

Narrative vs. 'objective' style: Notes on the style of news (agency) reports on violence in the late 19th and early 20th century

Maija Stenvall

Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English, University of Helsinki

Abstract

The paper examines stylistic changes in newspaper articles on violence between 1859 and 1910. I have looked both at news narratives, and at signs of the new, 'objective' writing style. Whenever possible, I have chosen stories attributed to AP (the Associated Press) and Reuters news agencies, since as global distributors of news, they have had an influential role in creating and reinforcing conventions of news writing. The paper clearly demonstrates the difference between the ghastly, chronological murder stories of the late 19th century and the 'modern' style adopted in the AP Siedlce narrative in 1906. The first evidence of the intentionally 'objective' writing style I found in Reuters telegrams on the Siedlce pogrom in 1906.

Key words: narrative, objective style, newspapers, news agencies, violence, Appraisal, Affect, Functional grammar, reporter voice, responsibility

1. Introduction

The decades around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries brought considerable changes into the style of news writing. One reason for emerging

new ideas and ideals, at least within American journalism, was a newspaper reporter's rising occupational status; Schudson (1978: 65) even argues that a reporter was "a social invention of the 1880s and 1890s". In the 1890s, two different writing models were promoted: "the ideal of the 'story' and the ideal of 'information'" (p. 89). More generally, on the one hand, what John Hartsock (2000) calls "literary journalism", took its first steps in the 1890s, and on the other, some news journalists began to aim at a more objective style one or two decades later.

Whereas media researchers generally agree that journalistic objectivity is an ideal that cannot be achieved, their views on the emergence of this new, more impersonal style differ considerably. In some studies, a shift in the writing style from "the flowery language of the 19th century" to the style which was "concise, stripped of opinion and detail" (cf. Scanlan, 2000: 195–196) has been credited to the invention of the telegraph and the birth of the wire services in mid-1800s (e.g. Carey 1989: 210), while other scholars (e.g., White 1998, Schudson 2001) argue that the objectivity norm in journalism emerged several decades later, around 1910 or 1920. In my present data, I found clear evidence of the intentionally objective style already in 1906; in the Reuters telegrams on the Siedlce pogrom (see section 7).

In the second half of the 19th century, news narratives on violence often contained minute descriptions of ghastly murders and their aftermaths. A multitude of other details, too, were given: the names and addresses of the victims and the culprits, direct quotes by the murderer and others, and so on.

Though it was evident that the information had come from an official source (from court proceedings or police reports) (cf. Schudson 1978, White 1998), the writer seldom explicitly referred to any such source in the narrative. Typically, the stories were told in a strictly chronological order. My examples of the late 19th-century narratives all date from the period when, according to Schudson (1978: 65), reporters did not yet have a clear occupational status, but the analysis below shows that even at that time some writers were more ‘professional’ than the others. For example, a story by an AP (the Associated Press) correspondent on the execution of three Modoc Indians in 1873 differs from other contemporary reports in that the reporter has taken a role of an eyewitness, telling the readers only what he has seen himself (see section 5.2.). At the same time, the Modoc story is still far from the present-day narratives, since it contains a wealth of authorial evaluation. The first stylistically ‘modern’ narrative, found in my data, is an AP story on the Siedlce pogrom in 1906 (see section 7).

Drawing on the Appraisal framework (see e.g. the Appraisal Website), I look into journalists’ attitudes; into values of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation. One of my main aims is to see how well the reporters have succeeded in hiding their own ‘voice’ (cf. White 1998), that is, in achieving the goal that is characteristic of today’s ‘objective’ news writing. When examining the values of Affect, I will apply a new taxonomy which I have suggested in Stenvall (2014). I want to shift the focus more onto the journalists’ *stance*; onto *how* they can be hypothesized to know about other

people's emotions, and *why* they have chosen one subcategory of 'observation' rather than another. In examining the strategies that tend to blur perpetrators' responsibility, I use tools from Functional Grammar (Halliday 1994).

Before the analysis I look briefly into the multifaceted concept of 'objectivity'; when and how it can be seen to have emerged in news writing, and whether the 'objective' style could have developed from "the ideal of information".

2. Material

For my study, I chose stories attributed to AP (the Associated Press) or Reuters news agency whenever possible. As global distributors of news, AP and Reuters have had an influential role in creating and reinforcing conventions of (at least English-language) news writing; they have acted "as a sort of common currency" for other media all over the world (White 1998: 122). Thus, it could be hypothesized that even if the new, intentionally objective style did not emerge immediately after the birth of the news agencies, they were among the first to promote it. Furthermore, both AP and Reuters themselves have always stressed 'objectivity' as an important ideal in their news distribution (cf. Handbook of Reuters Journalism: 494, 'AP news values & principles' web page).

Besides analysing news agency articles, I have explored other newspaper articles on violence (see section 5.1), to illustrate the history of the narrative style before the 1900s. All material has been collected from ProQuest database of historical newspapers between 1850 and 1910: from the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Manchester Guardian (abbreviated *NYT*, *WP* and *MG*). As search words – in addition to *Reuter* and *the Associated Press* – I have used, for example, the following words: *murder*, *soldiers*, *troops*, *terrorists*, *shocking*, *shooting*, *atrocious*, *atrocities*, and *execution*.

Before analysing the Siedlce stories from Reuters and AP, I look briefly at an AP news report on an “infernal machine” in Paris in 1892. The style of this long article is far from consistent; however, since the AP reporter sets to present a wealth of ‘pure facts’ in a very realistic mode, it could be connected to what Schudson (1978: 89) calls “the ideal of ‘information’”.

3. Theoretical background

3.1 The Appraisal Framework

This is how Martin & Rose (2003: 22) define the Appraisal Framework: *Appraisal* is concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned.

The three interactive systems of Appraisal are called Attitude, Graduation and Engagement. In the present study I focus on the system of Attitude, which comprises three sub-systems. The following presentation of Attitude has been taken from Thomson et al. (2008: 220) (relevant items are marked in italics):

(1) *affect* – emotional reaction.

It was, then, with *fury*, that I returned home on Saturday to find my own country rumbling with the mumbles of the peaceniks.

(2) *judgement* – normative assessment of human behaviour, i.e. by reference to notions of ethical/unethical, honest/dishonest, normal/abnormal, and so on.

To see police *brutally manhandling* demonstrators was not only shocking but representative of more *repressive* regimes, such as China.

(3) *appreciation* – assigning a social value to objects, artefacts, texts, states of affairs, i.e. by reference to aesthetics and other systems of social valuation.

The new president's speech was *elegant* and *well-woven*, sounding a panoply of themes without seeming *scattered*.

Attitude values can be either explicit or implicit, or even somewhere in between (see the Appraisal Website). In Appraisal terms, explicit values are called “inscribed”, implicit values are “evoked” (or “invocations” or “tokens” of Attitude). Values that are in between explicit and implicit evaluation are called “provoked”. “Provocations” are triggered by values that belong to another Attitude sub-system; for instance, values of Appreciation often “provoke” Affect or Judgement.

Before presenting my suggestion for a new Affect taxonomy, I discuss briefly the sub-systems of Appreciation and Judgement, and also ponder some coding problems.

3.1.1 Values of Appreciation and Judgement

Appreciation (Martin & White 2005: 56) is further divided into three subcategories: *reaction* (referring to impact or quality of the appraised entity), *composition* (dealing with balance or complexity) and *valuation* (‘was it worthwhile?’). The following adjectives, for example, denote positive reaction: *captivating*, *dramatic*, *intense* and *fascinating*, while negative reaction could be, e.g., *boring*, *uninviting*, *repulsive* or *revolting*.

The sub-system of **Judgement** (Martin & White 2005: 52–53) contains two subcategories: *social sanction* and *social esteem*. Values of social sanction (*honest*, *credible*, *good*, *moral*, *deceitful*, *devious*, *corrupt*, etc.) concern veracity [truth] and propriety [ethics], and can be regarded as more “severe” than those of social esteem (e.g., *normal*, *stable*, *powerful*, *brave*,

unpredictable, weak, cowardly) that “merely affect social status” (ben-Aaron 2005: 227).

Both Martin & Rose (2003: 35) and Martin & White (2005: 57–61, 67–68) have discussed the problems that the analyst of Attitude values may face; the so-called “borderline cases” which might call for “double-coding”. This issue – that there are no clear demarcation lines between the three sub-types – has been noted in several other studies, too (cf. Bednarek 2008, Hommerberg 2011, Suhr 2011).

ben-Aaron (2005: 230) even states that the category of Appreciation “appears to function as a kind of catch-all category for things that are not clearly either self-contained feelings or judgments of human behavior”. My analysis of the 19th century narratives gives clear evidence of this problem. By far the most popular value of Appreciation (reaction) in my data is “shocking” (murder or tragedy), which can be expected to provoke Affect, whereas the Appreciation “a murder of a very brutal character” (*MG*, Sept 27, 1864) refers to the condemnable behaviour of the perpetrator, and thus could be a *provoked* value of Judgement: social sanction.

3.1.2 Journalists’ stance on emotions vis-à-vis objectivity and factuality:

Suggesting a new taxonomy

In Thomson et al. (2008: 225), the following short definition is given for the term “observed affect”: “reporter describing the emotional responses of third parties”. Finding this definition too ‘broad’, I have suggested a somewhat

more sophisticated taxonomy for examining the journalists' stance on the reported emotions (see Stenvall 2014). Since news journalists, striving for objectivity and factuality, often 'outsource' other people's emotions, *non-authorial* Affect has first to be divided into two subtypes: *attributed* and *non-attributed*. In *attributed* Affect, emotional expressions appear in a quotation from a news actor; in other words, the journalist has resorted to *direct* or *indirect reported speech*. News actors' descriptions of their *own* emotions – whether in 1st person (*direct reported speech*), or in 3rd person (*indirect reported speech*) – that can be found in *attributed* Affect are called *experienced* Affect. The following three subcategories are common to both *attributed* and *non-attributed* Affect: *observed* Affect, *interpreted* Affect and *constructed* Affect.

The main factors defining the suggested subcategories of *non-authorial* Affect can be summarised as follows:

1. *experienced* Affect: *attributed* Affect/1st or 3rd person. A news actor describes her/his own emotions in a direct or indirect quote.

E.g. “*I felt so helpless, felt such anger*” (AP).

2. *observed* Affect: the journalist or a news actor describing emotions of third parties on the basis of the *behavioural surge*. The “surge” can appear as external signs, such as tears (sadness) or laughter (joy), or as a typical behaviour related to the emotion in question; for instance, demonstrators

hurling stones at politicians (anger) or crowds cheering (joy, national pride).

E.g. ...*tears streaming down her face*... (AP)

3. *interpreted* Affect: the journalist or a news actor sets to interpret other people's *emotional states* (anger, fear, happiness, etc.), for example, by making general observations on their behaviour and by talking to them. In *interpreted* Affect, Emoters remain more or less 'visible'.

E.g. *Americans feel both joy and fear over bin Laden* [death] (AP)

4. *constructed* Affect: feelings are presented as free-floating affectual states so that the connection between Emoters and feelings remains unspecified. Such feelings are often construed as powerful actors.

E.g. *Bomb fears sink stocks, dollar*... (Reuters)

My analysis of news agency examples led to the conclusion that these subcategories cannot be directly related to the elusive concepts of *objectivity* and *factuality*. We may, however, hypothesize that there is a fuzzy, declining cline of *verifiability*, starting from *observed* Affect (the most 'verifiable'), and going down to *constructed* Affect (the most 'obscure'). For example, it is presumed that Emoters in *observed* Affect can be identified, while at the other end of the cline (*constructed* Affect), they are only vaguely identified (if at all). At the same time, each subcategory has inherent features that might put objectivity at risk. We can argue that *experienced* Affect is the most 'factual', as it contains news actors' descriptions of their own feelings, whereas psychologists say that such 'verbal reports' are by no means reliable; that they are subject to distortions for various reasons (cf. Plutchik 1980: 6).

In *observed* Affect, the interrelatedness between the behaviour and the denoted emotions is not always clear; furthermore, extraordinary (e.g. aggressive or boisterous) behaviour may get over reported. *Interpreted* Affect relies on potentially subjective deductions from the part of the journalist, and *constructed* Affect is by nature vague and often seems to attract a host of modal expressions.

3.2 *Tools from Functional grammar: Transitivity, ergativity and nominalisation*

In Functional grammar (Halliday 1994: 106–175, cf. also Eggins 2004: 206–253), the system of *transitivity* is related to the *experiential metafunction*. According to Fowler (1991: 71), “[a] central insight of Halliday’s... is that transitivity is the foundation of representation ... transitivity has the facility to analyse the same event in different ways”. Halliday (1994: 16) states that “the transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of PROCESS TYPES”. He presents three main types of processes: (1) *material processes: processes of doing*; (2) *mental processes: processes of sensing*; and (3) *relational processes: processes of being* (107–138). In addition to the process itself (i.e. the verbal group), the process consists of two other elements: participants in the process, and circumstances associated with the process. The central participant in *material processes*, relevant in this study, is called an Actor; the second participant (a Goal) is optional. Circumstantial

elements are connected to the process only loosely; “a circumstantial element”, says Halliday (1994: 151), “is itself ...a process that has become parasitic on another process”.

An *ergative* point of view differs from a *transitive* point of view; instead of looking for differences, it focuses on the similarities, “on the basis of just one variable”, that of causation (Halliday 1994: 162 –163). Every ergative process has at least one participant, “the one through which the process is actualised, and without which there would be no process at all”, Halliday (1994: 163) says. This “key figure” is called the Medium. A central issue in an ergative process is finding the *source* of the process; in other words: has an external agency caused the process, or does it seem to have ‘happened by itself’? As an example of the ergative pattern, Halliday (1994: 163) gives the following ergative/non-ergative pair: *the lion chased the tourist/the tourist ran*. In both clauses, “tourist” is the one experiencing the process, the Medium, while the external agency of the first clause, “lion”, is the Agent.

Halliday looks at transitivity and ergativity as two more or less interchangeable points of view that can be used for analysing just *any* clause. Thompson & Ramos (1995), in principle, draw on Halliday’s semantic model of ergativity, but find Halliday’s view too broad, and therefore they set to develop a more ‘delicate’ tool for the ergative analysis. One of their central aims is to show how ergativity differs from transitivity; “to distinguish those clauses which encourage an ergative interpretation from those where an interpretation in terms of transitivity is more appropriate” (1995: 2). In my

analysis, I follow Thompson & Ramos and take transitivity and ergativity to be two complementary systems, “two possible sets of options for representing the world in language” (1995: 6).

Nominalisation transforms processes (verbs) or properties (adjectives) into nouns after metaphorical rewording (Halliday 1994: 352). These nominalised words (e.g., *massacre* in the Reuters’ Siedlce telegrams) can then function as a participant in processes, according to various options of transitivity, or as a part of a prepositional phrase (Halliday 1998: 197, Fairclough 1995: 112). From the point of view of news agency discourse and its alleged ‘factuality’, it is important to note that nominalisation is “inherently, potentially mystificatory” (Fowler 1991: 82). In addition to obscuring the participant roles, it can leave open the tense of the verb (of the original process), the type of the process, etc. (cf. Stenvall 2011: 101–103 on nominalisation).

4. Objectivity as a journalistic ideal

According to Schudson (2001: 163), objectivity was established as a central ideal in the American journalism by the 1920s. In Europe, the norm of objectivity was accepted even later and “with less fervor”, he argues (2001: 166). Discussing the objectivity ideal in the 20th century British journalism, Hampton (2008) more or less seems to share Schudson’s views. But he adds that though the American-style objectivity was not widely embraced by

British *newspaper* journalism, there were two notable exceptions in Britain: Reuters news agency and BBC news (Hampton 2008: 478, 482).

In their guidelines for journalists, AP and Reuters clearly mention ‘objectivity’ as an important ideal in their news distribution. At the same time, we have to note that ‘objectivity’, as a concept, is almost indefinable. Schudson (2001: 149) states that besides being ‘a moral ideal’, ‘objectivity’ is also “a set of reporting and editing practices, and an observable pattern of news writing”. In this paper, the last alternative – objectivity as an observable pattern of news writing – is central.

In the mid-1850s there were no common ideals in American journalism, simply because journalism “had not yet become an occupational group or an industry”, as Schudson (1978: 60) says. As discussed above, the 1890s was the decade when new ideals in the work of reporters emerged, and two different models were promoted: “the ideal of the story” and “the ideal of information” (1978: 89). Though “the informational ideal” was associated with such concepts as *fairness*, *objectivity* and *scrupulous dispassion* (1978: 90), according to Schudson (1978: 71) “the fact-mindedness of the 1890s” differs greatly from what later, in the 20th century, was meant by ‘objectivity’.

Today, an overwhelming majority of news agency reports belongs to the category of *hard news*. Accordingly, they follow the conventions of the ‘objective’ *reporter voice* (White 1998), which presupposes that the journalist’s voice is backgrounded. According to Thomson et al. (2008: 222),

the ‘objective’ voice of *hard news* reports, the so-called “reporter voice”, has the following restrictions:

1. *no/minimal authorial inscribed **judgement**; (if inscribed **judgement**, then attributed),*
2. *no authorial **affect**,*
3. *some observed affect, some inscribed authorial **appreciation**.*

5. News narratives on violence in the late nineteenth century

5.1 Early newspaper narratives based on court proceedings and police reports

As discussed above, writers of the murder stories in the 19th century do not often mention the source of their detailed information. However, the oldest murder story in my data, *Shocking murder of a farmer by his son*, is one of the rare exceptions, as it is carefully framed: “The circumstances, as elicited *in evidence at the coroner’s inquest...*” (*The Observer*, Nov 10, 1851; my italics). The story itself – when it begins – is told in a chronological order, with exact details of the killing, of what the killer said, of the gun-shot wound and “a piece of flesh attached to the wall”, etc.

But notably, the article starts with a general description which resembles today’s lead paragraphs:

- (4) This quiet and retired district, in the centre of the bleak Cotswald range of hills, has been thrown into *a state of consternation* [*constructed* Affect] by the murder of a wealthy farmer, Mr. Hambidge, by his illegitimate son.

(*The Observer*, Nov 10, 1851; my italics)

In addition, before the narrative itself begins, the two principal characters are presented with positive evaluative expressions: Mr. Hambidge is said to have been “a respectable farmer, advanced in life”, and the “prisoner... an illegitimate son of the deceased, was also a farmer well to do in the world...”

Some *NYT* stories that are attributed to the newspaper’s own correspondent have a reference which gives credit to the Association Press as a primary source. For example, the story titled *RONDOUT HORROR, A Terrible Tale of Blood-Rum, Jealousy, Insanity, Murder and Suicide* begins as follows:

- (5) An Associated Press telegram last evening briefly informed you of the *horrible affair* [*inscribed* Appreciation: negative reaction] which was enacted near here, at Ponckhookie Saturday night. I have gleaned the fullest particulars, and they are indeed *horrible* [*inscribed* Appreciation: negative reaction].

(*NYT*, Oct 26, 1869; my italics)

However, even the beginning of the early stories can conform to the chronological order, as this story of a murder attempt shows:

- (6) About two years ago, a young man, 21 years of age named James Gobey, living at No. 12 Schoolhouse Lane, Stepney, met a young woman, named Mary Anne Chambers. She was 17 years of age, and lived with her mother and her married sister. (*MG*, Sept 15, 1869)

Several other details of the young couple's life are told before the first reference to the tragic events comes:

- (7) One night in April last, while she was in bed, she saw him take a knife from underneath his pillow and give her a fierce look.
(*MG*, Sept 15, 1869)

Then follows a detailed narrative of the murder attempt, with several quotes from all participants. Towards the end, "the room was deluged with blood", most of which was due to the young man's suicide attempt. He was "in a very dangerous state", while the young woman was "progressing favourably". No information is given of the sources of this accurate information, and besides the headline – *SHOCKING TRAGEDY IN LONDON* – there is no authorial evaluation.

In the headlines and eventual framings of the stories, such values of negative Appreciation as *shocking* or *horrible* or *atrocious* (murder, tragedy etc.) are commonly used, but the chronological narratives of the event itself contain very little evaluation from the part of the writer, probably because they are more or less accurate reproductions of the official documents. In White's words (1998: 158), this kind of the 19th century stories are "significantly less mediated by journalistic textuality" than modern texts.

The story by a *NYT* "Special Correspondent" of "A Farmer Chopped to Pieces with an Ax" in 1870 is thus exceptional, as the correspondent calls the murderer ("a deaf and dumb colored man" employed by the farmer), by such highly intensified terms of *inscribed* Judgement (negative social sanction) as *the merciless wretch*, *the bloody fiend* and *the monster*. Some other Appraisal values are also found, for example, in the following extract, which describes the immediate aftermath of the murder:

- (8) Mr. HASBROUCK was *a horrible sight* [*inscribed* Appreciation: negative reaction]. About him upon the snow were streams of blood honeycombing the whitened flakes, while the clothes of the farmer were literally soaked with blood. His head and face presented *a shocking appearance* [*inscribed* Appreciation: negative reaction]. Perfectly unconscious he was conveyed to his residence. *The fright*

and grief of his family [*observed* Affect] were *heart-rending*
[*experienced* Affect?]

(*NYT*, Feb 17, 1870; my italics).

The two instances of Affect in example (8) leave some open questions. Since the *NYT* Special Correspondent most probably was not himself present at the murder site, who then was the one that ‘observed’ the emotions of the family and found the scene “heart-rending”?

5.2 *The Modocs executed: AP correspondent as an eyewitness*

All in all, journalists’ ‘presence’ is rather hidden in the narratives discussed above. But as early as in 1873, an AP correspondent who describes the execution of three Modoc Indians bases his story on his own experiences, even telling the readers that he has travelled by several hours of “hard riding” from Fort Klamath to Jacksonville to send his report.

The authorial voice in the Modoc story is quite apparent. For instance, we find such values of Engagement (cf. Appraisal Framework) as *evidently*, *of course*, and *apparently*, which would not appear in ‘objective’ news reporting. As White (1998: 153) notes: “[‘Objective’] reporter voice can be seen as disfavoured the rhetorical strategies associated with proclamation, that is with strengthening and motivating utterances so as to actively challenge heteroglossic alternation”.

Furthermore, the reporter resorts to values of *inscribed* Judgement, describing the moment when Modoc Indians Boston Charlie, Black Jim and Schonchin are led on the scaffold as follows:

- (9) They trod it with apparent indifference, having evidently resolved to die *as bravely as they have lived* [*inscribed* Judgement: positive social esteem].

(AP in *NYT*, Oct 5, 1873; my italics)

Capt. Jack, according to the reporter, “looked wretched and miserable” [*observed* Affect]; Barnacho and Slolox are called “poor fellows” [*authorial* Affect: empathy]. Finally, consider the following example, which contains a wealth of evaluation; for instance, it is highly charged with emotions – both with those of spectators and of the correspondent himself (the italics are mine):

- (10) As the drop fell and *the four wretched human beings* [*evoked authorial* Affect: empathy] fell with a *fearful thud* [*observed* Affect] the full length of the ropes, *a half-smothered cry of horror* [*observed* Affect] went up from the crowd of over 500 Klamath Indians who witnessed the *awful spectacle* [*inscribed* Appreciation: negative reaction], and from the stockade where the wives and children of the *poor fellows* [*evoked authorial* Affect: empathy] crowded in full view

of the *shocking scene* [*inscribed* Appreciation: negative reaction],
 arose a long and continuous *wail of anguish and despair* [*observed*
 Affect].

(AP in *NYT*, Oct 5, 1873; my italics)

5.3 Discussion

Framing his story, the writer in example (5) tells the readers that he has “gleaned the fullest particulars” of the “horrible affair” which had been informed briefly by *AP* (*NYT*, Oct 26, 1869). On the basis of my data, it is evident that official documents (reports from police rounds and court proceedings), indeed, offered a wealth of detailed material to the newspapers.

For example, in an *MG* article (May 2, 1881) on a father killing his one-year-old child, a long chronological narrative of the tragic events is followed by a somewhat shorter separate section “The Prisoner before the Magistrates”, repeating several details of what just had been told. According to Stevenson (2014: 43), the court proceedings in Britain from the 1850s onwards (until about the 1880s) were written by – what she calls – “lawyer-reporters”, that is, barristers, who “literally recorded the specific details of a case as opposed to journalists who typically would write from a much broader and generalized perspective”. Newspaper editors and proprietors got a ready-made report that was, besides factually relatively reliable, also in “a more

accessible format for an increasingly literate popular readership” (Stevenson 2014: 45). Differences between the writers of the crime news thus often depended on their skills of omitting superfluous details and of dramatizing the vital points of the story (cf. example 4 above, where the wife “saw him [the husband] take a knife from underneath his pillow and give her a fierce look”). Curtis (2001: 5) notes that murder news in the Victorian press “falls somewhere along the broad spectrum between fiction and lived reality”.

Overall, the 19th century both in the United States and in Victorian Britain was marked by readers’ growing appetite for crime stories, for fictive as well as for those from the ‘real’ life. The Penny Press in the United States from the 1830s onwards and Sunday newspapers in England some years later served crime news to the general public at affordable price (Curtis 2001, Conboy 2010). “Victorian readers seemed to relish the details of what knives, axes, bullets, or other lethal weapons had done to the victims’ bodies”, Curtis (2001: 14) writes, adding that many of those “morbid details ...would be deemed unfit to print today”.

In my data, the editors of the (quality) newspapers could use that kind of “morbid details” as a justification for making their stories more newsworthy; in particular, for fabricating catchy headlines and framings that advertised “shocking” or “brutal” murders. Though the writers’ own voice was rather ‘subdued’ in these narratives, owing to the newspapers’ working routines, the values of Appraisal that were found give ample support to White’s conclusions (1998: 168); i.e., to the observation that the constraints

of today's 'objective' reporter voice do not apply to the news texts of the 19th century. As discussed above, in my data there were examples, e.g., of *authorial Affect* and *inscribed authorial Judgement*.

Towards the end of the 19th century, crime news on both side of the Atlantic became more and more "sensational" with the advent of the so-called New Journalism (Curtis 2001, Conboy 2010), so that the critics of the earlier "morbid" news now, in fact, lamented "the decline and fall of good taste and decency in the press" (Curtis 2001: 66). The AP story on an "infernal machine", presented in section 6, gives evidence of this new trend: in the abundance of ghastly details it clearly 'wins' over the newspaper narratives analysed above.

6. The AP story on an "infernal machine"

The AP's article on an "infernal machine", which wrecked a police station and killed four persons in Paris in 1892, differs greatly from the chronological narratives discussed above. Furthermore, it is difficult to put it stylistically into any distinct category.

The beginning of the story brings to mind the leads of today's news reports, as the most important information is summarised first:

(11) An explosion occurred in this city this morning by which two policemen and two other men lost their lives, and another was fatally injured.

(AP in *NYT*, Nov 9, 1892).

But the last part of the lead is less ‘objective’:

(12) The affair was *undoubtedly* the work of Anarchists, who were seeking revenge against the Carmaux Mining Company, whose long-continued struggle with their employes was amicably settled a few days ago. The Anarchists failed in their attempt against the company, but as they *succeeded in killing* two policemen and two other men, they are *probably jubilant* over the outcome of their *dastardly* crime [evoked Judgement: negative social esteem]

(AP in *NYT*, Nov 9, 1892; my italics).

I have italicised the expressions where the journalist’s ‘voice’ is clearly visible: e.g., *undoubtedly*, *probably*, *dastardly*. Notably, the journalist also implicitly condemns the perpetrators’ behaviour by assuming them to be *jubilant*; such feelings after killings cannot be regarded as ‘normal’.

However, compared to corresponding news agency reports today, the most striking feature in this story is the abundance of grisly details. The journalist does not clearly explain how he has gathered all these ‘facts’; there is only a vague reference to what ‘a correspondent’ has said and to the inspection made by some authorities (two ministers among them). The following extract is not the only – but maybe the most appalling – description of the “horrible spectacle” at the police station:

(13) The headless trunk of the porter was found under a bench. Portions of what are believed to have once been his skull were picked up in the adjacent street. Only a part of the trunk of the Commissary’s Secretary was found intact. The head had been blown off and has not been found. The thighs were crushed and the legs were reduced to a pulp.

(AP in *NYT*, Nov 9, 1892)

This kind of “fact-mindedness” brings to mind “the ideal of ‘information’” which emerged in the 1890s (cf. Schudson 1978: 71, 89). But as shown below, it does not have much in common with the style of the Reuters Siedlce telegrams in 1906, where the journalist has taken quite considerable steps towards today’s ‘objective’ style.

7. Towards more ‘modern’ writing style: AP narrative and Reuters ‘objective’ telegrams on the Siedlce Pogrom

7.1 Background on the pogrom

During three days in September 1906, the Jewish population in Siedlce was terrorized by Russian soldiers. Tens of Jews were killed, hundreds were injured, and about 1,000 people arrested. The actual count of bodies, according to AP, was 140, and the figure rose in Reuters telegrams up to 200. However, the official records today give a much lower number, stating that 26 Jews were killed. *Why* and *how* the pogrom was organized was another controversial issue and remained as such even in various official reports presented afterwards.

In 1906, Siedlce belonged to the Kingdom of Poland, which at the time was under the Russian rule. Siedlce had about 25.000 inhabitants; approximately half of them were Jews. During the first Russian revolution 1905–1907, the Combat Organisation of the Polish Socialist Party (OB PPS) and General Jewish Workers’ Union (‘Bund’) caused widespread unrest and even resorted to terrorist methods in the Kingdom of Poland. In August 1906, a member of the OB PPS, dressed as a Jew, killed a Russian chief of police in Siedlce. It is said that this assassination served as a pretext for the Russian secret police, *Okhrana*, to launch a pogrom against the Jewish population of Siedlce a couple of weeks later.

According to Kopowka (2009), the pogrom started when a flag was hung on the city hall; some other sources speak of a red light that was shown on the city tower (e.g., the Advertiser, Dec 6, 1906). The Russian authorities, however, blamed ‘terrorists’ or ‘revolutionaries’ for triggering the massacre. Colonel Tikhonovsky, who had taken charge of Siedlce, summoned some Jewish leaders and demanded that they should give him an exact list of the ‘revolutionaries’ who, he claimed, were shooting at the army. Since this was not possible, the killings and other acts of terror by the Russian troops continued. For about three days, the soldiers were firing at Jewish houses, setting fires to them, beating up and killing inhabitants, looting and destroying shops, and so on. While the (often drunken) soldiers behaved recklessly and with the utmost cruelty towards the Jews, they told Christian Poles not to worry, as they had been ordered to kill only the Jews (the Advertiser, Dec 6, 1906).

Several commissions were set up to investigate the pogrom, but no real results were achieved. For example, the outcome of an investigation at the Russian parliament was to put the blame on some disobedient soldiers, who had been acting without official orders (Wikipedia). This is how the Vilnius newspaper *Dos Yiddishe Volk*, in December 1906, summed up the violent events of the September pogrom:

The Siedlce slaughter ended as all slaughters of Jews do. Investigating commissions arrived, then a government declaration follows, in which

everything is blamed on the revolutionaries, the perpetrators of the pogrom are promoted, and everything moves on.

(as quoted in Kopowka 2009).

7.2 Analysis of AP and Reuters Siedlce reports

As mentioned above, in my analysis, I put special emphasis on the stylistic differences between the AP and Reuters Siedlce stories. First I examine how the AP's narrative mode has been constructed. I aim at seeing what is 'new' in this model compared to earlier news narratives and, in particular, what kind of strategies the correspondent has used to align the readers into feeling empathy towards the victims, or to describe the brutality of the Russian soldiers. In the Reuters report, I take special interest in the issues of responsibility: for instance, does the journalist explicitly blame the Russian soldiers for the acts of violence, or is the question left obscure?

7.2.1 AP and the narrative mode: The ideal of 'story'

Hartsock (2000: 41) suggests that the story model of the 1890s aimed at "providing a challenge to or resistance against mainstream 'factual' or 'objective' news". The AP's narrative on the Jewish pogrom at Siedlce, September 1906, may not qualify as a perfect representative of – what Hartsock calls – "narrative literary journalism", but in the first part of the story, the journalist has, nevertheless, applied some "techniques commonly

associated with realistic fiction”, such as chronological order, scene construction, concrete detail and frame narrative (cf. 2000: 23). The reporter has taken the role of a third-person narrator, framing the main narrative by his own tour at Siedlce; for instance: “The railway station at Siedlce, when the correspondent arrived there...” (AP in *WP*, Sept 12, 1906). This kind of narrator role hardly exists in today’s news narratives; rather it can be linked to the role of eyewitnesses, who appear quite commonly in present day stories of various disasters, accidents, crimes, and so on.

The first part of the AP article, the story of the correspondent’s own visit to Siedlce, is rather short – only about 50 lines in a narrow column. However, as it is very carefully constructed, it paints a compelling picture of the situation: of the frightened Jews and the “scenes of desolation”. The second part, with the headlines “Told by Refugees” and “No Mercy for Children”, focuses on the eyewitness accounts of the brutality of the Russian soldiers. After that follows a rather long story, in which one refugee describes in a direct quote how he with other “fugitives” was fleeing from a hotel in Siedlce, pursued by violent soldiers, and how they finally found a safe haven in a church.

By contrast to the Modoc story, the reporter does not resort to even implicit *authorial* Affect. But he evokes empathy in readers by providing them, for instance, with the following points of identification:

1. He lists meticulously the locations he visits: the railway station, Warsaw Street, Pienkna Street, the Victoria Hotel.

2. He evokes memories of the ‘normal’ life which now has been ruined:
 - a. “The streets were littered with Jews’ hats, torn clothing, and damaged carts.”
 - b. “Cows and goats escaped from their pens, and wandered through the streets aimlessly.” (AP in *WP*, Sept 12, 1906)
3. The scene at the railway station depicts frightened Jews, among them *starving women with infants in their arms*. As, for example, Hartley (1982: 90) states the readers’ identification is easier, and the feelings of empathy stronger, when persons are presented as members of a family.

The next section of the article, which consists of short episodes describing the brutal behavior of the Russian soldiers, makes ample use of the strategy mentioned in point 3. Children’s sufferings get a prominent role: for instance, a Jewish child who wanted to search for his parents, *was kicked away by the officer*. The soldiers are mainly presented as Actors in a transitive *material process* (marked in italics):

(14) *...the soldiers began shooting* in the streets and *bombarded* houses...

(15) *...soldiers threw oil* upon burning houses.

(16) As a man was taking his wife and newly born child to a hospital, they were *fired upon by soldiers*, and the wife and child were killed.

(AP in *WP*, Sept 12, 1906)

The AP correspondent does not give any exact information of his sources; in fact, he even resorts to some obscure attributions typical of ‘objective’ news writing, such as *it is asserted, it is related*.

The 1st person narrative in the last section is provided by an unnamed refugee. The correspondent states (AP in *WP*, Sept 12, 1906) that “[t]his refugee would not give his name, as he feared persecution at the hands of the police”; an explanation totally in line with AP’s present day guidelines for the use of anonymous sources.¹ The refugee was fleeing from a destroyed hotel and finally managed to find a refuge in a church, together with about 300 other fugitives, most of them wounded. He speaks, for example, about the soldiers who *got drunk rapidly, and coming out onto the streets, began wholesale murder and plunder*. The eyewitness role of this refugee is relevant, since he had really experienced the violent events, whereas the AP correspondent had witnessed just the aftermath.

7.2.2 *The Reuters’ Siedlce story: Evading responsibility*

Four of the five Reuters telegrams were sent on Monday, September 10, from Warsaw, the last one – very short – from St. Petersburg. The Warsaw telegrams, which had been transmitted between 1 a.m. and 10.30 p.m., give evidence of a central feature in news agency reporting: that it is an *ongoing process*. Typically, too, the estimated number of the killed Jews keeps rising as the reporting proceeds: starting from 40, it goes up to 60, then 100, and finally 200.

When looking into the issue of the Russian troops' responsibility, one of the conspicuous evasive strategies is the emphasis put on the Actor role of the alleged 'Terrorists' or 'revolutionaries'. In fact, the actions of the Russian soldiers are transformed into *reactions*:

(17) the troops are *replying* with volleys and destroying houses.

(Reuters in *MG*, Sept 11, 1906; my italics)

Note that the AP correspondent, instead, spoke of *paid provocative agents* and not of *terrorists*.

Furthermore, nominalisations are used to blur the soldiers' Actor-role. For instance, the nominalisation *massacre* occurs four times, in different roles:

(18) It was the Libau Infantry Regiment which was chiefly *concerned* in the *massacres* and street fighting.

(19) *The massacre* began in Piesikna street, and then *spread* over the whole town.

(20) It is believed *the Terrorists provoked the massacre* of Saturday night by firing from roofs and windows on soldiers and policemen patrolling the streets.

(21) ...but *the search* [by the troops] soon *changed into massacre* and robbery. (Reuters in *MG*, Sept 11, 1906; my italics)

In (18), *massacre*, from the point of view of transitivity, is part of a *circumstantial element*, and as such only loosely connected to other process participants, for example, to Libau Infantry Regiment. In (19), *massacre* is the Medium in a non-ergative process, construed as something which has happened by itself, without any external agency. In the ergative process of example (20), *massacre* is also the Medium, but now with an Agent: *terrorists* are to be blamed. In (21), another nominalisation (*search*) is the Medium of this non-ergative process, *massacre* being in a prepositional phrase. The role of the perpetrators of the massacre and robbery is obscured; ‘changing’ seems to have happened by itself.

7.2.3 AP and Reuters: Emotions of fear and scenes of “unspeakable horror”

Fear felt by the Jewish population of Siedlce is a prevalent emotion in the AP story. The first scene the correspondent witnessed during his visit shows the railway station crowded with frightened Jews, who had just heard the sound of volley being fired about half a mile back of the station:

- (22) *A panic ensued, men trembling with fear and women imploring the soldiers for mercy, anticipating the slaughter of their loved ones and themselves [observed Affect]. (AP in WP, Sept 12, 1906; my italics)*

Though *fear* is an emotion that cannot always be easily seen from outside, I have categorised this extract as an example of *observed* Affect. We know who the Emoters are and, in addition, the correspondent has observed their *behavioural surge*. He also invites the readers to feel with the women by imagining their inner thoughts, the gloomy anticipations.

The AP correspondent ends the second part of the story by stating:

- (23) Here in Warsaw there *are some fears* of an outbreak [*constructed* Affect] (AP in *WP*, Sept 12, 1906; my italics)

This is an example of *constructed* Affect; in fact, more typical of ‘objective’ news writing. As White (1998: 271– 272) notes, news journalists often present emotions as “affectual states ...as simply reflecting reality”.

In the Reuters telegrams, there are only two instances of Affect, neither of them explicitly depicting the Jews’ emotions:

- (24) The authorities are ineffectually attempting to quiet the *infuriated* soldiers. [*observed* Affect]
- (25) The scenes witnessed in the city both yesterday and to-day were of *unspeakable horror* [*intensified inscribed* Appreciation: negative reaction]. Everywhere *screams and cries* mingled with shooting were heard [*observed* Affect] (Reuters in *MG*, Sept 11, 1906; my italics)

Example (24) puts the blame of the killings and other atrocities on the “infuriated” soldiers, without explaining what had triggered the emotion. Interestingly, the Russian parliament afterwards reached a similar conclusion, claiming that some soldiers had just acted without official orders, thus causing the pogrom. From the point of view of Appraisal analysis, example (25) is problematic. What the journalist actually says is that the *scenes* in Siedlce have caused feelings of “unspeakable horror” in *some persons* (maybe including the writer?) who witnessed them (and heard the screams and cries). Thus, I have coded the first sentence as an example of Appreciation: *intensified* negative reaction, and the second sentence as an example of *observed* Affect (by unknown Emoters). Alternatively, the first sentence could be seen as *provoked* Affect, if we consider those who ‘react’, instead of the scenes that had *caused* the reaction. Or the whole paragraph could be coded as *constructed* Affect (‘there is horror in Siedlce’). In any case, the Reuters reporter here presents a strong image of the Jews’ sufferings, and invites the readers to feel empathy. At the same time, by resorting to agentless passive, he hides the identity of the Emoters as well as of those who ‘observed’ the Jews’ *behavioural surge* (screams and cries). One cannot, for example, deduce whether the *observed* Affect in the second sentence is *attributed* or *non-attributed*.

7.2.4 Judging the soldiers

According to White, journalists writing hard news reports avoid using unattributed values of Judgement.

This ideal can be clearly seen in the Reuters Siedlce reporting. The reporter does use the adverb *mercilessly* [*inscribed* Judgement] twice, but in both cases the link to the soldiers remains vague, as he resorts to the agentless passive:

(26) ...but anybody leaving a shop or looking out of a window was *mercilessly* shot.

(27) About 1,000 persons, chiefly Jews, were arrested and *mercilessly* beaten. (Reuters in *MG*, Sept 11, 1906; my italics)

By contrast, the AP correspondent is more outspoken. After presenting several examples of the soldiers' "horrible atrocities", he states explicitly:

(28) The *undisciplined soldiery* acted with *the utmost brutality* all through the troubles [*inscribed* Judgement: social sanction]. (AP in *WP*, Sept 12, 1906; my italics)

However, much was left implicit by the AP correspondent, as we see by comparing the AP story to its multiline-headline, most probably fabricated by the Washington Post editor, who uses expressions of high intensity (*brutal soldiery, slaughter, horrible atrocities, butchery*):

(29) *JEWS FLEEING FROM SIEDLCE**Women and Children Victims of Brutal Soldiery.**SLAUGHTER NOT YET ENDED**Tales of Horrible Atrocities Told by the Refugees**Anti-Semite Is Acting Governor–Butchery Carefully Planned–Oil**Thrown on Houses to Quicken Flames–Officer Washed His Boots in**Water for Thirsting Children–Woman with Newly Born Babe Fired**Upon and Both Killed (WP, Sept 12, 1906)***8. Concluding remarks**

“At long last newspaper journalists are rediscovering that epistemological reality – and their own narrative heritage”, writes John Hartsock (2007: 278). By “heritage” he refers to the narrative literary journalism which had emerged more than one hundred years ago, but which, after two or three decades, “was driven to the margins, ... a situation encouraged by the rise of the concept of ‘objective’ journalism” (2007: 266). However, in the 21st century, for instance, a look at the Pulitzer Prize winners gives evidence of the recurrence of this form of writing (cf. e.g. Wahl-Joergensen 2013). According to Hartsock (2007: 274), the ‘objective’ journalism tends to make the world “a distant object unrelated to the reader”, whereas the ambition of the narrative

journalism was “to narrow the gulf between subject and object” (Hartsock 2000: 59).

One of the advocates of the literary journalism in the 1890s, Lincoln Steffens, saw as its ideal to report the news “so humanly that the reader will see himself in the other fellow’s place” (as quoted in Hartsock 2000: 37). This is a marked trend in the AP Siedlce story above. By reporting his own observations and the gruesome stories told by the refugees, the correspondent made the readers “mediated witnesses”, which, according to Peelo (2006) is a popular strategy, for instance, in today’s ‘human interest’ stories. In her studies on Pulitzer Prize narratives, Wahl-Joergensen (2013: 306) demonstrated how “the unavoidable subjective appraisals” could be managed by using special discursive strategies. Wahl-Joergensen (2013: 316) concluded that subjectivity, in fact, can operate “in ways that sometimes draw on the strategic ritual of objectivity and sometimes clash with it”. It can be argued that, as early as in 1906, the AP correspondent resorted to such strategies, which enabled him to mediate the emotions of the suffering Jews and the brutality of the Russian soldiers to the readers, with only minimal authorial evaluation.

The Reuters journalist in his Siedlce telegrams probably conformed to the routines of ‘objective’ writing more or less unconsciously, but by distancing the Actors – the Russian troops – from their evil deeds, he, nevertheless, construed a picture which, to a great extent, supported the official view, promoted by the Russian authorities.

References

- AP news values & principles. <http://www.ap.org/newsvalues/index.html>. (8 February 2016)
- Bednarek, Monika. 2008. *Emotion talk across corpora*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- ben-Aaron, Diana. 2005. *Given and news: Media discourse and the construction of community on national days*. PhD thesis. Helsinki: Department of English, University of Helsinki.
- Carey, James W. 1989. *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Conboy, Martin. 2010. *The Language of newspapers: Socio-historical perspectives*. London: Continuum.
- Curtis, L. Perry. 2001. *Jack the Ripper and the London press*. New haven: Yale University Press.
- Eggs, Suzanne. 2004. *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. London: Continuum.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Media discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Fowler, Roger et al. 1979. *Language and control*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Halliday, Michael. 1994. *An introduction to functional grammar*, 2nd edn. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hampton, Mark. 2008. The “objectivity” ideal and its limitations in 20th-century British journalism. *Journalism Studies* 9(4). 477–493.
- Handbook of Reuters journalism*. 2008. <http://www.reuterslink.org/docs/reutershandbook.pdf>.
- Hartley, John. 1982. *Understanding news*. London: Methuen.
- Hartsock, John C. 2000. *A history of American literary journalism: The emergence of a modern narrative form*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Hartsock, John C. 2007. “It was a dark and stormy night”: Newspaper reporters rediscover the art of narrative literary journalism and their own epistemological heritage. *Prose Studies* 29(2). 257–284.
- Hommerberg, Charlotte. 2011. *Persuasiveness in the discourse of wine: The rhetoric of Robert Parker*. PhD thesis. Växjö, Kalmar: Linnaeus University Press.
- Kopowka, Edward. 2009. *The Jews in Siedlce*. <http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Siedlce3/sie041.html>. (8 February 2016)

- Martin, James R. & David Rose. 2003. *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London: Continuum.
- Martin, James R. & Peter R.R.White. 2005. *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Peelo, Moira. 2006. Framing homicide narratives in newspapers: Mediated witness and the construction of virtual victimhood. *Crime, Media, Culture* 2(2). 159–175.
- Plutchik, Robert A. 1980. A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion. In Robert A. Plutchik & Henry Kellerman (eds.), *Emotion: Theory, research, and experience*. Vol. 1, *Theories of emotion*, 3–33. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Scanlan, Christopher. 2000. *Reporting and writing: Basics for the 21st century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schudson, Michael. 1978. *Discovering the news*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schudson, Michael. 2001. The objectivity norm in American journalism. *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* 2(2). 149–170.
- Silverman, Mike & Kathleen Carroll. 2005. AP reminds staff about policy. <http://www.apme.com/committees/credibility/061705apletter.shtml>. (25/07/2007).
- Stenvall, Maija. 2011. *Captured by conventions. On objectivity and factuality in international news agency discourse*. PhD thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Bookwell Oy.
- Stenvall, Maija. 2014. Presenting and representing emotions in news agency reports – On journalists' stance on affect vis-à-vis objectivity and factuality. *Critical Discourse Studies* 11(4). 461–481.
- Stevenson, Kim. 2014. Outrageous violations: Enabling students to interpret nineteenth century newspaper reports of sexual assaults and rape. *Law, Crime and History* 1(4). 36–61.
- Suhr, Carla. 2011. *Publishing for the masses: Early modern English witchcraft pamphlets*. PhD thesis. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.
- The Advertiser*, Adelaide, Australia. 6.12.1906. Restless Russia. The Siedlce Massacre. An Official Scapegoat. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/5118694>.
- The Appraisal website: Homepage.
www.grammatics.com/appraisal/AppraisalKeyReferences.html.
- Thompson, Geoff & Rosinda Guerra Ramos. 1995. Ergativity in the analysis of business texts. DIRECT Papers. Working Paper 21.

- Thomson Elizabeth A., White, Peter R.R. & Philip Kitley. 2008.
“Objectivity” and “hard news” reporting across cultures. *Journalism Studies* 9(2). 212–228.
- Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin. 2013. Subjectivity and story-telling in journalism.
Examining expressions of affect, judgement and appreciation in
Pulitzer-Prize winning stories. *Journalism Studies* 14(3). 305–320.
- White, P.R.R. 1998. *Telling media tales: The news story as rhetoric*.
Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Sydney.
www.grammatics.com/appraisal/AppraisalKeyReferences.html.
- Wikipedia. http://tutorgigpedia.com/ed/Siedlce_pogrom.

¹ In June 2005, AP sent its journalists a special reminder concerning the use of unnamed sources, urging them to tell the readers the *reason* for anonymity, should they be compelled to resort to this kind of (not recommendable) method (Silverman & Carroll 2005).