how it should be. Indeed, when it came to Thatcherism, *Emmerdale Farm* as drama seemed as capable of this kind of interrogation as news or documentary.

The link between myth and television has been proposed by several analysts, though many different conceptualisations of myth have been used for the task (see Carey 1988). Masterman et al, for example, have studied the relationship between politics and culture by focusing on Roland Barthes' important recognition that myth is "characterised above all by its 'self evident truth', its 'naturalness'" (1986: 4). The contributors use this to study the ideological effect of television products as disparate as commercials, game shows, soap opera and situation comedy. Silverstone rejects Barthes' understanding of myth on the grounds that it reduces television to pure ideology, unable to explain the specificity of media products, the pleasure they involve or the relationship between culture and ideology (1988: 21). Instead, he focuses on the *stories* in television and, drawing on a variety of sources, uses an extremely broad and, as he says "multivalent" notion of myth, when he tries to demonstrate the ways in which television is "like myth". For him, myth mediates between the sacred and the profane, the individual and society, the everyday and "the arcane". It is speech, it is

stories, it is associated with ritual (1988: 23). Though he follows through with some of these characterisations, the most significant part of his analysis for television derives from Levi-Strauss. Like myth for "primitive societies", television is "a culture thinking about itself" (1988: 29). He picks up on similarities of oral culture, communication and a binariness in the logic of the narrative which:

> ...manifests itself in the texts of today's television programs, as they attempt a resolution, always provisional and ineffective, of the basic dilemmas of social life: the dilemmas of gender, work, morality, of our relationship to the environment or to the cosmic (1988: 33).

Silverstone achieves a considerable depth of insight into television through his identification of processes of myth in television, and various features of this analysis of *Emmerdale Farm* and British society of the eighties would appear to accord with his view. The centrality of binarism to the narrative structure, the evidence that through its stories and its logic the serial is confronting the "dilemmas of social life", the basis of the serial in oral speech (Chapter Three); all these support his theory that television is best studied as myth. One could, following Levi-Strauss, demonstrate that in *Emmerdale Farm* production personnel are engaged in myth making as the narrative uses a transforming series of oppositions to bring closer together the terms in which the irresolvable contradiction between the social and the economic under capitalism is expressed.[1] Such an analysis would take up the function of myth to resolve in thought contradictions and paradoxes in society which is posited by Siverstone but not demonstrated since his is an analysis based on deduction from text.

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1. Such an analysis would use the structuralist method as demonstrated in "The Story of Asdiwal" (Levi-Strauss 1976).

This analysis of the political functioning of *Emmerdale Farm* did not utilise the concept of the serial as myth for at least two reasons, each of which identifies an aspect of the politics of the serial considered important in the broader question of the relationship between television and social power. First, the arguments that television operates as myth in industrialised societies which utilise either Levi-Strauss or Barthes[2] tend to identify a major function of myth in "social coherence and reassurance" (Silverstone 1988: 24, see also Carey 1988: 15). The exploration of the politics of *Emmerdale Farm* contained in this thesis demonstrates that the serial can and does operate politically in this way as relations and practices are naturalised and critiques of contemporary society also ultimately legitimate capitalism and democracy themselves. Yet to summarise television as reinforcing would have lost the full complexity of the serial's engagement in the field of politics. Rather, this account brought cultural production into that field, so that culture, signification and representation were all understood as part of the struggles for power in society; not just affirming and legitimating social and political arrangements, but also contesting them. As such, the serial's rendering of British society through the rural was particularly significant as it confronted areas of tension. This brings me to the second reason why this thesis did not ultimately characterise *Emmerdale Farm* as myth.

In studying the specifics of *Emmerdale Farm*'s engagement in the field of politics against the broad issue of the relationship between culture and politics, it was also important to be able to distinguish between moments and processes of reflection and reflexivity in the production (and consumption) of the serial (Babcock 1980: 1-4, Myerhoff and Ruby 1982: 3). Where used to illuminate media products, myth tends to be unitary, a society thinking about

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2. In his account of television as culture, John Fiske (1987) points out that these are two quite different kinds of theory about myth, though Davies (1978/9) combines both in her structural analysis of narrative.

itself, resolving in thought its social contradictions. But in order to understand the relationship between television and social power we need a method of discerning the full significance of the exegesis manifest in television programmes in terms of the kinds of consciousness which they promote (Masterman 1986: 5). We need to be able to assess what kind of "thinking about ourselves" (Myerhoff and Ruby 1982: 3) they represent; whether they "masquerade as different versions of truth into which individuals may come and go without realizing how contrived it all is" (Myerhoff and Ruby 1982: 3) or whether, through reflexivity, society, the system of signification itself, has become the object to be explicated to itself (Babcock 1980: 2,3).

The study in this thesis demonstrates that television, especially in its production aspect, includes both forms of contemplation of society and its members. Production personnel engage in processes of both reflection and reflexivity. Personnel are being reflexive when in story drafting, writing, rehearsal work they actively think about or play with their culture and how it works. They deconstruct it when they argue about how an image or phrase works in social practice and what would be required in performance to get audiences to make certain assumptions about a character or situation. Rehearsals as restored behaviour objectify culture, holding it up for investigation and dissection. In production, personnel thus formulate and reformulate their culture in ways which make plain its constructedness and its social significance. At one level the constructedness of the rural is also to the production office personnel at least. The dump story, for example, was devised reflexively, with a desire to contest the image and place of the rural in popular English culture.

The thesis revealed also that personnel reflect on their society, in a way which operates *within* the taken-for-grantedness of culture. At this level, personnel show their audience their own culture, "but without the requirement of explicit awareness of the implication of [our] display"

(Myerhoff and Ruby 1982: 3). As the form of consciousness which is enshrined in the product itself by the conventions and genre of *Emmerdale Farm*, reflection dominates and acts to constrain reflexivity. Though the conventions of production operate to produce meaning, they also conceal that production (cf Cranny-Francis 1988: 175). Like the "new journalists" (Myerhoff and Ruby 1982: 13-17), *Emmerdale Farm* ultimately affirms "reality" as even its deconstruction of the rural is completely constrained within typification and cultural taken-for-granteds about rural/urban difference. Reflection thus also gave shape to the political significance of *Emmerdale Farm*, particularly in the field surrounding the politics of Thatcherism.

Personnel both confront, explore and question the constructedness of the social world and operate as if that social world was natural rather than constructed. Authenication mediated between these two ways of knowing and interpreting the world. As workers in a culture industry personnel can be understood as both bearers of their culture (Weber 1951) and explorers who render the logic and working of that culture problematic. This prevents any single, monolithic explanation of what television does politically, but also makes possible a multidimensional functioning of television in its relationship with social power. It makes television very contradictory ground in which affirmation and legitimation co-exist with contestation and doubt. This is what we saw in the participation of *Emmerdale Farm* in a field of rural politics focused by conceptions of crisis and in the serial's extension of this participation to operate in the broader processes of political contestation over Thatcherism.

The constitution of both reflection and reflexivity in *Emmerdale Farm* are fundamental to the way in which the relationship between culture, here television, and politics is best conceptualised. Television is a site of power. Of course, its own power relations are part of the process of making and

disseminating programmes, though these are also contiguous with power outside of the television arena. More importantly, the thesis demonstrated that, through representation as process and relationship, television is a site of power which articulates, *speaks*, power struggles in a multitude of other sites of power in society. Television is thus also a political process, involved in both perpetuating and resisting power relations. This is why, in so many different aspects, *Emmerdale Farm* was embroiled in the struggles over winning a hegemony based on Thatcherism's principles, which as Hall says took part in every site of power in British society (1987: 20). Through both reflection and reflexivity in representation, the serial responded at different levels of consciousness to these struggles, bringing into itself the contestation over the social world which was their mark.

As only one articulation of these struggles within television as a site of power, *Emmerdale Farm* was demonstrated to have no single relationship with power in the broad political field. Contestation best sums up its overall operation in this field, as in sometimes not obvious ways, narratives and processes of production and dissemination engaged with the content of the major political struggles of Thatcherism: the use of the petit-bourgeoisie to restore a particular way of looking at capitalism, the morality of the market and profit making (here given a particular content in its interaction with the politics of the environment), the politics of welfare and collectivisation, democracy and egalitarianism, the issue of the market versus planning, the role of trade unions and the management of capitalism. All of these issues, which in turn encapsulated particular visions of the world and in particular capitalism, can be found in *Emmerdale Farm*'s own version of the world, and indeed were given weight by the overlaying of the idealisations of the world of soap opera.

To understand the significance of the serial's participation in these struggles through rendering them in an aesthetic mode, the world of the

imagination, this thesis has asked time and time again just whose vision of the world was authorised by specific presentations and who was therefore being empowered to provide the solution to the problem. The level of contestation provided within this site of power is attested to by the plurality of answers to these questions. This is a plurality which was also found in the chapters on rural issues in other sites of power. Sometimes in the serial the farmers were authorised for example, providing a justification for individualism; at other times the collectivity was favoured. At times, the petit-bourgeoisie seemed to provide the answer, especially against big business; yet at other times the serial insisted on limits to their individual, unfettered pursuit of profit maximisation. Even in what appeared to be a general rejection of Thatcherism and big business, the serial never rejects capitalism itself. Rather, like Thatcherism and indeed the petit-bourgeoisie themselves, *Emmerdale Farm*'s central concern is with the *management* of capitalism, particularly the *morality* of the visions of the social world on which management positions rest. Through contestation (both reflecting and interrogating reflexivly their world) the serial could thus be understood to be ultimately legitimating of capitalism, though within the political arena the serial provided resistance within cultural production to the vision of the world which underpinned the attempted hegemony of Thatcherism. Television both helped to reproduce power relations and provided a site of resistance to at least some of the principles and processes which increased structured inequality in British society in the nineteen eighties.

Emmerdale Farm in 1987 was thus the product of the playing out of hegemony or at least the struggles over hegemony. It did not produce hegemony and contra Hall (1987) the analysis suggests that overall it can be understood as resistance to the adoption of a new hegemony which conceptualised society, social relations and social obligations in terms of the market. The study of this thesis, based on a particular theory of

representation, clearly drives the analysis of *Emmerdale Farm* far further than any notion of ideology could. It is interaction, in so many different ways and aspects of the representation process, with the social and political context which it is rendering for a mass audience, which provides the multifacetted power outcome of *Emmerdale Farm*. This interaction also provides the possibility that the political significance of even the same serial may change over time. It means that not all television (or any other media institution) is to be understood in the exactly the same way.

Representation as political process was also shown to be structured through the objectification of the social world. This occurred at many points in the production process, from the actual conceptualisation of the dramatic field, here rural life, through to rehearsals. A relation of power, the ability which objectification gave to television personnel to define the nature of the social object meant that their own social location, their possession of cultural capital and their intentions, were relevant to the overall process of representation. Then it mattered how they *knew* the elements of the social world being portrayed. In the case of the rural, the objectification built into the representation process compounded the dominant way in which the rural is already known in British society, objectified from the perspective of a more powerful urban. This meant that *Emmerdale Farm* was as much about the city as the country (Peace1990: 89), about the whole as much as the part.

There is another dimension of representation, not systematically covered in this thesis, which has implications for the relationship between social power and television. That is the important issue of audience reception of the programme, the interpretive work done in the process of representation by the viewers bringing their own experiences to the interpretation of the product (see for example, Swanson 1986, Fiske 1987, Ang 1985, Hobson 1982, Taylor and Mullan 1986). It is clear that, though the possible meanings of any television text are seriously limited in its

construction, there are spaces in which the audience may make counter-readings (Fiske 1987, Hall 1984: 137). Further, there is pleasure for the audience in both these counter-readings and those which rely on naturalising the social world (Ang 1985, Brunsdon 1986). This question again raises the issue of consciousness and the two modes of thinking about culture, representing culture to itself, reflection and reflexivity. In both the letters from viewers and the responses of the dalespeople to a programme which purports to present dales life which form the basis of reception in this study, the centrality of the concept of "reality" makes reflection rather than reflexivity dominant. Time and time again the serial's audience calls the production personnel to brook for what are perceived as 'inaccuracies', for strayings from "reality". Indeed, finding error in *Emmerdale Farm* was important for some farmers for the expertise, the sense of identity which it offered to them. "Authenticity" was the imperative which drew people into the programme, creating an immediate link for them between their world of lived experience and the world of the soap opera. It established them as being of the same world and was thus enabling of the process of interrogation of British society which has been analysed in this study. Authentication acknowledged the constructedness of the serial's rendering of society while responding to its use of naturalism to obscure that constructedness. This process hinged on the potency of the concept of "reality" as a way of affirming that the world is as it appears to be.

The responses of viewers (echoed in the taken-for-granteds of production personnel (Chapters Two, Three and Four)) which are articulated through the concept of "reality" create a very important political space through the process of naturalisation. The construction and privileging of a category of "the real" as natural constructs the social world *as* a reality. It suggests a non-constructed, non-social and therefore non-political world and the stress is on one accepting it, the need to "live in the real world"

rather than indulge in "dreams" of change: a kind of political pragmatism which Margaret Thatcher used time and time again to justify *her* particular policies. This politically potent category is used consistently in television making and reception (including media segments in the press) and ties *Emmerdale Farm* into other kinds of knowing and thinking in British society. More needs to be done on this reception area in representation, though the significance of the concept of "reality" in the limited study of *Emmerdale Farm*'s reception at least indicates one way in which representation links viewer and production personnel.

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