

Bowing out in style:

**A Critical Discourse Analysis
of Margaret Thatcher's and
Tony Blair's farewell addresses**

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Introduction

When British Prime Minister Tony Blair made his last address as leader of the Labour Party to his own faithful at the Party Convention in Manchester, September 26, 2006, he knew that his speech would, perhaps, to rephrase a fellow statesman and rhetorician of his some sixty years earlier¹, not only mark the end of the beginning, nor the beginning of the end, but quite simply the end for his period as the most influential politician in the United Kingdom.

A Prime Minister on his way out of office, being forced out by his most loyal followers, would obviously have both his powers and his influence curtailed. But what about his reputation? How would his decade of inhabiting number 10 Downing Street be reviewed; how would his winning three successive general election victories as the first Labour PM ever, be summarized? The long-awaited speech was Tony Blair's answer to his critics, his riposte to his in-house sceptics, his grandiose adieu to the media – and the start of his personal fight for his post-political reputation. As his institutionalized power swiftly disappears, Blair tries to shape his own reputation and legacy via the language he uses.

Tony Blair thus found himself in a position not unlike that of one of his predecessors: Tory PM Margaret Thatcher. She, too, was forced out of office by her party after a decade as PM. Her expulsion as Tory leader took place under dramatic circumstances in November 1990. And she, too, bowed out in style. In a legendary parliamentary session, Thatcher summed up her years in office, fending off every Labour attack in the process. She, too, was fighting for her accounts of reality to be upheld, for her version of the state of the nation, for her world-view to gain momentum – in short, for her post-political reputation.

These were not simply highly personal battles for a generous post-political reputation; the two politicians were also fighting for their parties: Neither PM wanted a shift in the political whims of change in Britain. Having said that, the boundaries between personal and political issues have long since been blurred. Tony, as the tabloid press love to call him, is the Labour Party, or rather the figurehead of what was to be called New Labour, just as Maggie in her

¹ That fellow statesman is of course Winston Churchill and the original quote is: 'This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning', from a speech given at the Lord Mayor's Luncheon, Mansion House, London, November 10, 1942 (<http://www.winstonchurchill.org>).

time was a materialization of extreme Tory values. After all, this was a lady who would use the inclusive we in situations hitherto reserved for the royal family².

So how do they go about in order to influence and persuade their listeners and voters that they have done, however unpopular, what is right for the nation; that they are still doing what is in their might to make Britain a better place to be, and that the only way forward is that forked out by their respective parties?

My hypothesis is that the ideologies advocated by Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair respectively are present in the language they use. Their aim is a discursive reproduction of their account of the world – by means of access to different discourses and through the power of definition inherent in the position as Prime Minister. Given their adverse political affiliations, their ideologies will be presented differently, if not as two complete opposites; they will be the flipside of each other. Secondly, I will suggest that media language has changed considerably over the almost twenty years that has passed since Thatcher resigned as PM in 1990. I will argue that the element of infotainment, if not to say pure entertainment, has today become an inherent part of the coverage of politics in media, especially in the tabloids. My hypothesis is that this has changed the role of the politicians; they have transmuted into actors and entertainers. Thus the political journalists have become more like theatre critics; they rank and review the performances and shows by the different politicians in a way that was not common in the early 1990s.

The present analysis thus aims at, firstly, examining the political discourse used by these two British Prime Ministers in order to find out how they, by way of being in control of proceedings, exercise their power through the language they use. Furthermore, by analysing Blair's speech and Thatcher's last parliamentary session, I would try to say something about how they glorify their own achievements, omit unpleasant information and devilize their opponents in the process. In short, how do they create their own reputation, what kind of ideology is hidden behind the language they use – when it is deciphered and decoded from its obtrusive political spin.

² 'We have become a grandmother', as she blatantly stated to the press on the birth of her first grandchild March 3 1989.

Secondly, I will analyse the editorials commenting on these addresses. The editorials come from a sample of British newspapers the day after the addresses. How, then, does newspaper discourse differ from the political discourse? How do the media portray these two characters and their political achievements? And do they differ in their portrayals according to their assumed ideological stances? I will also look for conspicuous differences between the way Thatcher was portrayed in the newspapers in 1990 and how Blair is portrayed today.

Although I am dealing with different types of texts, one could say that they all meet under the label discourse. My theoretical point of departure will thus be Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Even though CDA is considered to have a clear political agenda, and that it is difficult to pin it down to one coherent theory with a single method, it has still ‘become the standard framework for studying media texts within European linguistics and discourse studies’ (Bell & Garrett: 1998: 6). Furthermore, I will be looking at discourses that involve a substantial amount of power, not least the parliamentary debate, but also the political speech, not to forget the editorials of newspapers with a total circulation of 8.3 million copies, and with 25 millions readers – every day³. Hence, as a tool to decipher these discourses CDA might well be a handy instrument.

In the first chapter, I will give an account of the theoretical framework for this analysis. I will start off with some preliminary remarks and a brief historical outline (section 1.1.-1.3.) of what today is called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Then I will discuss several different approaches to CDA (section 1.4.), and give a short introduction to two of the fields typically studied by CD analysts, namely political discourse and media discourse (section 1.5.). Section 1.6. sums up some of the criticism that has been aimed at this theoretical approach, whereas section 1.7. is a brief discussion of the role of metaphors in CDA.

In Chapter 2, there will be a discussion of methodology (section 2.1.). Then follows a presentation of the data I have chosen and some background information (section 2.2.).

The actual analysis may be found in Chapter 3 and comprises both the two speeches and the newspaper editorials. Finally, Chapter 4 contains some concluding remarks.

³ Circulation figures are the total average net circulation from January 29 to February 25 from the website of the Audit Bureau of Circulations. The readership figures are the circulation figures multiplied by three.

1. Theoretical framework

Beyond description or superficial application, critical science in each domain asks further questions, such as those of responsibility, interests, and ideology. Instead of focusing purely on academic or theoretical problems, it starts from prevailing social problems, and thereby chooses the perspective of those who suffer most, and critically analyses those in power, those who are responsible, and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems. (van Dijk 1986: 4, qtd in Wodak & Meyer 2001:1)

The quotation above from Teun van Dijk summarizes the core and the spirit of what today is known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). He spells out the most central aims and goals of this particular theoretical school. However, before I dig deeper into the world of CDA, it might be fruitful to give a brief historical outline (1.1.). In the following sections, I will provide a general introduction to this theoretical approach (1.2.), some definitions and clarifications (1.3.), before I move on to present three different approaches to CDA (1.4.). Then follows an elaboration of two of the fields particularly studied by CD analysts, i.e. political discourse and media discourse (1.5.). Section 1.6. sums up some of the criticism that has been levelled at CDA, whereas the last section discusses the concept of metaphors in regard to this theory (1.7.).

1.1 Historical outline

Jürgen Habermas and the ‘Critical Theory’ of the Frankfurt School is one of the most important sources for the development of CDA. Scholars such as Fowler, Fairclough and Wodak drew upon his thoughts, guided by the notion that language can be used for self-interested ends by power groups (Chilton 2005: 19).

Neo-marxist in its orientation, CDA follows theorists such as Foucault (1972) and Pecheux (1982) who comprise the idea of an abstract system of socio-political ideology in the construction and indeed reproduction of modern-day society. ‘As a pre-eminent manifestation of this socially constitutive ideology, language becomes the primary instrument through which ideology is transmitted, enacted and reproduced’ (Talbot et al 2003: 36).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) first appeared under the name of Critical Linguistics (CL), coined by a group of Hallidayan linguists (Fowler, Kress & Hodge) at the University of East Anglia. Today, however, the two terms are used interchangeably, although CDA seems to have become the preferred variant. According to Wodak, the origin of CL can be traced back

to the 1970s. That decade ‘saw the emergence of a form of discourse and text analysis that recognized the role of language in structuring power relations in society’ (Wodak 2001: 5). Fowler, for instance, made a telling contribution by showing how tools provided by standard linguistic theories could be used to uncover linguistic structures of power in texts. Until then, linguistic research, heavily influenced by Chomsky, had been ‘focused on formal aspects of language which constituted the linguistic competence of speakers and which could theoretically be isolated from specific instances of language use’ (ibid).

Sociolinguists such as Labov and Hymes seemed to be more concerned with ‘describing and explaining language variation, language change and the structures of communicative interaction, with limited attention to issues of social hierarchy and power’ (ibid). Thus, M. A. K. Halliday and his systemic functional grammar became a source of influence. In fact, Wodak claims that an introduction to the basic ideas of Halliday’s grammar is essential for a proper understanding of CDA in its many variants.

Very early, Halliday had stressed the relationship between the grammatical system and the social and personal needs that language is required to serve. Halliday distinguished three interconnected metafunctions of language, the *ideational* function through which language lends structure to experience; the ideational structure has a dialectical relationship with social structure, both reflecting and influencing it. Secondly the *interpersonal* function refers to relationships between participants, and finally the *textual* function accounts for coherence and cohesion in texts (Wodak 2006: 7).

Another major influence for CDA is the work of Michel Foucault. Especially Fairclough, but also Wodak, has drawn upon his ideas, the most notable being the insistence that language is a form of social action (Chilton 2005: 20). Given its eclectic and interdisciplinary approach, CDA has, of course, picked up bits and pieces from a range of other disciplines, such as classical rhetoric, text linguistics and sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and pragmatics to name but a few.

1.2 Preliminary remarks

However different the various theoretical approaches are, all critical discourse analysts share the vision of the centrality of language as a means of social construction. And, several of the assumptions set forth by the early advocates of this new approach are still basic assumptions of CDA today: Here as formulated by Kress (1989) in Wodak 2001:

- language is a social phenomenon;
- not only individuals, but also institutions and social groupings have specific meanings and values, that are expressed in language in systematic ways;
- texts are the relevant units of language in communication;
- readers/hearers are not passive recipients in their relationship to texts;
- there are similarities between the language of science and the language of institutions, and so on (Kress 1989 qtd in Wodak 2001: 6)

Whereas Kress' summary points out the notions on which Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is grounded, the epigraph by van Dijk points to the most central aims and goals of this particular approach. According to van Dijk, the interdependence of research interests and political commitment is perhaps most notable. Armed with such an explicit political agenda, always from the perspective of those who suffer most, CDA aims at solving actual social problems: results from critical discourse analytic work should be both accessible and applicable; the findings should make a difference, the concluding guidelines should work.

The actual analyses that are undertaken are, and have to be, eclectic. Only through an interdisciplinary approach can discourse analysis be truly critical, and 'gain a proper understanding of how language functions in, for example, constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power' (Wodak 2001: 11).

Apart from van Dijk, the two most prominent advocates of CDA are Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough. They see discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of social practice:

Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people.
(Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258)

Thus, discourse can both sustain and reproduce the social status quo, or it can contribute to transform it. In any way, discourse has major repercussions for society; it gives rise to

important issues of power, and it has major ideological effects: Discursive practices ‘can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people’ (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258).

The core of CDA, according to van Dijk, is ‘a detailed description, explanation and critique of the ways the dominant discourses (indirectly) influence such socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, namely through their role in the manufacture of concrete models’ (van Dijk 1993: 258-59). Hence, the main object of CD analysts is the discursive reproduction of dominance – which means a closer examination of both the production and the reception of discourses. Or, as van Leeuwen (1993) argues: CDA is, or should be, concerned with two aspects: ‘with discourse as the instrument of power and control as well as with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality’ (van Leeuwen 1993: 193 qtd in Wodak 2001: 9).

This particular interest in the relation between language and power sheds light on why context is such a crucial notion for CD analysts. Wodak, for instance, claims that discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to context. Hence, the focus on extralinguistic factors such as culture, society and ideology – and, of course, the interdisciplinary approach that takes psychological, political and ideological components into account (Wodak 2001: 15).

However, the linguistic element is still at the core of the CDA approach, as shown in Wodak’s more general definition:

CDA is used nowadays to refer more specifically to the critical linguistic approach of scholars who find the larger discursive unit of text to be the basic unit of communication’, but, she continues, ‘this research specifically considers institutional, political, gender and media discourses (in the broadest sense) which testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict (Wodak 2001: 2).

van Dijk agrees: ‘CDA may be interested in macro notions such as power and domination, but their actual study takes place at the micro level of discourse and social practices’ (van Dijk 2001: 115). Language, then, is the most important object for CDA scholars, fundamentally concerned as they are with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control. That is to say, ‘CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by

language use (or in discourse). Most critical discourse analysts would thus endorse Habermas's claim that "language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. In so far as the legitimations of power relations, ... are not articulated, ... language is also ideological" (Habermas 1977: 259)' (Wodak 2001: 2).

van Dijk also stresses the importance of the bottom-up and top-down linkage of discourse and interaction with societal structures as highly typical of CDA. Discourse analysis is thus at the same time cognitive, social and political analysis, but focuses rather on the role discourses play, both locally and globally, in society and its structures (van Dijk 2001: 118).

In conclusion, most theorists could probably endorse the aims and principles Wodak proposes as constitutive of CDA:

1. The approach is interdisciplinary. And the interdisciplinarity is located on several levels: in theory, in the work itself, in teams, and in practice.
 2. The approach is problem-oriented, rather than focused on specific linguistic items. And social problems are the items of research.
 3. The theories as well as the methodologies are eclectic.
 4. The study usually incorporates fieldwork and ethnography to explore the object under investigation (study from the inside) as a precondition for any further analysis and theorizing.
 5. The approach is abductive: a constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data is necessary.
 6. Multiple genres and multiple public spaces are studied, and intertextual and interdiscursive relationships are investigated. Recontextualization is one of the most important processes in connecting these genres as well as topics and arguments (topoi).
 7. The historical context should be analysed and integrated into the interpretation of discourses and texts.
 8. The categories and tools for the analysis are defined in accordance with all these steps and procedures and also with the specific problem under investigation.
 9. Grand Theories might serve as a foundation; in the specific analysis, Middle-Range Theories serve the aims better.
 10. Practice and application are aimed at.
- (Adapted from Wodak (2006: 6) and Wodak (2001: 69-70))

1.3 Definitions and clarifications

A number of central terms and notions have already been introduced in the preceding sections of this thesis, not least in the name of the theoretical framework itself; Critical Discourse Analysis. Before I move on to elaborate on the specific approaches put forth by the most central scholars within this theoretical field, a few definitions and clarifications might come in handy.

The use of the word ‘critical’ in the name of the approach might need to be further expanded. Wodak refers to Krings (1973) when discussing this notion, claiming that it denotes ‘the practical linking of “social and political engagement” with a “sociologically informed construction of society”’ (Wodak 2001: 2). However, Fairclough’s understanding must also be considered, that is ‘... in human matters, interconnections and chains of cause and effect may be distorted out of vision. Hence “critique” is essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things’ (Fairclough 1985: 747 qtd in Wodak 2001: 2).

Wodak herself claims the term ‘critical’ involves having distance to data, embedding the data in the social, taking explicit political stances, and focusing on self-reflection as scholars doing research. Also, she suggests, all those concerned with CDA should have application of the results as their aim. The critical theories should be guides for human action:

They are aimed at producing enlightenment and emancipation. Such theories seek not only to describe and explain, but also to root out a particular kind of delusion. Even with differing concepts of ideology, critical theory intends to create awareness in agents of how they are deceived about their own needs and interests ... One of the aims of CDA is to ‘demystify’ discourses and deciphering ideologies
(Wodak 2001: 10).

As for ‘discourse’, while Fairclough and Wodak define it as language use in speech and writing, van Dijk has a more inclusive definition; discourse is defined as a communicative event, ‘including conversational interaction, written text, as well as associated gestures, facework, typographical layout, images and any other “semiotic” or multimedia dimension of signification’ (van Dijk 2001: 98).

Nevertheless, Wodak also argues that CDA, in contrast to other paradigms in discourse analysis, focuses not only on spoken and written texts as objects of inquiry. She claims that a fully ‘critical’ account of discourse requires a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups create meanings in their interaction with texts. As a consequence, there are three concepts that figure indispensably in all CDA: the concept of power, the concept of history, and the concept of ideology (Wodak 2001: 2-3).

Power is such a central notion in CDA, mainly because language is entwined in social power in so many ways. According to Wodak:

[L]anguage indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is a contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term. Language provides a finely articulated means for differences in power in social hierarchical structures ... Power is signalled not only by grammatical forms within a text, but also by a person's control of a social occasion by means of the genre of a text. It is often exactly within the genres associated with given social occasions that power is exercised or challenged
(Wodak 2001: 11).

Ideology, for CDA, then, is considered to be an important aspect of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations. Wodak claims that CDA takes a particular interest in the ways in which language mediates ideology in a variety of social institutions. For Thompson (1990), according to Wodak, ideology refers to 'the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds'. CDA, thus, must investigate the social contexts, the social forms and processes, which bring forth such symbolic forms. (Wodak 2001: 10).

1.4 Different approaches to CDA

Although most CDA scholars would accept the characteristics set forth so far in chapter 1.2, there are also quite a few differences and idiosyncrasies in the various approaches taken by CD analysts. In fact, CDA is best seen as a programme, or a school; or as van Dijk puts it: 'at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis' (van Dijk 1993: 131). With this in mind, I will in this chapter take a closer look at the three most central approaches to CDA, i.e. the approaches of van Dijk, Wodak and Fairclough respectively.

1.4.1. Teun van Dijk and the Socio-Cognitive Model

Teun van Dijk differs slightly, as will be shown, from his fellow CDA theorists in as far as he emphasizes cognition to a much larger extent than his fellow scholars. Nevertheless, he, too, holds the analysis of the complex relationship between dominance and discourse as the main aim of CDA (van Dijk 1993: 252). In fact, he even sounds covertly neo-marxist when he claims that those who control most dimensions of discourse (preparation, setting, participants, topics, style, rhetoric, interaction, etc.) have the most power (Wodak 2006: 14) – where the parallel to Marx's idea that those who control the means of production also control the outcome, the capital and collect the dividends is blatant.

van Dijk has done research on mass media and parliamentary debates, especially focusing on issues such as racism and xenophobia. The assumption that elites in many ways preformulate and thus instigate popular racism stems from his many studies within these fields (Wodak 2006: 13).

A common shortcoming for many CDA studies according to van Dijk, is the failure to show how societal structures influence discourse structures and precisely how societal structures are in turn enacted, instituted, legitimated, confirmed or challenged by text and talk. (Wodak 2006: 14). Cognition, he argues, is the missing link of these studies. Hence, he broadens the scope for CDA by including and emphasizing socio-psychological factors and concentrates his efforts within the theoretical discourse-cognition-society triangle. Afraid of being exposed for reductionist misinterpretations, van Dijk is eager to spell out his understandings of these three notions. 'Discourse', as already pointed out, he sees as a communicative event including a range of extralinguistic components; a slightly broader definition than for instance Fairclough and Wodak. So according to van Dijk (2001: 97-98), 'cognition involves both personal as well as social cognition, beliefs and goals as well as evaluations and emotions, and any other "mental" or "memory" structures, representations or processes involved in discourse and interaction'. 'Society' includes local, microstructures of situated face-to-face interactions, and also the more global, societal and political structures variously defined in terms of groups, group-relations (such as dominance and inequality), movements, institutions, organizations, social processes, political systems and more abstract properties of societies and cultures, etc. (van Dijk 2001: 97-98).

The cognitive and social dimensions of the triad together define the relevant context of discourse. These elements need detailed analysis, a mere study of text and talk added to some cognitive or social ponderings simply will not do, van Dijk argues: Only through an integration of these accounts may one reach a sufficiently descriptive, explanatory and critical adequacy in the study of social problems (van Dijk 2001: 98).

As for the analysis of social dimensions, understanding the nature of social power and dominance is an essential presupposition. Such power deals with properties of relations between social groups, for instance privileged access to forms or contexts of discourse and communication. And, van Dijk claims (1993: 255 ff.) powerful groups always have special

access to discourse. In fact, the power and dominance of groups can be measured by their control over and access to discourse. And as always, the most effective form of dominance is when the minds of the dominated can be influenced in such a way that they accept it, and act in the interest of the powerful out of their own free will⁴.

Power involves *control* namely by (members of) one group over (those of) other groups. Such control may pertain to *action* and *cognition*: that is, a powerful group may limit the freedom of action of others, but also influence their minds ... 'modern' and often more effective power is mostly cognitive, and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation or manipulation, among other strategic ways to *change the mind of others in one's own interests*. It is at this crucial point where *discourse* and critical discourse analysis come in: managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk (van Dijk 1993: 254).

'Modern' power, as van Dijk puts it, has also got a major cognitive dimension. Such mind management, or gaining access to the public mind, is conceptualized in terms of social cognition in the meaning of 'socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation, thinking and arguing, inferencing and learning' (van Dijk 1993: 257). Even though social cognitions are embedded in the minds of individuals, they are social because they are shared and presupposed by members of a group; they monitor social action and interaction, and underlie the social and cultural organization of society as a whole. Indeed, 'ideologies are the fundamental social cognitions that reflect the basic aims, interests and values of groups' (van Dijk 1993: 258).

In van Dijk's cognitive model, context plays an important role, but as of yet, he claims, there is no such thing as an explicit theory of context. van Dijk thus ventures into pastures unknown and sets forth his own thoughts on the matter. He distinguishes between global and local context, where the former is 'defined by the social, political, cultural and historical structures in which a communicative event takes place', and the latter sounds like an echo of the sociolinguistic concept of accommodation theory; 'what we say and how we say it depends on who is speaking to whom, when and where, and with what purpose' (van Dijk 2001: 108).

This leads him to the idea of a context model, a form of mental model that control many of the properties of discourse production and understanding, which 'allows subjective interpretations of social situations and differences between language users in the same

⁴ From lack of a better concept, van Dijk uses the term 'dominance' to refer to power abuse (breaches of laws, rules and principles of democracy, equality and justice), just as he uses the word 'hegemony' to describe this most effective form of dominance (van Dijk 1993: 255).

situation, strategically incomplete models, and in general a flexible adaptation of discourse to the social situation' (van Dijk 2001: 108-09).

These models are important because they are the interface between mental information about an event and actual meanings being constructed in discourse. They do not only link discourse and society, but also the personal and the social. Without such models, we are unable to explain and describe how social structures influence and are affected by discourse structures (van Dijk 2001: 110-12).

van Dijk continues by introducing the concept of an event model. As the context model, the event model is also a mental representation. Such a notion is important to better understand the events or situations language users speak or write about – because it 'is not the facts that define coherence, but rather the ways the facts are defined and interpreted by the language users in their mental models of these facts. These interpretations are personal, subjective, biased, incomplete or completely imaginary' (van Dijk 2001: 111).

Both these models are mental representations stored in episodic memory; that is, 'the part of long term memory in which people store their knowledge and opinions about episodes they experience or read/hear about'. To simplify, one might say that context models control the 'pragmatic' part of discourse and event models the 'semantic' part. And: Understanding a discourse basically means being able to construct a model for it (van Dijk 2001: 110-112).

Since CDA deals with power, domination and social inequality, it tends to focus on groups, organizations and institutions, and thus requires an analysis of the social cognition – or the social representations – shared by these collectivities. Most important, according to van Dijk, are knowledge (personal, group and cultural), attitudes (socially shared opinions) and ideologies (basic social representations of social groups) (van Dijk 2001: 113-14).

To find out how language users exercise power in or by their discourse, one needs to examine those properties that can vary as a function of social power. Hence, van Dijk suggests one should concentrate upon the following linguistic markers: stress and intonation; word order; lexical style; coherence; local semantic moves such as disclaimers (local meaning, lexical meaning, meaning of words, as well as the structures of propositions, coherence, implications, presuppositions, allusions and vagueness); topic choice (global meaning of the discourse,

semantic macrostructures); speech acts; schematic organization; rhetorical figures; syntactic structures; propositional structures; turn takings; repairs; and hesitation (van Dijk 2001: 99). As Meyer (2001: 26) points out, all these linguistic devices are more or less susceptible to speaker control, although not always consciously controlled or controllable by the speakers.

However, with the object of study mostly being ideologically biased discourses, CDA is especially interested in the way these polarize the representation of in-groups (us) and out-groups (them). This can be done, often quite consistently, by juxtaposing the positive self-presentation with a negative other-presentation, where our good sides and actions are emphasized and our bad things deemphasized and vice versa.

Such ‘othering’ can be done on many levels:

Speakers or writers may emphasize our good things by topicalizing positive meanings, by using positive lexical items in self-descriptions, by providing many details about good actions, and few details about bad actions, by hyperbole and positive metaphors, by leaving implicit our negative properties, or by de-emphasizing our agency of negative acts through passive sentences or nominalizations ... such formal and meaning aspects of dominant discourse not only express and enact power, but are also geared to the construction of desired mental models and social representations, that is, to influence, manipulation or control of the mind (van Dijk 2001: 108)

Nevertheless, the most central element in a polarized model is still content, but to make sure that statements that entail positive evaluations of ‘us’, or negative ones of ‘them’, are both credible and persuasive, discourse structures like those mentioned above or those summed up underneath are used.

- Argumentation: the negative evaluation follows from the ‘facts’.
- Rhetorical figures: hyperbolic enhancement of ‘their’ negative actions and ‘our’ positive actions: euphemisms, denials, understatement of ‘our’ negative actions.
- Lexical style: choice of words that imply negative (or positive) evaluations.
- Storytelling: telling about negative events as personally experienced; giving plausible details about negative features of the events.
- Structural emphasis of ‘their’ negative actions, e.g. in headlines, leads, summaries, or other properties of text schemata (e.g. those of news reports), transactivity structures of sentence syntax (e.g. mentioning negative agents in prominent, topical position).
- Quoting credible witnesses, sources or experts, e.g. in news report (van Dijk 1993: 264)

According to Meyer (2001: 26), van Dijk puts forth a six step-strategy on how to conduct the actual analysis (see also van Dijk 2001: 101-08 for an example of how he uses this analysis). At any rate, Meyer's summary is found below.

1. Analysis of semantic macrostructures: topics and macropropositions
 2. Analysis of local meanings, where the many forms of implicit or indirect meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness, omissions and polarizations are especially interesting
 3. Analysis of 'subtle' formal structures: here most of the linguistic markers mentioned are analysed
 4. Analysis of global and local discourse forms or formats
 5. Analysis of specific linguistic realizations, for example, hyperbolas, litotes
 6. Analysis of context
- (Meyer 2001: 26)

1.4.2. Ruth Wodak and the Discourse-Historical Approach

The discourse-historical approach bases its model on sociolinguistics in the Bernsteinian tradition, and on ideas of the Frankfurt school, especially those of Habermas. Significant for Wodak and her followers is 'the attempt to integrate systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a written or spoken text' (Wodak 2006: 15). This branch of CDA may be the most linguistically orientated and has got its focal point in politics.

According to Wodak (2006: 15), this approach is designed to enable the analysis of indirect prejudiced utterances, and indeed to identify and expose the codes and allusions contained in prejudiced discourse. Thus, she never hides CDA's political agenda nor its practical applicability: a major aim for this approach is to help find a set of guidelines both for non-discriminatory language use towards women, for more effective communication between doctors and patients, as well as to provide expert opinions for courts on antisemitic and racist language use by journalists and newspapers (Wodak 2006: 14-15).

As already touched upon, the discourse-historical approach follows three aspects of the complex concept of social critique:

1. 'Text or discourse immanent critique' aims at discovering inconsistencies, (self)-contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in the text-internal or discourse-internal structures.
 2. 'Socio-diagnostic critique' is concerned with the demystifying exposure of the possibly persuasive or manipulative character of discursive practices. The analyst has to exceed the purely textual or discourse internal sphere and make use of her or his background and contextual knowledge.
 3. 'Prognostic critique' contributes to the transformation and improvement of communication.
- (Wodak 2001: 64-65)

As mentioned in section 1.2, Wodak sees discourse as a form of social practice. However, she distinguishes between the notion of 'discourse' and the notion of 'text'. To further specify her

concepts, Wodak leans towards Girth (1996) and argues that discourse could be understood as ‘a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens, very often as “texts”, that belong to specific semiotic types, i.e. genres’ (Wodak 2001: 66). Furthermore, she claims that discourses are open and hybrid systems; new sub-topics can be created, and intertextuality and interdiscursivity allow for new fields of action (ibid).

These comments call for a few more clarifications: Wodak (2001: 66) defines ‘texts’ as ‘materially durable products of linguistic actions’ whereas a ‘genre’ is understood as ‘conventionalized more or less schematically fixed use of language associated with a particular activity’. ‘Fields of action’ could be seen as ‘segments of the respective societal “reality”, which contribute to constituting and shaping the “frame” of discourse’ (ibid).

The Wodak school sees the concept of ‘context’ as crucial for CDA analysts. In her approach, Wodak particularly considers four aspects of this concept: (1) the immediate, language or text internal co-text; (2) the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses; (3) the extralinguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames of a specific ‘context of situation’ (middle-range theories); (4) the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to (‘grand theories’) (Wodak 2001: 67).

The preferred analysis of Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and Wodak (2001) is three-dimensional: Start off by establishing the specific contents of topics of a particular discourse with racist, anti-semitic, nationalist or ethnicist ingredients, then investigate the discursive strategies. Thirdly, examine the linguistic means (as types) and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) of the discriminatory stereotypes (Wodak 2001: 72).

Wodak’s discourse-historical approach also views the discursive polarization of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ as the basic fundament of discourses of discrimination. Of the many linguistic and rhetorical means in use, she names five questions which could detect discriminatory discursive elements:

1. How are persons named and referred to linguistically?
2. What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?

3. By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimize the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others?
4. From what perspective or point of view are these labels, attributions and arguments expressed?
5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or are they mitigated? (Wodak 2001: 72-73)

These five questions pave the way for five types of discursive strategies, summarized in Wodak's table below:

Table 1.1 Discursive strategies

Strategy	Objectives	Devices
Referential/nomination	Construction of in-groups and out-groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • membership, categorization • biological, naturalizing and depersonalizing metaphors and metonymies • synecdoches (pars pro toto, totum pro pars)
Predication	Labelling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits • implicit or explicit predicates
Argumentation	Justification of positive or negative attributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • topoi used to justify political inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment
Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation	Expressing involvement Positioning speaker's point of view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting, description, narration or quotation of (discriminatory) events and utterances
Intensification, mitigation	Modifying the epistemic status of a proposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of (discriminatory) utterances

(Wodak 2001: 73)⁵

Wodak also argues that the different forms of polarization and discrimination can be discussed by means of argumentation strategies or topoi. Within argumentation theory, 'topoi' are 'parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises. They are content-related warrants or "conclusion rules" which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim' (Wodak 2001: 73-74).

Briefly summarized from Wodak (2001), the list of topoi could be described as follows. The *topos of usefulness, advantage* can be paraphrased by the conditional: if an action will be useful, then one should perform it. The *topos of uselessness, disadvantage* more or less covers the opposite assumption. The *topos of definition, name-interpretation* implies that if either one of an action, a thing, a person or a group is named/designated (as) X, it carries or should carry the qualities/traits/attributes contained in the (literal) meaning of X. The *topos of danger*

⁵ For a full summary of her procedures, see Wodak (2001: 93).

or threat: if there are specific dangers and threats, one should do something against them. The *topos of humanitarianism* could be paraphrased by the conditional: if a political action does or does not conform with human rights, one should or should not perform it. The *topos of justice* is based on the principle equal rights for all, whereas the *topos of responsibility* could be summarized by the conditional: because a state or a group is responsible for the emergence of specific problems, it or they should act in order to find solutions to these problems. The *topos of burden* is causal: if burdened by specific problems, act in order to diminish those burdens. The *topos of finances*: if something costs too much money or causes loss of revenue, one should perform actions which diminish the costs or help avoid the loss. The *topos of reality* could be said to be tautological: because reality is as it is, a specific action should be performed. The *topos of numbers* - if the numbers prove a specific topos, a specific action should be performed. The *topos of law/right* simply implies that if a law prescribes or forbids something, the action has to be performed or omitted. The *topos of history* means that one has to learn by the lessons of history, whereas the *topos of culture* is slightly cultural relativistic following the argumentation scheme: because the culture of a specific group is as it is, specific problems arise in specific situations. Finally, the *topos of abuse* is paraphrased by the conclusion rule: if a right or an offer for help is abused, one should change it, or the help should be withdrawn (Wodak 2001: 73-77).

1.4.3. Norman Fairclough and the Orders of Discourse

Fairclough – perhaps the most neo-marxist of the CDA scholars – argues that CDA should be used as a resource in struggles against exploitation and domination (Wodak 2006: 11)⁶. According to Meyer (2001: 22), he takes a specific middle-range theory position: ‘he focuses upon social conflict in the Marxist tradition and tries to detect its linguistic manifestations in discourses, in particular elements of dominance, difference and resistance’. Discourse, in Fairclough’s view, is not merely a product or reflection of social structures, but it affirms, consolidates and, in that way, produces and reproduces existing social structures. It is at once socially constituted and socially constitutive, against the synchronic backdrop of socio-cultural and political forces.

⁶ Fairclough claims that CDA should pursue emancipatory objectives, which means that CDA oscillates between a focus on structure and a focus on action.

Conventions underlying discursive events he calls ‘orders of discourse’: The order of discourse of some social domain is the totality of its discursive practices, and the relationships between them. The boundaries and insulations between and within orders of discourse may be points of conflict and contestation, open to being weakened or strengthened, as a part of wider social conflicts and struggles (Wodak 2006: 11).

For him, CDA is the analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of social practices. Semiosis figures in roughly three ways in social practices: (1) as a part of the social activity within a practice, (2) it figures in representations, and (3) it figures in the ‘performances’ of particular positions within social practices. Semiosis as part of social activity constitutes genres, in the representation of social practices it constitutes discourses, and in the performance of positions it constitutes styles (Fairclough 2001: 123-24).

‘Social practices networked in a particular way constitute a social order’, Fairclough continues, and it is the semiotic element of a given social practice that he calls an order of discourse (a term borrowed and adapted from Foucault (1984)). To simplify; his main focus is intertextuality, ‘how in the production and interpretation of a text people draw upon other texts and text types which are culturally available to them’. This cultural resource for text production and consumption is referred to as an order of discourse. It is ‘a structured configuration of genres and discourses (and maybe other elements, such as voices, registers, styles) associated with a given social domain – for example, the order of discourse in school’ or, say, political discourse (Fairclough 1998: 143-45).

Fairclough proposes a three-dimensional framework, consisting of text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. The three different sorts of analysis are summed up below:

1. Analysis of texts (spoken, written, or involving a combination of semiotic modalities, e.g. televisual texts)
 2. Analysis of discourse practices of text production, distribution and consumption
 3. Analysis of social and cultural practices which frame discourse practices and texts
- (Fairclough 1995, 1998: 144)

According to Meyer (2001), his method is, like Wodak’s, pragmatic and problem oriented. First he sets out to identify and describe the social problem to be analysed. Then he goes on with the structural analysis of the context, then the interactional analysis focusing on linguistic features (such as agents, time, tense, modality and syntax), and finally, he conducts

an analysis of interdiscursivity, which seeks to compare the dominant and resistant strands of discourse (Meyer 2001: 28). Fairclough's analytical framework is represented schematically below:

1. Focus upon a specific social problem which has a semiotic aspect; go outside the text and describe the problem and identify its semiotic aspect.
 2. Identify the obstacles to it being tackled, through an analysis of:
 - a the network of practices it is located within
 - b the relationship of semiosis to other elements within the particular practice(s) concerned
 - c the discourse (the semiosis itself)
 - structural analysis: the order of discourse
 - interactional analysis
 - interdiscursive analysis
 - linguistic and semiotic analysis
 3. Consider whether the social order (network of practices) in a sense 'needs' the problem.
 4. Identify possible ways past the obstacles.
 5. Reflect critically on the analysis.
- (Adapted from Meyer (2001: 28) and Fairclough (2001: 125-127))

1.5. Fields typically studied by CDA

Given its explicit socio-political agenda, CDA is especially concerned with the unequal power relations which underlie text and talk in a society and, more specifically, how the role of discourse is reproducing or challenging the socio-political dominance. Media and politics are thus particular subjects of CDA because of their manifestly pivotal role as discourse-bearing institutions (Bell & Garrett: 1998: 6). Wodak also points to how research in CDA specifically considers institutional, political, gender and media discourses (in the broadest sense) because they testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict (Wodak 2001: 2). This chapter will thus look more closely on the two fields most typically studied by CDA. Chapter 2.2.1. deals with CDA and political discourse, whereas Chapter 2.2.2. discusses CDA and media discourse.

1.5.1. CDA and political discourse

The van Dijk passage used as an epigraph for Chapter 1 conspicuously points to the central role of politics and politicians, or more precise the political discourse, as crucial objects of study within the field of Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA focuses on prevailing social problems, and thus, by order of necessity, 'critically analyses those in power, those who are

responsible, and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems' (van Dijk 1986: 4, qtd in Wodak & Meyer 2001: 1).

According to Wodak (2001), language on its own is not powerful. It gains power by the use powerful people make of it. And, since the main object of CDA analysts is the discursive reproduction of dominance, the discourse used by powerful people, such as politicians, becomes the most important data. 'This explains why CL [i.e. CDA] often chooses the perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and opportunity to improve conditions' (Wodak 2001: 10).

Nevertheless, van Dijk insists that although CDA focuses on social power, it ignores purely personal power (or individuals), unless enacted as an individual realization of group power, that is, by individuals as group members, such as a PM whose power derives from the position he or she holds. Social power is based on privileged access to socially valued resources, such as wealth, income, position, status, force, group membership, education or knowledge (van Dijk 1993: 254).

Furthermore, politicians, by virtue of their trade, also have special access to discourse, and as we shall see below, they thus also have access to media. van Dijk is even tempted to measure their power and dominance in terms of their control over and access to discourse: 'managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk' (van Dijk 1993: 254).

Wodak, who has got her focal point in politics, sees politicians 'both as shapers of specific public opinions and interests and as seismographs, that reflect and react to the atmospheric anticipation of changes in public opinion and to the articulation of changing interests of specific social groups and affected parties' (Wodak 2001: 64). This makes the relationships between media, politics (all genres) and 'people' very complex, and, up to now, scholars have not been able to provide clear answers about who influences who and how these influences are directed.

Fairclough is also preoccupied with what in his jargon would be the political order of discourse, and in his work *New Labour, New Language?* (2000) he undertook the task of examining the language used by Tony Blair in order to gain momentum for his 'new' and

refurbished Labour politics. Fairclough leans on Bourdieu's (1991) theories when making the same observation as Wodak: Political discourse is doubly determined. In a CDA framework this means that there is a power struggle to achieve hegemony both 'internally' – within the rarefied field of professional politics – and 'externally' – in the fields outside politics, particularly to woo the electorate (Fairclough 1998: 146-47).

Nor must we forget that CD analysts have a more or less explicit political agenda, and aim to make a difference with their research. Consequently, analysing politics and political discourse seems inevitable, if, as they claim, they want to create guidelines for future conduct by powerful groups.

1.5.2. CDA and media discourse

The other main arena for CDA is media discourse. And since mass media report from the world of politics, and since politicians need to be in the news, the two fields – or orders of discourse – have become increasingly intertwined or interdependent. Or as Bhatia (2006: 174) puts it; they are sharing a paradoxical relationship whereby one needs the other to survive, or rather thrive, yet each endorses considerable hostility for the other.

The interest in media discourse is important not only because media are a rich source of readily accessible data for research and teaching, but because media usage influences and represents people's use of and attitudes towards language in a speech community. Thus, media use can tell us a great deal about social meanings and stereotypes projected through language and communication, as well as reflect and influence the formation and expression of culture, politics and social life (Bell & Garrett: 3-4).

In some of his studies, Fairclough has focused particularly on the mass media, scrutinizing the assumption that media language is transparent. Media institutions often purport to be neutral, that they only provide space for public discourse, that they reflect states of affairs disinterestedly, and that they give the perceptions and arguments of the newsmakers. This is, of course, a complete fallacy, Fairclough insists that one must not forget that journalists have quite a prominent role in their own right, they do not just 'mediate' others (Fairclough 1998: 148).

According to Fairclough, journalists are just one of many categories of agents that figure in mass media. Hence, ‘mediatized political discourse as an order of discourse is constituted by a mixing of elements of the orders of discourse of the political system – the lifeworld (ordinary life), sociopolitical movements, various domains of academic and scientific expertise, and so forth – with journalistic discourse’ (Fairclough 1998: 148).

While there is often a struggle both between agents and between orders of discourse in media discourse, that might not always be the case; one must also be aware of confluences and alliances. A range of examples can be found in British newspapers, especially the down-market tabloids want to be on the winning side, and claim credit for it, exemplified in immortal front page splashes like *The Sun*’s ‘It’s *The Sun* wot won it’ after the 1992 general election which saw John Major unexpectedly beat Labour’s Neil Kinnock by 21 seats⁷.

van Dijk also calls for a critical look at media discourse, especially considering that the increasingly influential role of the mass media not necessarily paves the way for more objective reporting: ‘Control of knowledge crucially shapes our interpretation of the world, as well as our discourse and other actions. Hence, the relevance of a critical analysis of those forms of text and talk, e.g. in the media and education, that essentially aim to construct such knowledge’ (van Dijk 1993: 258). He also points out that it is through mental models of humdrum everyday discourse such as conversations, news reports and textbooks that we in fact acquire our knowledge of the world, our socially shared attitudes and finally our ideologies and fundamental norms and values (van Dijk 2001: 114).

1.6. Criticism of CDA

In some regards, it is quite easy to criticize Critical Discourse Analysis and the criticism levelled at CDA could be said to cover several dimensions. Firstly, CD analysts are criticized for their use of a hermeneutic approach to text analysis that often fails in practice (in fact, Meyer claims CDA often tends to use more ‘text-reducing’ than ‘text-extending’ methods of analysis). Secondly, for the broad context which is used to interpret texts, and the often very large theoretical framework which does not always fit the data (e.g. the very selective use of

⁷ *The Sun*’s self-satisfactory claim came after a one-sided pre-election coverage where the newspaper on election day had a photo of Neil Kinnock inside a light bulb accompanied by the title: ‘If Kinnock wins today will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights’.

linguistic categories, mostly what suits the social problem under scrutiny). Finally and most importantly, for the explicit political stance taken by the researchers (Meyer 2001: 16) (Wodak 2001: 4-5).

Meyer (2001) finds it especially problematic that 'CDA scholars play an advocacy role for groups who suffer from social discrimination' claiming that this approach at times will cross the thin line drawn between 'social scientific research, which ought to be intelligible, and political argumentation' (Meyer 2001: 15). However, he continues, CDA researchers never hide their motives: their approach is one that explicitly endeavours to uncover power relationships which are frequently hidden, and deriving results that are applicable and of practical relevance in the process.

Meyer quotes Henry Widdowson when he furthers his criticism of CDA: CDA is an ideological interpretation and therefore not an analysis. Hence, the term critical discourse analysis is a contradiction in terms. Widdowson, according to Meyer, thus believes 'that CDA is, in a dual sense, a biased interpretation: in the first place it is prejudiced on the basis of some ideological commitment, and then it selects for analysis such texts as will support the preferred interpretation' (Widdowson 1995: 169 qtd in Meyer 2001: 17).

'CDA is biased - and proud of it', van Dijk claims (2001: 96). It is discourse analysis 'with an attitude' so to speak, 'it focuses on social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination. Wherever possible, it does so from a perspective that is consistent with the best interests of dominated groups' (ibid). It supports the oppressed and their struggle against inequality and combines this with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power. Thus, van Dijk blatantly refuses the notion that biased scholarship per definition is bad. Quite the contrary, he suggests that critical research must not only be good, but better scholarship in order to be accepted (van Dijk 2001: 96).

However, they all fail to convince Meyer, who can thus only conclude: 'Nevertheless, strict "objectivity" cannot be achieved by means of discourse analysis, for each "technology" of research must itself be examined as potentially embedding the beliefs and ideologies of the analysts and therefore prejudicing the analysis toward the analysts' preconceptions' (Meyer 2001: 30).

Chilton (2005) also questions whether a theoretical approach should aim to provide ‘demystifying and emancipatory effects’ – even though CD analysts could argue that acknowledging their own interests is per se a form of scientific objectivity. However, he does not stop there, Chilton lists a number of shortcomings that seriously bedevil CDA. In fact, he poses the ultimate question: Has CDA got any credible efficacy as an instrument of social justice (Chilton 2005: 21)? If the answer to that question is just a bit in doubt, he continues, we must ask ourselves another, and even more provoking, question: do we need CDA at all?

Chilton asks these questions because he deems CD analysts to be interdisciplinary, but only selectively so. ‘Despite some limited use of work in psychology and cognitive science, it appears to be fair to say that CDA has generally neglected developments in these fields. It has eschewed not only generative linguistics but also cognitive linguistics’ (Chilton 2005: 21).

According to Chilton, CDA not only has no social effects, ‘it is also questionable whether it has any theoretically interesting yield for the social sciences, and more especially for linguistics’ (Chilton 2005: 21-22). Apart from some early work by Fowler, Kress and Hodge, he argues that CDA has recently made no contribution to a scientific understanding of our language capacity. ‘This is strange in view of the CDA insistence that language plays such an enormous role in social and political life’ (ibid).

In fact, CDA’s neglect of the human mind is an important theoretical lack in its own terms, but what is more, it makes Chilton conclude that we do not actually need CDA – at least not in its current form. But, he continues, if CD analysts were to expand their interdisciplinary scope and thus be able to provide more than just mere description, it could be worthwhile to follow their line of analysis – but that presupposes that they must pay more attention to both cognitive science and especially evolutionary psychology.

Firstly, Chilton argues that CDA needs to consider Machiavellian intelligence: ‘if CDA is to take account of all relevant science, then it seems inevitable that it has to confront the question of how the human mind works when engaged in social and political action, which is largely, for humans, verbal action’ (Chilton 2005: 29-30). And, if humans in any case have an innate ‘theory of mind’ (Humphrey 1976, Leslie 1991, Baron-Cohen 2001) and a

metarepresentational module (Sperber 1994, 2000), that is what needs to be studied, and, consequently, CDA might not be necessary at all (ibid).

Then there is the problem of the metaphors and the field of cognitive linguistics. Chilton (2005: 29-31) argues that CDA lacks a detailed theory of metaphor – metaphors are often simply treated as a ‘persuasive’ rhetorical device of some sort. He thus suggests that CD analysts should incorporate work done by, for instance, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and Gibbs (1994) or the conceptual blending theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) (see also Chapter 1.6. below).

Chilton sums up the issues at stake for CDA as follows: Firstly, if CDA fails to implement a cognitive framework, this approach may be incapable of going beyond description. Secondly, if we accept, only very tentatively the modular model of mind, the whole emancipatory enterprise of CDA has to be re-examined: ‘if people have a natural ability to treat verbal input critically, in what sense can CDA either reveal in discourse what people can (by the hypothesis) already detect for themselves or educate them to detect it for themselves?’ Thirdly, still accepting the existence of such innate logico-rhetorical modules, Chilton doubts that purely linguistic or discourse-analytical means would explain why people fails to use their cognitive models, rather institutional and economic restrictions on communicative freedom should be considered, and a more thorough historical, social, economic and political analysis is needed. Finally, Chilton claims that there seems to be no linguistic matters ‘under which certain cognitive effects take hold of whole populations by way of verbal communications’, which implies that CDA’s analyses of text and talk may have no direct bearing on social and political conditions (Chilton 2005: 44-46).

1.7. CDA and metaphors

As was pointed out in the preceding section, Chilton criticizes CDA for neglecting the field of cognitive linguistics and for lacking a detailed theory of metaphors. It will be beyond the scope of this thesis to try and incorporate such a theory within the multi-faceted CDA framework, but it could certainly be an interesting task to undertake and one that should be given more attention. Nevertheless, I will make a few comments and argue that metaphors must be treated as more than simply a ‘persuasive’ rhetorical device.

Just as CD analysts hold that discourse reinforces and reproduces certain power structures, a recurrent theme in Conceptual Metaphor Theory is that metaphors could shape our world: ‘metaphors do not directly reflect reality but filter it, so that the metaphorical choices made by a speaker or writer inevitably present a biased viewpoint’ (Deignan 2005: 125).

So then, what is a metaphor in Conceptual Metaphor Theory? Barcelona (2000) has the following definition: ‘Metaphor is the cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain is partially “mapped”, i. e. projected, onto a different experiential domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one’ (Barcelona 2000: 3 qtd in Bartnes 2002: 33).

Deignan (2005) is slightly more specific, although the following definition could be said to be more generally true of a linguistic metaphor:

A metaphor is a word or expression that is used to talk about an entity or quality other than that referred to by its core, or most basic meaning. This non-core use expresses a perceived relationship with the core meaning of the word, and in many cases between two semantic fields
(Deignan 2005: 34)

A *conceptual metaphor*, then, is the connection between these two semantic domains. The source domain, the domain that provides the metaphors, is usually concrete, whereas the target domain, what is being referred to metaphorically, is typically abstract. Lakoff & Johnson (1980), the coiners of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, illustrate this with examples such as ARGUMENT IS WAR⁸. They hold that the abstract phenomenon of an argument is often linguistically realized in terms of war vocabulary: ‘Thus one activity, talking, is understood in terms of another, physical fighting’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 77-82).

The vast majority of conceptual metaphors are like the example just given; mappings of a concrete domain onto an abstract one. In fact, Deignan (2005) argues that metaphors are so central to abstract language ‘that for many metaphorical expressions there are no literal paraphrases’; thus writers within the Conceptual Metaphor school ‘argue not only that linguistic metaphors⁹ are very frequent, but that some abstract subjects cannot be talked about

⁸ Conceptual metaphors are denoted in small capitals as is common in metaphor literature.

⁹ Deignan (2005) uses the term *linguistic metaphor* for the actual metaphors that occur in naturally-occurring language. The linguistic metaphors both *realize* and are evidence for the underlying conceptual metaphors.

without them' (Deignan 2005: 17-19): Abstract topics 'central to our existence, such as birth, love and death, are understood largely or entirely through metaphors' (Deignan 2005: 14).

But why, then, are we studying metaphors?

To study metaphor is to be confronted with hidden aspects of one's own mind and one's own culture. To understand poetic metaphor, one must understand conventional metaphor. To do so is to discover that one has a worldview, that one's imagination is constrained, and that metaphor plays an enormous role in shaping one's everyday understanding of everyday events (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 214 qtd in Bartnes 2002: 42).

Deignan (2005) goes further. She writes that discourse-based metaphor research can be divided into two types. 'The first analyses speech or writing of a particular text-type, generally with the agenda of showing how metaphors are used to present a particular message or ideology', and the second examines 'how speakers use metaphor to develop shared understandings as a spoken discourse unfolds' (Deignan 2005: 124). 'We use metaphors to structure our understanding of the world', Deignan continues, and argues, just as Lakoff and Johnson before her, 'that metaphors can give form to social and political ideas, and that they can be exploited to suggest that a particular interpretation of events is the natural, inevitable interpretation' (Deignan 2005: 130).

Many studies support the claim that metaphors could be used to present a particular interpretation of situations and events. Most notable, perhaps, is a study by Lakoff (1991) where he argues that 'metaphors can kill' based on his analysis of the discourse used by the US Administration to prepare the ground for the first Gulf War.

'A metaphor by its nature suggests an equation between the metaphorical and literal meanings that does not actually exist' (Deignan 2005: 23). Therefore, a metaphor will never give a completely accurate picture of its topic, and every vehicle will inevitably highlight some aspects of the topic and hide others (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 10-14). If we accept this framework, it follows that we can learn about a community's interpretation of the world by studying its conceptual metaphors.

2. Method and material

In this chapter I will start with a discussion of the methodological problems that is associated with Critical Discourse Analysis and try to find a way past them (section 2.1.). Section 2.2. contains a presentation of the material I have chosen, including some background information of the socio-economic profiles on the newspapers in question (section 2.2.1.).

2.1. Methodology

Methodology is one of the most complex issues within the field of CDA. Meyer, for instance, claims that there is no such thing as a common methodology or theoretical viewpoint in CDA: CDA theoreticians draw on a number of theoretical levels in their analyses, from epistemology, grand theories or general social theories, middle-range theories, micro-sociological theories, socio-psychological theories, discourse theories to linguistic theories (see Meyer 2001: 18-20 for a more thorough discussion).

CD analysts are both aware of this criticism and recognize it. van Dijk states that CDA, like any good scholarship, should integrate the best work from all the relevant contributors and disciplines (van Dijk 2001: 95-96), whereas Wodak points out that CDA has never attempted to be or to provide one single or specific theory. Quite the contrary: ‘studies in CDA are multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical background, oriented towards different data and methodologies. Researchers in CDA rely on a variety of grammatical approaches’ (Wodak 2006: 2). The reason for this, according to Wodak (2001: 8), is that relationships between language and society are so complex and multifaceted that interdisciplinary research is necessary.

Furthermore, Meyer (2001) claims that in CDA there is an assumption that all discourses are historical and can therefore only be understood with reference to their context, making him conclude that CDA, thus, is open to the broadest range of factors that exert an influence on texts. Consequently, by applying extra-linguistic factors such as culture, society, and ideology, CDA scholars, by necessity, have to make use of an interdisciplinary procedure.

Nevertheless, there are at least a few features that are common no matter which approach to CDA one chooses. Firstly they are all problem oriented and not focused on specific linguistic items (although linguistic expertise is obligatory for the selection of the items relevant to specific objectives). Secondly, both theory and methodology are eclectic, i.e. both are integrated as far as it is helpful to understand the social problems under investigation (Meyer 2001: 29).

As for a single and applicable methodology, even Fairclough admits that it simply does not exist. CDA is not a technique, nor a tool from a toolbox; it is as much theory as method (Fairclough 2001: 121). van Dijk elaborates: 'In CDA, theory formation, description, problem formulation and applications are closely intertwined and mutually inspiring' (van Dijk 2001: 96). However, the aim of CDA is clear: It can only make a significant and specific contribution if it is able to provide an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality (van Dijk 1993: 279).

In this thesis I am not concerned with openly discriminatory discourses as such, but more with the production of power and the reflection of power in discourses. My data are two speeches by two different Prime Ministers and newspaper editorials from the day after their respective deliveries. Hence, at first glance CDA might not seem applicable, but as van Dijk points out, many of the observations found in discriminatory discourses also 'hold for the domains of gender, class, caste, religion, language, political views, world region or any other criterion by which groups may be differentiated and oppressed or marginalized' (van Dijk 1993: 265).

As we shall see, it is indeed striking to see how many of the same techniques used for discriminatory effect in overtly or covertly racist passages are used by politicians – and in newspaper editorials. Especially polarization is adopted in politics. And, of course, it makes sense, politicians want to create differences, even when they all agree, in order to provide clear alternatives for the voters.

In this thesis I will use van Dijk's six-step-analysis as a point of a departure, but I will also try, as van Dijk recommends, to include and incorporate analytical tools from other main CDA approaches and scholars. From Wodak, who also starts by identifying the topics of a

discourse, I will try to apply her concept of discursive strategies, as well as her argumentation theory. Fairclough's orders of discourse will be made reference to throughout this thesis.

Meyer (2001: 18-24) claims that in CDA, data collection is not a phase that must be finished before analysis starts but might be a permanently ongoing procedure. In a way, this could easily be adopted in my analysis as well, especially in the case of Blair, who at the time of writing, had yet to announce the date of his retirement and thus gave new tokens of his political thoughts and legacy every day. However, the data analysed will still be the one speech he held at the Labour Party Conference in September 2006 and the reception it got.

The relatively small data corpus I have chosen is in line with the CDA approach, as Meyer sees it. He claims that in CDA theory there is little discussion about statistical or theoretical representativeness of the material analysed and that CDA (with the possible exceptions of van Dijk and Wodak) mostly deal with only small corpora, which are usually regarded as being typical of certain discourses (Meyer 2001: 25).

According to van Dijk, Meyer's critique is not appropriate; indeed, CDA may require this type of corpus:

Decades of specialization in the field have 'discovered' many hundreds, if not thousands, of relevant units, levels, dimensions, moves, strategies, types of acts, devices and other structures of discourse. We may have paraverbal, visual, phonological, syntactic, semantic, stylistic, rhetorical, pragmatic, and interactional levels and structures. This means that in any practical sense there is no such thing as a 'complete' discourse analysis: a 'full' analysis of a short passage might take months and fill hundreds of pages. Complete discourse analysis of a large corpus of text and talk, is therefore totally out of the question (van Dijk 2001: 99)

2.2. Material

As already pointed out in the Introduction, the political discourse under scrutiny will be Margaret Thatcher address to the Parliament on Friday November 23, 1990, just hours after she had formally resigned both as Leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister. The token chosen as an example of Tony Blair's political discourse, is his last address to his own

party, on Tuesday September 26, 2006, after his much-publicized decision to step down both as Party leader and Prime Minister¹⁰.

A collection of five newspapers representing different owners, presumed different political affiliations, as well as different socio-economical readerships, has been chosen to provide a representative selection of the British national newspaper market. The newspaper material are collected from the day after Blair and Thatcher held their speeches, from *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*, and *The Daily Telegraph* respectively.

2.2.1. Who reads what: Socio-economic profiles of the newspapers in question

The selected editorials are taken from five different national newspapers in Britain. Using Jucker's (1992) classification, we can place two of the newspapers in the down-market group (*The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror*), one in the mid-market (*The Daily Mail*), and the last two in the up-market category (*The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*). The newspapers are split in groups according to their socio-economic readership profiles. The readers of the down-market papers belong predominantly to the working class, the mid-market papers are read mostly by the skilled working class and the lower middle class, and more than fifty per cent of the readers of the up-market papers are members of the middle and upper end of the middle class (Jucker 1992: 58).

However, this classification does not reveal the ideological positions of the newspapers. But if we are to try and place them politically, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Sun* openly support Blair (though not every aspect of his policies, the first two being extremely critical towards the war in Iraq)¹¹, *The Daily Telegraph* is conservative, and *The Daily Mail* positions itself close to a right-wing populist stance. As for their readerships, the MORI poll of 21,727

¹⁰ Tony Blair publicly announced his resignation on May 10, 2007 and said that he will be leaving office June 27, 2007. Unfortunately, I had already conducted my analysis by the time he made that statement, and his official resignation speech is thus not part of the data for analysis in this thesis.

¹¹ It is, of course, difficult to place the extremely populist the Sun on a left-right political continuum. The newspaper was a dedicated supporter of Margaret Thatcher and John Major's first premiership period, but famously switched to New Labour before the 1997 election. It certainly holds a number of views that must be regarded as conservative, it calls for a longer jail sentences and supported the Iraqi war. Maybe it is just the nature of such a populist newspaper to follow the political whims of its people it is said to serve, and always come out on the winning side.

British adults, conducted between July and December 2004¹², showed that, as expected, *The Mirror* has the most Labour voters in their readership with a percentage of 61, compared to 15 per cent Conservative voters. *The Sun* draws more readers from both camps with 41 per cent Labour affiliates and 31 per cent Tory sympathizers. *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* are both firmly placed in the Conservative faction, with respectively 53 per cent and 61 per cent of Tory voters in their readerships (percentage of Labour voters: 21 and 15 respectively), whereas *The Guardian* has only 5 per cent Tory readers compared to the 44 per cent of their readers that would vote Labour (and the 37 per cent that pledge their allegiance to the Liberal Democrats).

With its average daily circulation of just over three million copies, *The Sun* has the largest circulation of any English language newspaper in the world. The right-wing populist *Daily Mail* is on the increase, and has now got a circulation of 2.3 million, which is in fact not only one of the largest of any English language daily, but the twelfth highest circulation of any newspaper. The third tabloid included in my data is *The Daily Mirror*; it hovers just above 1.5 million copies every day. *The Daily Telegraph* is the biggest of the former broadsheets and has a circulation of just under 900,000, almost thrice as big as *The Guardian* with its daily average of 366,233 copies. Together, the five newspapers have a total circulation of just over 8 million, and thus a readership of over 20 million people – every day¹³.

The five newspapers in question have been chosen in order to be as representative of the flora of British national newspapers as possible and yet keep data at a minimum. These five papers cover both tabloids and broadsheets, the entire political spectre, as well as a variety in ownership (*The Times* was excluded due to it being owned by Rupert Murdoch's News International, the same media conglomerate that owns *The Sun* and *News of the World*.).

Jucker (1992) suggests that there are considerable differences across the three types of papers and that these will be reflected in the language they use. (As to metaphors, it seems logical that they would be found more frequently in the up-market papers, not only because they simply contain longer texts, but also because they try to accommodate a higher educated readership.)

¹² For more information, see the following website: <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2004/voting-by-readership.shtml>

¹³ According to the British Audit Bureau of Circulations, see the following website: <http://www.abc.org.uk>

Since British newspapers so neatly fall into different categories as regards their readers socio-economic profiles, Teo's claim that 'discourse does not merely reflect social processes and structures, but affirms, consolidates and, in this way, reproduces existing social structures' (Teo 2000: 10) could be taken to support, justify, and even reinforce, the divided readerships of the three groups of papers. Reah (2002) states that newspapers are, indeed, aware of this:

[A] way in which papers may identify and address their implied readerships is by reporting stories in a way that is designed to evoke one particular response, thus establishing a set of shared values, usually in opposition to another group who do not share, or who attack these values
(Reah 2002: 40)

3. Analysis

The chief aim of the present thesis is to show how Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair used their last addresses to the British people to build their own post-political reputation, and how they used language, or discourse, to cement their own legacies. In this chapter I will try to address this by looking particularly at the way they use polarization as means to this end. In section 3.1 the analyses of the speeches¹⁴ delivered by Thatcher and Blair respectively are conducted, and the section is concluded by a short summary and comparison (section 3.1.3.).

As a subsidiary purpose, I wanted to see how the newspapers reported from the historic and long-awaited happenings. The editorials from five different British national newspapers¹⁵ serve as data and are analysed in section 3.2. Again, I am especially looking for examples of polarization, as well as examining who make up the different in-groups and out-groups of the newspapers. As expected, these vary according to political affiliation.

Finally, section 3.3 is a summary and comparison of both the analyses of the speeches and the analyses of the newspaper leader articles.

3.1. The speeches

The analyses of the two speeches consist of an introductory section of contextualizing remarks, followed by a brief discussion of the topics and the genre of the discourse, and concluded with a sequential analysis of the full text.

3.1.1. Analysis of Thatcher's last parliamentary session as PM

The historical context (i.e. the need for ethnography, cf. Wodak 2001) is important to fully understand the speech made by PM Margaret Thatcher in the House of Commons on the day of her resignation. I will therefore begin with a few contextualizing remarks.

¹⁴ The full texts of both Margaret Thatcher's parliamentary session and Tony Blair's address to the Labour Conference are included in the appendix.

¹⁵ The full texts of all the editorials are included in the appendix.

Margaret Thatcher's fall from power after more than eleven years as Prime Minister is one of the most dramatic episodes in post-war British political history. Having led the Conservative Party to three consecutive election victories, Thatcher had become the longest continuously serving PM since Lord Liverpool (1812-1827). However, more than a decade in office had nevertheless taken its toll on the Iron Lady, and opposition was mounting even within her own party.

Still, undefeated at the polls as she was, not even the calculating Thatcher could predict her own rapid downfall. However, in November 1990 things happened quickly. Opposition to her policies on local government taxation – the Community Charge, or the controversial 'poll tax' as it was more publicly known – was mounting. In addition, an overheated economy with interest rates as high as 15 per cent, and publicly vented disagreements over European integration had left her party increasingly divided – and Thatcher herself politically vulnerable.

On November 1, 1990, Sir Geoffrey Howe resigned as Foreign Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister in protest at, first and foremost, Thatcher's scepticism towards European integration. His bitter resignation speech in the House of Commons two weeks later prompted Thatcher's former cabinet colleague Michael Heseltine to challenge her for the leadership of the party. In the ballot that followed, Thatcher won by 204 votes to Heseltine's 152, but her total fell four votes short of the necessary majority plus 15 per cent that party rules demanded.

Receiving the news at a conference in Paris, Thatcher initially announced her intention to fight on. However, on her return to London, a minor political earthquake occurred. Her Cabinet colleagues being called in for a consultation could not promise her the support needed in the second ballot, believing that the internal political battle would cost her a fourth General Election victory.

Ousted by her own ministers, Thatcher had no choice but to withdraw. On November 22, at just after 9.30 a.m., she announced to the Cabinet that she would not be a candidate in the second ballot. Shortly afterwards, her staff made public what was, in effect, her resignation statement:

Having consulted widely among my colleagues, I have concluded that the unity of the Party and the prospects of victory in a General Election would be better served if I stood down to enable Cabinet

colleagues to enter the ballot for the leadership. I should like to thank all those in Cabinet and outside who have given me such dedicated support¹⁶

Thatcher's decision paved the way for John Major, who duly won the leadership battle with Heseltine. She officially resigned as PM on November 28, 1990. Major succeeded her and served in the post until the landslide election of Tony Blair's Labour Government in May 1997.

After Thatcher's resignation was publicly known, Neil Kinnock, Leader of the Opposition, proposed a motion of no confidence in the government, and Margaret Thatcher seized the opportunity this presented to deliver one of her most memorable performances. The following is a critical analysis of her last parliamentary session as Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party.¹⁷

Both Wodak and van Dijk suggest that one should start by establishing the topics or the macro-propositions of the chosen discourse. Topics represent what a discourse 'is about', they embody the most important information of a discourse, and explain overall coherence of text and talk. They are the global meaning that language users rely on in discourse production and comprehension. However, most likely they cannot be directly observed, but are usually inferred from or assigned to discourse by language users (van Dijk 2001: 102).

In Thatcher's speech there are two main topics:

- (1) Britain has prospered under Conservative rule
- (2) The Labour Party had left – and will leave again if given the chance – Britain in ruins with their socialist policies

In fact, one could easily claim that the two topics mirror one another; the second topic is in many ways the flipside of the first and vice versa. This observation thus serves a striking foreboding of what we can expect from Thatcher's speech, namely an extremely polarized account of British politics, or perhaps even the world.

The central issues of Europe and the looming Gulf War could perhaps have been included as main topics, but I include them as sub-topics as they both contain the polarization inherent in

¹⁶ The statement in full can be found on the following website:
<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108254>

¹⁷ The resignation as depicted in Thatcher's memoirs:
<http://www.margaretthatcher.org/commentary/displaydocument.asp?docid=109189>

the two main topics. As for Europe, the message is that Britain must embrace the single market, but fend off a federalized union and the single currency, whereas the defence political topic is: Britain must use military means whenever necessary.

Thatcher also makes several other claims in her speech. These could perhaps best be seen as exemplifications of the two main topics. Summarized, her assertions include the idea that Britain has increased its reputation and standing abroad, it has produced faster investment growth than many of its competitors, its finances are better, and its industry has been modernized. However, the claim that power has been given back to people (which also contains a number of sub-topics on its own), is of a slightly different character. Still, in Thatcher's world it is the exact opposite of Labour policies and thus it becomes another example of polarization.

The opposition also tries to bring up some topics; these are only briefly discussed by the PM: The Conservative leadership debate, unemployment figures, inflation, increasing gaps between rich and poor, the Poll tax, and the situation for the disabled. However, as the main speaker of this parliamentary session it is Thatcher that gets to define the 'global meaning' of the debate, and that is not to be misunderstood. It could be summed up as why the electorate should make sure the Conservatives would win a fourth consecutive general election.

The next step is to provide a description of the genre in question as well as the necessary background information of this particular genre.

Thatcher's memorable speech in the House of Commons came about after Labour leader Neil Kinnock called for a motion of no confidence. Such a motion is traditionally put before a parliament by the opposition in the hope of either, on rare occasions, defeating the government or, more likely, embarrassing it or trying to dent the ruling party's chances in the next election. The reason for Kinnock's move was, as Thatcher also points out, the leadership debate that led to the premier's resignation. During the questions session earlier in the day, Kinnock had even asked Thatcher if she would write out a new general election, but the call was abruptly rejected by a confident PM.

As for all parliamentary sessions in the House of Commons, the representatives present their speeches, comments and questions orally – under the authoritative supervision of a speaker¹⁸. The MPs can thus to a certain point come prepared to parliamentary debates, but would always be susceptible to interruptions, comments and other audible exclamations of disgruntlement or approval from the other members – as is the norm for parliamentary debates in Westminster. Nevertheless, by their very status as MPs, the representatives gain access to this important arena; a privilege by which especially the government, but also the Leader of the Opposition and other front-benchers, can set the political agenda for Britain.

Although there are some matters outside her command, the Prime Minister is very much in control of proceedings in the parliamentary debates. She can deliver prepared speeches on topics chosen by the government and can, by choice, either dismiss, neglect or barely touch upon questions or comments from the opposition. Having said that, the debaters usually do pay attention to previous statements, questions and remarks to further their own arguments and dismiss the opposition's. Such polemics requires a sharpened, fast-thinking and well-trained brain, excellent rhetorical skills, and above all knowledge of proceedings and in-depth knowledge of the matter under discussion. If in possession of such qualities, the politician would be in an excellent position to put forth his or her version of the case, of the state of affairs, and of the world.

Politics is all about establishing clear alternatives, or, in CDA terminology, creating in-groups and out-groups. Such discursive polarization is used by all the political parties regardless of ideological position in order to present a world-view of 'us' versus 'them', where 'our' positive self-presentation is juxtaposed with a negative presentation of 'them'. Politicians always seem to have a number of 'enemies' that they seek to 'other'. These are, of course, dependent on the eye of the beholder, and will vary according to the different political parties. Historically, for instance, trade unions have been pronounced adversaries for the Conservatives, just like the property-owning aristocratic elites traditionally have been enemies of the Labour party.

Therefore, in order to build up this us versus them dichotomy right from the start of her speech defending the confidence of the government, Margaret Thatcher launches a manifold

¹⁸ I have not heard or seen any fragments from the debate in question and could thus not comment on Thatcher's delivery or any other audio-visual elements such as gestures, intonation or facework.

attack on the Labour Party and their leader Neil Kinnock. After an introduction of ridiculing the opposition, the PM continues with what the Conservative party, in her view, has achieved during their eleven years in office: An excellent example of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation if ever we saw one.

As Wodak (see chapter 1.4.2.) has pointed out, the way persons are named and referred to linguistically, and the qualities and characteristics which logically follow their naming, are effective techniques used to present a polarized account of reality. In addition to Wodak's discursive strategies (chapter 1.4.2.), they form a brilliant tool to sum up Thatcher's efforts of alienating the Labour Party and its leader Neil Kinnock. The Tory PM consistently refers to the Labour Party as socialists, and not any kind of socialists; they are defenders and advocates of the form of socialism of the old communist regimes in Eastern Europe before the Iron Curtain fell, i.e. their policies are likened to those executed by brutal dictators of totalitarian states. What Thatcher does is to compare a target enemy (Labour) with another, certified enemy (Communist socialism) to further emphasize the evilness of the former (van Dijk 1998: 59-60).

The dichotomy strong-weak is consistently used in Thatcher's depiction of the two political combatants: Labour is constantly referred to as soft, weak and wavering. They are not capable of taking tough, but necessary decisions, they are 'hankering after soft options'¹⁹, and they are not prepared to fight for their country: For Labour, 'it is all compromise'; they are paralyzed when in power.

Thatcher continues her specification of Labour's bad qualities. They have selective memories, but even worse, they lack knowledge, they are ignorant – and they operate with a hidden agenda, in a secretive fashion, behind their voters' backs. What is more, Labour leader Neil Kinnock has 'no alternative policies', no vision; all he can offer are just 'disjointed, opaque words' as the 'windy rhetorician' he is. In fact, Labour 'put expediency before principle', Thatcher argues. And their apparent disrespect for democracy is just in line with their totalitarian inclinations.

¹⁹ In this section, the words and phrases in inverted commas are quoted from Margaret Thatcher's speech in the parliament.

The PM has a long list of arguments as to why Labour must be kept from power, most of them centred around the assumption that Britain under Labour rule was ‘in a parlous state’ and those days will return if the Conservatives are not given a fourth period in office. Specifically, Labour ran up debts, inflated the economy, had the lowest growth rates in Europe, but the highest strike record, offered virtually no increase in take-home pay and thus had to be ‘rescued’ by Thatcher’s unpleasant, but necessary measures.

More importantly, at least from a conservative point of view, Labour ‘took away power from the people’ by allowing strong trade unions, by nationalizing industries, by opposing private ownership, and by denying them choice in public services. Thatcher elegantly rephrases Labour’s motion against her by saying that Labour’s policies are, in fact, ‘a vote of no confidence in the ability of British people to manage their own affairs’. And now Labour even opposes the current government policy of giving power back to the people, of ‘spreading freedoms and choice’. Labour ‘wants to renationalize’ big companies, they want ‘more in its own fitful and debilitating grasp’: ‘Labour’s industries consume the wealth that others create and give nothing back’. This ‘would return us to conflict, confrontation and government by consent of the TUC’. Hence, Labour has not got what it takes to make the difficult and unpopular decisions or to take tough measures. The party turned Britain into ‘the sick man of Europe’ and ‘a doubtful prospect’ for investment with, for instance, ‘an overmanned, inefficient, backward manufacturing sector’.

Not only are their economic policies ‘disastrous’, they would be squandering the tax payers’ money in Europe had it not been for the Conservatives’ efforts: Labour had arranged to contribute a good £10 billion to EC budgets, but ‘we’ have recovered the money. But perhaps, that is the kind of Europe Labour members want: ‘a Europe on subsidies, a Europe of socialist restrictions, a Europe of protectionism. They want it because that is how they would like to run – or is it ruin? – this country.’

Hence, their vision is restricted, narrow-minded and has arisen out of self-interest, whereas the Conservative Party has a ‘larger vision’, for instance on Europe, ‘where member states cooperate more closely to the benefit of all’. In fact, Thatcher is quick to take credit for the democratization processes in the old Soviet satellite states, but again: ‘it was no thanks to the labour party’.

Margaret Thatcher concedes nothing when describing the Labour Party, except ‘their right to test the confidence of the House in the Government’. Her consistent derogatory categorization of the Labour Party and their affiliates could also be seen as a case of over-lexicalization, it ‘results when a surfeit of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms is woven into the fabric of news discourse, giving rise to a sense of “over-completeness” in the way participants in the news discourse are described’ (Teo 2000: 20)²⁰.

Many of Thatcher’s derogatory remarks are overtly expressed, and leave nothing to the imagination. Other comments are more subtly iterated, and can only be inferred from positive statements about her own party, or they are presupposed if Thatcher’s assumptions and logical deductions are to hold water. This parliamentary session serves as evidence of the polarized world of British politics, it is a battle between the two main parties and their respective leaders, and as much effort is put into criticizing the opposition as is into idealizing one’s own party’s achievements.

Although the Labour Party is the overarching political enemy, Thatcher also sets up a few other out-groups in her speech. Every other person, politician or state opposing democracy, which sometimes seems to be the same as a ‘commitment to economic liberty, enterprise, competition and the free market economy’, are equally condemned²¹. Finally, she also launches a stern attack on Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and other aggressors around the world, e.g. Argentina’s former Junta leader general Leopoldo Galtieri for his attempts to invade the Falkland Islands in 1982.

So far I have concentrated on the polarization between Labour and the Conservatives created from the very first paragraph in Thatcher’s speech, and the consistent ‘othering’ of Labour Party members and policies in particular. I will now turn to the flipside of this ‘othering’, and examine how Margaret Thatcher uses her last parliamentary session to fight for her political reputation. Hence, what follows is an analysis concentrating on her positive self-presentation, trying to pay specific attention to both discursive and argumentation strategies, as well as

²⁰ However, we must keep in mind that this is the under-fire Conservative PM on her way out of office, fighting for her political reputation, speaking. The point-of-view is obviously from a highly personal but Conservative standpoint, ideologically consistent with what today is known as Thatcherism.

²¹ I’m aware that this argument follows the same logic British comedian Rory Bremner excellently uses to parody the Labour Party for ousting maverick politician Ken Livingstone as their candidate to become the first Mayor of London in 2000. Bremner’s point was that Labour party officials claimed this was nothing personal, they would not only exclude Mr Livingstone, but any person bearing the name of Ken Livingstone from the nomination process.

linguistic means. The analysis is sequential, it proceeds clause by clause as Wodak recommends, applying one category after another throughout the whole text. This is done in order to be faithful to the coherence and cohesive structure of the text, in which the linguistic strategies always will be mixed with one another. However, as stressed by van Dijk in chapter 2.1., a critical discourse analysis cannot be 'complete', it has to reflect the main scope of the study and select those structures that are relevant.

Thatcher uses the first five paragraphs to set the tone and introduce the topics she really wants to discuss, namely what she has achieved during her period in office, and, secondary, what her achievements must lead to: a fourth successive Conservative general election victory. In the process, she manages not only to visualize the polarization between the main two political parties, she also does her best to make a mockery of Kinnock's motion of no confidence. First, she questions his motivation for doing so, and claiming that he has a hidden agenda (his 'real reason is the leadership election'); then she claims that there is indeed no need for such a motion, Britain is better off than it was when Labour was in charge. And finally, she suggests that Kinnock offer no more than 'disjointed, opaque words' as the 'windy' rhetorician he is, and Labour, thus, offer no alternative policies; they are quite simply not an option.

Applying argumentation theory to Thatcher's assumptions, one could say that her first and last claims rely on the topos of definition: if the Labour leader is unreliable and a rhetorician, his policies are thus also fallacious and consist of merely empty words. The second assumption is based on a number of topoi: One could apply the topos of uselessness (there is a presupposed notion that Labour's policies are useless, and that they must not get a sniff at power again), finances (Labour ran up debts, the Conservatives are repaying them) and history (Britain was in a 'parlous state' under Labour rule, but the Tories 'rescued' Britain and now the nation's standing is 'deservedly high', do not make history repeat itself). However, one must keep in mind that Thatcher's deductions are only valid insofar as one accepts her premises, i.e. her conservative view of the world.

A very important move Thatcher makes is that she hijacks democracy. She makes the positively connotated notion of 'democracy' a specific quality of the Conservative party: Their contribution to ending the cold war and spreading democracy was substantial, simultaneously implying that Labour did nothing. Furthermore, she herself has fought for the very core of the idea of democracy to be upheld; she has 'given power back to the people' – in

stark contrast to the Labour party who took it away. The accusation is then repeated when it comes to the leadership debate, Labour does not apply the most democratic rule of all: one member, one vote; theirs is a system of block votes. 'Precious little democracy there' as Thatcher puts it.

Thatcher continues to equate Labour rule to socialism and the root to all evil, she even borrows authority from one of the 'most distinguished ambassadors' as well as the well-respected, but very conservative magazine *The Economist* to underscore the horrid state in which Britain was – and that the prognosis, in 1979, was 'discouraging'. Hence, Britain had to be 'rescued', and now 'once again Britain stands tall in the councils of Europe'.

Note also Thatcher's use of lexis, especially the active verbs, when describing her party's efforts; the Conservatives have 'changed' all that Labour ruined, they have 'brought unparalleled prosperity to our citizens at home', they have 'given power back to the people on an unprecedented scale', they have 'given control back' to the people and given them 'choice in public services'. This generosity is, of course, no more than the rhetorical version of classic conservative values, which often implies building down the social welfare system under the mantra of freedom of choice – in line with the topos of justice's claim of equal rights for all and no special treatment for anyone. Note also the unprecedentedness and uniqueness in Thatcher's portrayal of reality, her Britain is one of 'unparalleled prosperity', never before has people had it better. Again, an assumption that is not proven factually.

The Conservative generosity and willingness are in stark contrast to Labour's approach: They 'oppose' and are 'against spreading those freedoms and choice to all our people'. Instead, 'Labour would return us to conflict, confrontation and government by the consent of the TUC'. And, they want 'to take power back into its own fitful and debilitating grasp'. What Thatcher does is to apply the topos of threat: just imagine what horrible conditions a Labour government will bring about.

Martin Flannery tries to counter Thatcher's arguments with a number of factually based, but emotive objections (unemployment rates, inflation, oil money), but the PM hardly gives nothing away with her 'yes, but' answer. In fact, she furthers the gap between the two parties by saying that where Labour members (almost implying a party organized by nepotism) ran up debts, the Conservatives invest for the future. Dave Nellist follows next with a direct and

personal question as to why the PM has been driven out of her own party, if things are as good as she outlines. Thatcher, notably, never answers that question, nor the one posed by Sillars a bit later; for her these are only untimely interruptions from the more pressing and important issues at stake, namely defending the Conservative policies of eleven years in office.

The energetic and vigorous way in which the Conservative party takes the difficult, but sometimes unpopular decisions that Labour never did, is further emphasized by Thatcher focussing on ‘our hard work, success and enterprise’. Labour, on the other hand, creates an industry for parasites, where ‘nationalized’ companies ‘consume the wealth that others create and give nothing back’. Thatcher’s argument here is that such policies violate the topos of justice: Labour’s industry policies favour state-owned companies and steal dividends from the man in the street.

The fact that Thatcher keeps repeating deductions based on her conservative world-view (e.g. because individuals and families have freedom to choose, they have more opportunities to succeed) does not make them hold water, even though she tries to prove them by some neatly arranged facts and figures and carefully chosen statistics. Note also, the euphemism for wages: the conservatives offer ‘better reward for hard work’.

Finances or salaries also become topics again when Simon Hughes interrupts with a leading question about the increasing gap between the rich and the poor in Britain. Enter Thatcher the polemic. Thatcher fends him off, belittling him in the process by stating that he should pay attention, ‘he might hear something he did not know’. Then, she twists and turns his question around and puts entirely different words into her combatant’s mouth: ‘he would rather that the poor were poorer, provided that the rich were less rich’ – and repeating it to maximize the effect. She even makes it sound like Hughes has a hidden agenda, and that he betrayed himself by a slip of the tongue.

Thatcher then ignores the topic and continues with another conservative truism – a more economically successful private sector creates the wealth for better social services – to introduce her passage about Britain’s economy, or economic resurgence, as she puts it. The turnaround is substantial, by tough and sometimes unpopular measures, the Conservatives

have transformed the ‘overmanned, inefficient and backward’ sector left by the Labour Party into ‘modern, dynamic industries’.

The PM treats the controversial issue of Europe by launching a stern but ideological defence of conservative values: Under her premiership she has fought ‘resolutely against subsidies, state aids to industry and protectionism; unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy and increasing unaccountable central power at the expense of national Parliaments’. Her vision of a ‘free and open’ Europe (repeated several times) based on ‘willing cooperation, not compulsion or bureaucratic dreams’ is strikingly juxtaposed to the ‘burdens’ and ‘barriers’ and other ‘unfair’ or ‘unnecessary’ obstacles such as ‘regulations’, ‘restrictions’ and ‘constraints’, which is said to be – or was – the result of Labour rule. Thatcher often resorts to the classical rhetorical device of parallelism in her speech. It is normally defined as ‘the repetition of a syntactic structure within a short space of text or period of time’ (Partington 2003: 121-122). What Thatcher uses is the three-part list (tricolon), where she repeats a phrase structure three times. The first two occurrences set up the expectation in the hearer and prepare the audience for the emphatic climax of the third utterance. For instance, when Thatcher claims that Labour members ‘want a Europe of subsidies, a Europe of socialist restrictions’, and, ‘a Europe of protectionism’.

The conservative notion of freedom for the individual is omnipresent in Thatcher’s speech. And the Tories are always ready to fight for this inalienable right, for all the inhabitants of Britain, that is. Again, the dichotomy strong (the Conservatives) versus weak (Labour) is striking. Hence, the tough and vigorous Conservative Party is always ready to defend Britain, its people and the pound sterling. And defend it, they must, be it against ceding power to Brussels, against totalitarian states or against aggressors threatening British interests. By contrast, the Labour party is soft, their members only ‘carp, criticize and moan’, for them ‘it is all compromise’ with horrendous consequences for Britain (as she neatly puts in a topos of threat/fear). The fall of the iron curtain, for instance, ‘was no thanks to the Labour party’ – the tough deterrence policies executed by Thatcher were done ‘in the teeth of the opposition’.²²

²² At this point Thatcher made her famous remark ‘I am enjoying this’, which could be said to reflect her superiority in this debate and underscore what an extraordinary political, rhetorical and polemical talent she was. Or, it could be said that the comment made a mockery of proceedings, she made the entire section a battle of political wit and rhetoric, devoid of any deeper meaning whatsoever.

So should the Conservatives be censured for doing what is right, Thatcher rhetorically asks before moving on to defence policies. Again, it is the tough, unwavering tone which is emphasized. But this time Britain and Thatcher are up against powers outside their control, the Gulf War, for instance, is destiny: ‘when principles have to be defended, when good has to be upheld and when evil has to be overcome, Britain will take up arms’. And, as Saddam Hussein himself is ‘othered’ as the reincarnation of evil, depicted as the dangerous, unreliable tyrant he was, there seems to be no way to avoid a war.

Classical motivational arguments are used to prepare her country to accept going to war: It is, unfortunately, a deed of necessity given the circumstances, the decision is ‘taken with a heavy heart’, ‘but with tremendous pride in the professionalism and courage of our armed forces’. As for argumentation strategies, Thatcher again uses the topos of danger or threat: since Saddam Hussein is a threat to both his own people, Kuwait and the world, decisive action (i.e. war) must be taken. The PM certainly has a way with words, as sending troops to the Gulf and going to war with Saddam Hussein all of a sudden turns out to be ‘the peaceful option’.

3.1.2. Analysis of Blair’s last party conference speech as Labour leader

Early September 2006 the mounting speculation about Tony Blair’s resignation reached a climax when many senior ministers, anonymously, criticized the Prime Minister in public. Of course, the increasing uproar and call for his head came as a result of his vow two years earlier not to fight a fourth election. Nevertheless, the extraordinary attack forced Tony Blair to confront his critics and in a statement to the BBC on September 7, 2006, Blair said that he would quit within a year and that the party conference later that month would be his last as leader of the Labour party²³.

Blair had then been leader of the Labour party since July 1994 following the sudden death of his predecessor, John Smith. Under Blair’s leadership, Labour won a landslide victory in the 1997 general election, ending 18 years of rule by the Conservative Party, and inflicting upon the Tories their worst defeat since 1832. Tony Blair has now become Labour’s longest-serving Prime Minister and the only person to have led the party to three consecutive general

²³ At the time of writing, Tony Blair had yet to give a date for his withdrawal. However, his resignation statement followed on May 10, 2007 where he said that he will officially leave office on June 27, 2007.

election victories. In fact, he is the only Labour Prime Minister to serve more than one full consecutive term.

For many commentators, Blair's statement was seen as a major gamble with his already limited and shaky future as Prime Minister. By setting a 12-month timetable for his resignation, Blair must have hoped to bring an end to the mounting speculation regarding his withdrawal and to buy himself political leeway on his way out of office.

The timing of his decision could also be seen as Blair's wish to end the publicly vented party internal divisions before they would seriously hamper Labour's hopes of future election victories. It also enabled him to conduct a coup d'état of the Labour conference, hoping that it would be a 'thank you' rally for his political achievements rather than a scene of political back-stabbing and blood-letting as it looked certain to become.

However, the feeling that the announcement has turned Blair into a political lame duck seems reinforced, although one could claim that the damage was already done by his decision in 2004 to step down before a fourth election. With less than a year to go in his premiership, Blair is certain to have lost authority and control not only over his own government and party, but also over his political acquaintances across the world. The decision could thus be seen to defeat its own end and further inflame those Labour mavericks who desperately want a new leader and a new course, and who would claim him unfit to run the country, or introduce any radical, long-term policies in his last few months when in practice his premiership is over. And it would certainly spur the opposition in their quest to debilitate the Labour government.

The debate and controversy surrounding Blair's decision to step down, but not giving the exact date for his vacating Downing Street 10, fuelled expectations of what was soon to become his last address at the Labour conference as leader of the party. The speech was all of sudden assumed to be of enormous magnitude and was eagerly anticipated by both his peers, his colleagues, his critics, the opposition and the media. Not only did the conference give Blair the chance to sum up his decade as premier, he could also give advice and look forward to future challenges without the main responsibility as to which course was selected, and he could pull some strings as to who should be the frontrunners to succeed him. Most importantly though, with the complete attention of the whole nation for up to one hour, he could try to put a stamp of authority on how his legacy is to be decided: The Labour

conference podium marked the beginning of his verbal fight for a generous judgment by history.

So which topics did Blair choose when entering centre stage for the last time as Labour leader? Not surprisingly, he chose to focus on what Britain and the British people have achieved under his premiership, half-heartedly disguised under the mantra: (New) Labour has transformed Britain. Presupposed here is, of course, that Britain has moved in the right direction, implying that the nation was in a horrendous state before Labour and Blair took over in 1997. Secondly, Blair looks ahead and, tries, with grandeur a little unfit for a politician of his stature, to act as a self-appointed elder statesman and give advice to his successors. The message: In order to win a fourth election, Labour must change their policies to adapt to new, global challenges.

Subordinate to each of these two overarching topics there are many minor ones. As for the first, Blair explains why a change was called for (because the Tories left Britain in tatters), why they did it (in order for the normal people to prosper), and how (the efforts done to right the wrongs) they changed Britain. The second main topic revolves around what the Labour party, and thus Britain, can achieve in the future, as Blair briefly tackles many – if not most – of the political issues of today (which all become sub-topics in his speech).

It comes as no surprise perhaps, but the contents and aims of Blair's speech are almost identical with those of Thatcher 16 years earlier. They are both fighting the same battle, both personally and on behalf of their parties, in an attempt to create a polarized world of us versus them, where they themselves belong to the positively represented in-group and the opposition is firmly placed in the out-group, negatively or derogatorily portrayed whenever possible. The main focus, as always in politics, is to win the forthcoming election.

Perhaps one could define the party conference speech as a sub-genre of the more general genre of political speech. In any case, the party conference²⁴ speech is special insofar that it mostly addresses people of the same conviction as the speaker. Hence, one would expect the

²⁴ In the United Kingdom each major political party holds an annual party conference. In the Labour Party, the conference is the supreme body, although the party leadership has made clear, particularly in recent years, that it will ignore the conference's decisions where it does not agree; constitutionally, a British government must be free to make decisions on behalf of the whole population and cannot be bound by any private body.

audience to be friendly, patient, attentive and responsive, and not a source for openly expressed critique or hostility. As opposed to a parliamentary session, the speaker usually need not expect other interruptions than applause or other positive feedback.

With the podium at the speaker's disposal for up to or exceeding one hour and the full attention of the audience, he or she can come thoroughly prepared, and, depending on his or her status within the party, bring up exactly the topics he or she wants and thus set the agenda for that session, if not the entire conference. Of course, as politicians are expected to master the skills of oratory, one would assume that a speaker at such a scene would try to incorporate and address topics or issues discussed by others or of current interest.

When speaking at the conference of his or her party, the speaker is in total control of proceedings and could choose what other means to accompany the delivery, be it music or sound effects, visual elements like film, pictures or slogans, as well as more subtle moves like placement of the podium, timing, order of appearances and so on. The speaker apparently controls both the screenplay and direction. Nevertheless, the actual words spoken are the focus of this analysis, and it should be kept in mind that these are written for oral delivery, for the party, but also to a large extent to please and accommodate the ever-increasing corps of journalists. And, lest we forget; Blair's words are written to enhance his post-political reputation. With respect to this latter point, some traits stand out in particular; the sentences and paragraphs are shorter, the use of lists seems to be on the increase, and catchwords, punch-lines and gags pervade the speech.

As for this very speech by Blair, it was a long-awaited address and an object of massive attention, heavily announced beforehand as it was. Blair had the privilege to speak one day after his main adversary and possible successor, Chancellor Gordon Brown, but also had to face the tabloid front page splashes of Cherie, his wife, being caught on tape spitting out the word 'liar' when Brown addressed the conference and verbally offered an outstretched hand towards her husband. In Blair's world that was never a problem, although to the tune of 'we're not invincible' from Take That's 'Never forget', he never seemed to flinch, his response simply being, at least 'I don't have to worry about Cherie running off with the bloke next door'²⁵. From then on it was one hour and one minute of the Blair show.

²⁵ In this section, the words and phrases in inverted commas are quoted from Tony Blair's speech at the Labour conference in Manchester.

Nevertheless, it all started in a humble and thankful way, the Labour leader was in his most subservient and self-ironic mode. The ‘thank you’ remarks were flying in every direction, as he joked about the job giving both him and his fellow members grey hair. However, his delivery was everything but grey or insignificant. His highly personal introduction only served one purpose: to prove that politics is about people, and not just any kind of people, ‘normal people’, like you and me, and that Blair himself is a normal bloke, but a normal bloke that happens to live in number 10 Downing Street²⁶. This inclusive tone is obviously chosen to decrease what many see as a widening gap between politicians and the ordinary man in the street. Blair sums it up himself, the inclusive ‘we’ are on ‘journey of progress’ together, although ‘we’ have slightly different roles: ‘Leaders lead but in the end it’s the people who deliver’ (and make no mistake about it, the prosperity on show, he makes concrete examples, could only have happened under a Labour government²⁷).

The journey imagery serves to further highlight the distance Blair wants us to believe Britain has travelled since he succeeded the Conservatives in 1997. In other words, he has made ‘progress’, and progress is per definition good. Hence, Blair himself is a ‘progressive’ as opposed to the ‘regressive’ policies of the Tories and their leader David Cameron. Progressive are also the NHS staff, who ‘transform and save tens of thousands of lives every day’, and the teachers, the pupils and their parents, who ‘have given our country the best educated children in history’.

Then, Blair starts a long rant about the horrid state in which Britain was when he first became Labour leader. Again he sides with the people and shares their ‘anger’ at the state of the nation with its ‘crumbling school buildings’, its ‘patients dying in pain, waiting for operations’, of a ‘doubled’ crime rate, of ‘homes repossessed’ and wholesale ‘poverty’. The British people could rightly feel ‘betrayed’. At this point, Blair attaches no agents to his descriptions of society, but as listeners we sense the existence of a big, bad wolf responsible for this misery. Not even when he lists the ‘daunting challenges’ Labour faced after the landslide election victory in 1997, does he mention the Conservatives. Nevertheless, by

²⁶ Implicit in the ‘normalness’ of his fellow Labour colleagues is also an amicable and open-minded spirit: Labour consists of member with big hearts, how else could Blair be ‘rescued’ from the tough world of London politics in 1983.

²⁷ Although Blair seems very eager to give credit to each and everyone of the British people, he quite literally spells out who has made this happen, as for the Whiston Hospital in Knowsley, where *he* (my emphasis) ‘laid down the foundation stone’.

juxtaposing the ‘daunting challenges’ with his own list of achievements, Blair creates an in-group consisting of the British people and the Labour party, and an out-group of the hitherto unnamed malefactors.

‘This was a country aching for change’, Blair exclaims and emphasizes a recurrent theme in his speech, namely change and transformation. Firstly, he stresses the need for change, the need for an energetic government that could right the wrongs (we must ‘keep changing Britain for the better’), then he highlights and sings the praises of the changes that have indeed taken place under the current premiership (‘this is a changed country’). However, it is important to keep in mind that Tony Blair at this stage is prosecutor, barrister and judge at the same time, revelling in the powerful position of defining what is right and what is wrong, what has worked, and what has not²⁸. Hence, he chooses his facts carefully, for instance when mentioning unemployment, he emphasizes the rather obscure wording ‘virtually no long-term young unemployment’ which, at best, only gives a partial picture of the problem, or ‘challenge’ to use Blair’s mediatized vocabulary.

In his list of good deeds for his fatherland, he makes use of the passive voice. Labour has now banned ‘things that should never have been allowed’ and allowed ‘things that never should have been banned’ – but somebody has at some time done something very wrong – which we are led to believe are their political adversaries but some of these claims are obviously also approved by numerous Labour governments in the past (e.g. smoking in public places). Blair is also appealing to the common sense of the public, it is very hard to disagree with any of his assertions: This is progress in practice and proof of the ‘the chaos’ that Labour ‘inherited’.

His first mention of the Tories is characteristically hostile, but leaves much to be inferred from his economical language. The essence is still not to be misunderstood: they were wrong (about the minimum wage, for instance²⁹). Now they are, reluctantly, forced to admit it, and to change their minds in the process – because, and that is for everyone to see, these Labour policies worked. In the world of politics, that is about as big a setback as anyone can get.

²⁸ In his article on presidential rhetoric, Zarefsky (2004) claims that political speeches by such prominent actors define political reality. Social reality is not given, it is chosen from among multiple possibilities. Because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication, Blair, as the US president, by defining a situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public. These definitions are often stipulated, offered as if they were natural and uncontroversial rather than chosen and contestable.

²⁹ And they have got no empathy either, as they cut the help for the world’s poor.

As for David Cameron, Blair describes him as a joke. Cameron and his Tories are consistently ridiculed. Firstly, Blair questions their ability to lead Britain: David Cameron's Tories? – surely, you must be joking. Then, he rebukes him by saying that politics is ‘not a multiple choice quiz question, Mr Cameron’, before he laughs at his idea about a Bill of Rights drafted by a Committee of Lawyers: ‘Have you ever tried drafting anything with a Committee of Lawyers?’ Blair goes on by casting doubt on his moral grounds: ‘sacrificing British influence for Party expediency is not worthy of a Prime Minister’, demeaning his financial policies (‘he wants tax cuts and more spending’), and branding him naïve in the process (the idea that the terrorized old lady should give the young thug a nice, big hug). They just ‘haven’t thought it through’, he concludes, implying that the Conservatives are not only ignorant, but that they simply lack the knowledge necessary to be in charge of affairs. ‘Get after them’ and ‘take this lot apart’ is his, rather blood-thirsty, advice to his own party.

Note also the lexis Blair uses to distance himself and his party from the Tories. They ‘pander’ to ‘anti-Americanism’ and ‘to the Eurosceptics’, they ‘cut’ the help for ‘the world’s poor’, and they put ‘expediency’ first. Tony Blair’s New Labour ‘freed Britain’ from this ‘reactionary’ grasp of the Tories, who could never bridge the notion of ‘individual prosperity’ with that of a ‘caring society’. Blair, however, has ‘defied conventional political wisdom’, made the impossible possible, by uniting economic efficiency and social justice.

It is nevertheless a slightly humble PM who speaks to his party, his mission is not completed, there are still many things ‘that remains to be done’. Neither does he want to dwell on things past, according to Blair, ‘politics is always about the next challenge’, to ‘keep changing Britain for the better’. And, in order to do that, Labour must adapt to a changed world: ‘In 1997 the challenges we faced were essentially British. Today they are essentially global’. Thus, Labour must adapt not by throwing all their beliefs overboard, or by ‘ditching New Labour’, but by understanding ‘that New Labour in 2007 won’t be New Labour in 1997’; different times call for different policies. Blair exemplifies by referring to previous Labour governments and leaders that went desperately wrong because they were out of step with their surroundings (public). Hence, Blair justifies the ‘newness’ in his Labour by juxtaposing New Labour with the Labour of the past, a comparison which paints a rosy picture of his leadership.

Criticizing central Labour dignitaries such as Harold Wilson is a potentially hazardous pastime. Of course, Blair knows that, but having won three consecutive election victories he also knows he can get away with it. According to him, those victories were due to his being tuned in with the electorate's needs, whereas Labour in the past were certainly not, 'electorally hopeless' as they were. To further emphasize this topos of history, Blair uses metaphors from the world of economics, 'the values themselves become devalued' and 'have no purchase in the real world' – quite appropriate considering his pandering with more market oriented policies than previous Labour governments.

Blair's language is clearly emotive³⁰, it is quite obvious that he wants to appeal to the feelings of both his audience and the public. 'Be proud', 'take heart from' what we have achieved, have 'faith' and 'belief' in yourselves, these are all messages Blair wants to get across to his party faithfuls – believing that only a confident leadership can spread confidence to the public. At the same time he wants to be a uniting force for his party ('I want to heal'), like a monarch or patriarch stepping down, he reminisces, he is personal, he generously pours of his vast experience, and he gives advice. He is a man of the world, and he makes no attempt to hide it: 'You take my advice. You don't take it. Your choice', as if he is saying: Do not come knocking on my door later.

Again, it is the wannabe-elder statesman speaking, a Prime Minister that is desperate to present his 10-year-premiership in the best possible light. He was a strong leader (getting results 'require leadership'), he made the tough decisions ('courage is our friend, caution our enemy'), he got results, and he is Labour to the bone ('I love this party') – despite claims of the opposite ('He's not Labour. He's a closet Tory'). This is positive self-presentation in practice.

Although Blair says, 'next year I won't be making this speech', he still wants the party 'to keep on winning'. There are two reasons for that, he argues. Firstly, if Labour do not succeed, the Conservatives will be back in office, and, subsequently, change the country, but in a regressive way. Secondly, as the people's man he is, Labour must carry on winning for the sake of the public.

³⁰ Blair here uses the strength versus weakness image, but a version appropriated to the realms of the emotional.

As for the first reason, Blair applies the topos of threat: If David Cameron's Tories win the next election, Britain will – again – become a grim place. As for the second, Tony Blair stresses that Labour and himself, sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference³¹, always 'put the Party at the service of the country', one could almost hear the echo of the late US president John F. Kennedy in his inauguration speech in 1961: 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country'. His call for commitment is balanced by an attempt to close the gap between the Labour government and the British people: They are all in the same boat. 'Their reality became our reality. Their worries, our worries', Blair brags, and claims that Labour's 'core vote is the country', 'not any sectional interest or lobby'. Labour does not put personal interests or populist proposals first, they have got their mandate from the public, as shown in Blair's little anecdote about the female part-time worker to which he spoke about her tax credit. 'Go sort it out', was her message to the PM, and, according to Blair, that has got to be Labour's mission, 'keep changing Britain for the better'. And since, the people (i.e. the individuals, 'the patient; the parent') come first, it is not about Labour winning a fourth election, it is not about winning for 'winning's sake but for the sake of millions here that depend on us to win, and throughout the world', it is about how Britain can 'carry on winning'.

However, after three election victories, Blair argues that time is both an advantage and a disadvantage for Labour. Although the Labour government is now experienced, 'there are no popular third term governments'. Being in office has taken its toll, that is 'the nature of the beast', Blair explains. But there is no need to be paralyzed, people 'will lose faith in us only if we first lose faith in ourselves', he continues.

However, to win a fourth election Labour must adapt to a changed world, where the 'fundamental dilemma' is how to 'reconcile liberty with security', how Britain can be 'open and secure' at the same time. This is Blair's attempt to address terrorism and immigration (and thus in the process implying an intricate relationship between the two concepts), and a situation where 'suicide bombers born and bred in Britain bring carnage to the streets of London'. By use of the semantic structure of the text, Blair subtly manages to 'other' migrants by way of implication and indirectness. Seemingly non-evaluative and non-ideological descriptions of 'facts' imply negative traits to immigrants in the way the sentences

³¹ In his study about the metaphor system used to justify war in the Gulf, Lakoff (1991) points out that the ruler-for-state (or in this case leader-for-party) and state-as-person metaphors are common in political speeches.

of the discourse cohere (van Dijk 1998: 63). For instance, when Blair goes from talking about ‘who is here lawfully’ via ‘organized crime gangs’ that ‘are free to practice their evil’ to the difficulty of deporting ‘foreign nationals even when inciting violence’, it is obvious that he implies a connection between immigrants on the one hand and crime and violence on the other. Thus, he applies a topos of reality to justify a tougher immigration policy, for instance by introducing identity cards: ‘because our idea of liberty is not keeping pace with change in reality’, the essential freedom of liberty and security ‘are in jeopardy’ (because reality is as it is, necessary measures must be taken).

Openly, of course, he distances himself from the idea of a shut Britain. ‘Some want’, those some, of course, are not Blair himself, ‘a fortress Britain – job protection, pull up the drawbridge, get out of international engagement’. And despite the ID cards, he does not want to live in a ‘police state’ or ‘a Big Brother society’. His is a ‘third way’, consistent with his earlier rhetoric, ‘by using collective power to advance opportunity and provide security for all’. If not, ‘instead of a welcome, migrants find fear’ – here Blair cleverly makes the migrants the agents and implies that everything he is concerned about is their well-being.

‘Terrorism isn’t our fault. We didn’t cause it’, Blair blatantly states. ‘It’s not the consequence of foreign policy’, he continues in a stern defence of Britain’s involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Terrorism is a ‘struggle’ against an ‘enemy’ with an ‘ideology’³². ‘It is an attack on our way of life’, Blair continues, emphasizing the us versus them dichotomy. The polarization is further reinforced by the use of images and metaphors: terrorists ‘prey on every conflict’, and ‘exploit every grievance’, they are the ones that ‘slaughter the innocent’ with their ‘sectarian death squads’. That is why it will be ‘committing a craven act of surrender’ to retreat from Afghanistan and Iraq now or to withdraw as ‘America’s strongest ally’. However, Blair is quick to add that ‘not a day goes by or an hour in the day when I don’t reflect on our troops with admiration and thanks’ – with the extraordinary bravery of being out of range, one might add.

³² Interestingly, Bush’s term ‘war on terrorism’ has recently been rejected by the Labour government. Cabinet minister Hilary Benn said to the Guardian April 19, 2007, that the British government did not use the phrase, as it gave succour to terrorists and was too narrow a definition. ‘In the UK, we do not use the phrase “war on terror” because we can’t win by military means alone. And because this isn’t us against one organised enemy with a clear identity and a coherent set of objectives. It is "the vast majority of the people in the world" against "a small number of loose, shifting and disparate groups who have relatively little in common. What these groups want is to force their individual and narrow values on others, without dialogue, without debate, through violence. And by letting them feel part of something bigger, we give them strength’, Mr Benn said to the Guardian.

It is impossible to discuss Blair's speech without mentioning his oratory skills. This is a rhetorical marksman, a cunning media user, a brilliant performer who has made the podium his natural habitat. He always interacts with his audience, with his short, emotional sentences, his rhetorical questions, his pinpointed lists of arguments, his inclusiveness, his convenient pauses and his rise and fall in intonation. And his humour. He makes his listeners laugh, his gags were many throughout the speech, for instance the joke about his getting older, his wife running off with Gordon Brown, but there were more: 'They know there isn't some fantasy government where nothing difficult ever happens. They've got the Lib Dems for that'. In total he got nine minutes and 13 seconds of standing ovation during his delivery, according to the BBC. Never mind the fact that he spoke to his own, this was vintage political oratory from one of the best in the business.

3.1.3. Summary and comparison of the two speeches

The circumstances that led to the resignation of Margaret Thatcher in 1990 and Tony Blair some 16 years later are strikingly similar. The two Prime Ministers were both ousted by their respective parties in the middle of their fourth term in office. In fact, neither of them did ever lose a general election, they both won three successive election victories and served their country for more than a decade – Blair as the first ever in Labour's history, Thatcher as the longest-serving PM since Lord Liverpool (1812-1827).

Still, Thatcher's exit was by far the more dramatic of the two. Her position as leader of the Conservatives was challenged by her former cabinet colleague Michael Heseltine in an internal leadership battle. She quite easily fended him off, but failed to get the necessary 15 per cent buffer so that she could continue unaffected. Instead, there was to be a second ballot, from which Thatcher, after an initial vow to fight on, duly resigned. The reason being that her trusted ministers could neither guarantee her victory nor that the contest would end the destructive divisions within the Conservative party.

To some extent, Tony Blair had only himself to thank for the mounting criticism he received during his fourth term in office. Comments such as 'I would not fight a fourth election' and 'I

will step down within a year³³ had fuelled expectations about his leaving. So had the apparent deal between Blair and his Chancellor, Gordon Brown. Various reports claim that in a gentlemen's agreement Blair had accepted that he should hand over the job to the Chancellor at a given point in his premiership, a deal Blair allegedly had struck with Brown after the death of Labour leader John Smith in 1994³⁴. Nevertheless, there were still a number of Labour seniors that wanted to see the back of Blair, and who eventually succeeded in forcing him out.

But, whereas Thatcher faced the facts immediately and resigned as soon as she realized that there was no other option, Blair decided to hang on. In fact, he had been hanging on for close to a year, when he returned to his constituency in Sedgefield on May 10, 2007, and made the announcement everybody had been waiting for: He will tender his resignation to the queen on June 27, 2007.

When Thatcher decided to bow out without further ado, she was left with the motion of no confidence in the House of Commons as the setting for her farewell address. Blair, on the other hand, could better orchestrate his swansong and chose the Labour conference as time and place for his speech. Hence, whereas Thatcher had to face the hostility and unpredictability of the Commons just hours after her formal resignation, Blair had the privilege of delivering a thoroughly prepared and directed farewell address to his party faithful.

Indeed, most of the differences between the two addresses stem from the different context in which they were held. Thatcher had to confront both the opposition and her own Tory dissidents in the House of Commons; she had to be alert and quick-thinking to tackle immediate feedback, be it interruptions, questions or audible exclamations of disgust or sympathy. In contrast, by announcing his forthcoming retirement, Blair had managed to turn his conference speech into a thank you rally. He could be more personal and speak directly to his own, illustrated by the use of personal ('you') or inclusive ('we') pronouns and phrases such as 'take heart from it' and 'show belief in ourselves'.

³³ According to the BBC, Blair revealed in 2004 that he would not fight a fourth election and made the latter claim in September 2006 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/5322094.stm).

³⁴ See Wikipedia for more information about this widely-held belief in British politics (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blair-Brown_deal).

Nevertheless, the similarities are more striking than the differences. Just as Thatcher's topics were the flipside of each other, Blair's speech is in many ways a repetition of Thatcher's, but turned on its head. The framework and their goals are the same; in the polarized world of the two-party political system in Britain, both Thatcher and Blair put their own achievements in the best possible light whereas they try to bedevil everything associated with the opposition: The only difference is their political affiliation and their account of reality (although there is one view they could share; they both regarded Saddam Hussein as an evil enemy, and whereas Thatcher was on the brink of a war with Hussein's Iraq, Tony Blair actually invaded the country).

Another conspicuous similarity in the two speeches is their relentless accumulation of evidences of change. Fairclough (2001: 132) argues that this cascade of change firmly establishes the notion of a transformed Britain as a simple fact, although many of their assertions could be questioned. Examples of change are authoritatively represented in both texts 'as lists of known appearances (and truisms) in the present which are indifferent to place and whose social agency is effaced, and which must be responded to in certain ways'. Both Thatcher and Blair thus construct a vision of a changed Britain to which there is no alternative.

One could perhaps claim the polarization is more overt in Thatcher's speech than in Blair's. The latter often omits the agency of some of his accusations and generally uses a subtler way of othering the Conservative party. As for the contents of their speeches, Blair looks ahead and tries to address future challenges to a larger extent than Thatcher. Still, both he and Thatcher emphasize what they have achieved; they are after all fighting for their post-political reputation. Summing up a decade in power seems like a daunting challenge, nevertheless, they both managed to bow out in style, like the stars of contemporary politics they both were. At times, it even reaches royal proportions, like monarchs, or at least elder statesmen, they look back, reminisce and give advice to their successors as they leave centre stage for the last time³⁵.

³⁵ Whereas Thatcher probably would not dream of criticizing her own colleagues, even though they brought her down, Blair attacks both his predecessors and some ex-ministers. Perhaps that is because he can hide behind the newness in his Labour and thus get away with it.

3.2. The newspaper editorials

Section 3.2.1. contains the analyses of the leader articles from *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* from November 23, 1990 – the day after Thatcher announced her retirement from number 10 Downing Street – whereas section 3.2.2. contains the analyses of the newspaper editorials from September 27, 2006, the day after Tony Blair delivered his last speech to the Labour conference as leader of the party.

The leader articles from the five different newspapers are analysed one by one. I start by analysing the down market tabloids (*The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror*), then I continue with mid market *The Daily Mail*, and the two broadsheets *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Both sections are concluded by a short summary and comparison.

As already pointed out, I will especially look for examples of polarization, how the different newspapers construct in-groups and out-groups dependent on their ideological position. Note also that quotations from the editorials are placed in inverted commas.

3.2.1. The newspapers' coverage of Thatcher's speech

Below follows an analysis of the leader articles that were printed in *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* on November 23, 1990, the day after Margaret Thatcher had publicly announced her resignation. A copy of these five editorials can be found in the appendix.

The Sun: 'Thank God for our decade of mighty Maggie'

'*The Sun* salutes a great PM'. That is the heading of *The Sun*'s editorial page the day after Margaret Thatcher announced her decision to resign and defended the Government's confidence in the House of Commons. The tabloid runs an extended one-page special tribute accompanied by a drawing, with the caption 'among the greatest', that places 'Maggie' on a pedestal alongside 'Nelson', 'Wellington', 'Churchill' and 'Monty' – and the Union Jack. The leader article is titled 'Thank God for our decade of mighty Maggie' to further underline her

greatness. However, the title not only sums up and points out *The Sun*'s message, it also forms 'a cognitive macro-structure that serves as an important strategic cue to control the way readers process and make sense of the report' (Teo 2000: 14). Firstly, it includes the element of gratitude and the feeling that deeds of evil beyond description would have taken place if it were not for 'Maggie', appropriately then, the title also puts God in the equation, as if to place the deity in the newspaper's in-group of Thatcher tributors and as a divine guardian for her Tory highness. Furthermore, the colloquial twang and the informal address add more than a touch of assumed togetherness with *The Sun* readers, the informality is applied to include 'Maggie' into their community. Finally and most importantly, the label 'mighty Maggie' presents the ousted Tory leader as an unwavering, sturdy and momentous character, a majestic Premier who has led her country by example.

The notion of an infallible and imperious leader is a recurrent theme throughout the article, the imagery is consistent and unequivocal, Thatcher is 'resolute', she is 'rock-solid', and she is forceful – she is quite simply portrayed as the incarnation of strength, both politically, physically and morally. Politically, *The Sun* says she is one of the greatest, most powerful and vigorous leaders Britain has ever had, illustrated by lexis such as the 'Thatcher Revolution', but also the passages that places her 'among the greats of history' and that her name 'will appear on every page' 'when the history of the 1980s is written'. Furthermore, she, in persona, has brought Britain from 'drifting without a rudder' to 'new heights of prosperity', her 'resolute' foreign policy has ended the Cold War and brought 'freedom' for the former Soviet satellites, and she has rebuilt Britain's reputation and influence in Europe and got a better deal in the process, and, finally, she has refused to succumb to 'aggressors', victoriously leading her country into one war and on the brink of another – one almost gets the impression that she alone has rebuilt the crumbling British empire, or at least rekindled the spirit thereof (her foreign policy 'has won again for Britain a crucial and honourable place in world counsels'). The image of strength also includes references to physical strength, she has 'fought like a tigress', she has displayed 'steely refusal' and shown 'stubborn courage' and 'sheer guts' – all excellent images considering her nickname, the Iron Lady. The wording also shows that this is a no-nonsense character who is met with due respect wherever she goes³⁶. As for her integrity, she is a moral lighthouse: 'Honesty. Principle. Vision', *The Sun* names and prizes her principal qualities. She is held in high esteem, 'she is as readily recognized' in

³⁶ She has even defeated the 'once-invincible' Arthur Scargill.

Bulgaria as in Britain. In fact, she is portrayed as morally infallible, like a living Statue of Liberty, and now one must hope that ‘her torch of freedom is taken up by someone who proves worthy of it’.

The Sun uses the word ‘revolution’ to further emphasize the complete turn-around and transformation Thatcher’s decade-long premiership has brought about. The ‘unique’ ‘Thatcher Revolution’ has ‘changed Britain for the better’. (Note that the tabloid even capitalizes the ‘r’ to make it sound like an established fact.) Again, the image of a stout, brave and vigorous PM is depicted: She ‘**ROLLED BACK** the frontiers of the State’, ‘**ROUTED** the once-invincible Arthur Scargill’, ‘**FREED** the great State industries’, ‘**SLASHED** the controls that bedevilled private enterprise’ and ‘**CUT** taxation again and again’ – this time reinforced by the use of bold majuscular catchwords to move the heart and soul of every Sun reader.

The five highlighted verbs all imply a vigorous and active agent, a person of action and firmness, and again that person is ‘mighty Maggie’. The wording is, of course, carefully chosen, with ‘rout’ *The Sun* manages to turn ‘the once-invincible Arthur Scargill’ into a evil-minded, selfish enemy, who holds ‘the country to ransom’, ‘slash’ is colloquial and could be the newspaper’s attempt to speak in a way their working class readers will be familiar with, and to sound more trustworthy when the tabloid speaks on behalf of its readers.

Furthermore, the five point list is also a brilliant example of the art of paraphrasing politically loaded concepts into public-beating material. ‘Rolling back the frontiers of the State and returning control to the people’ is almost exactly the same as ‘freeing the State industries’, which just as well could have been called by its proper name: privatization. Another euphemism is found when *The Sun* says that Maggie ‘slashed the controls that bedevilled private enterprise’, the tabloid refers to state intervention and promotes an economic laissez-faire politics. Together with the many cuts in taxation, these are policies that form the backbone of a Conservative ideology, or more precisely what today is known as Thatcherism (of which *The Sun* so boldly predicted that the history of the 1980s would be full).

‘Honesty. Principle. Vision. Stubborn courage. Sheer guts.’ The aphorisms that summarize Thatcher’s political life are plentiful. *The Sun* almost resorts to sloganizing when it comes to describing her legacy, also exemplified by the three crossheads (‘Principle’, ‘Control’ and ‘Honour’). Thatcher’s rhetoric of her being patron and guardian of democracy and freedom is

naturalized and repeated by *The Sun*, mainly by praising her political deeds but it is also spelled out directly; she ‘freed’ her own country from the loathed Scargill and brought ‘freedom’ to the people of Eastern Europe – and above all she is likened to one of the greatest symbols of freedom and democracy in our time; the Statue of Liberty.

Labour is barely mentioned in *The Sun* editorial, which almost strips the article of any overt party polarization. Instead, the polarization resides in Thatcher versus her own party. And, in the in-group alongside the great ‘Maggie’ stands *The Sun*, her ‘most steadfast, loyal friend’. The supportive tabloid uses the inclusive ‘we’ as if it speaks on behalf of a greater unit of *Sun* readers. And it is disgusted at ‘the manner of her going’, that she was ‘brought down by her own party’. Even Thatcher herself exclaimed that that was ‘cruellest thing’, and *The Sun* duly repeats her utterance. Thus, the newspaper openly disapproves of the Conservative mavericks; they are not with ‘us’ and are firmly placed in the out-group of Thatcher opponents.

Consistent with the positive self-presentation of the Thatcher in-group, there is an inherent critique of governments past, mainly aimed at presupposed Labour failings. In 1979, when the Tories took over from Labour’s James Callaghan, ‘Britain was drifting without a rudder’. There was ‘stinking rubbish’ ‘piled in the streets’, Britain had entered the Common Market ‘on their knees’, humiliated and ruined in the process, and the country was ‘held to ransom’ by the trade unions. In addition the economy was suffering from erroneous state control and Britain was open to attacks from foreign aggressors. So whereas the image of strength was preserved for ‘Mighty Maggie’, *The Sun* uses imagery from the other end of the dichotomous continuum of strong-weak to describe the leaders before her. The Britain Thatcher inherited is portrayed in stark contrast to the Britain of which she helped ‘release the energies and talents’ and thus ‘rose to new heights of general prosperity’. Thatcher’s legacy is further cemented in the closing of the leader article: ‘she deserves to be remembered with gratitude, respect and affection in the hearts of the nation’.

The Daily Mirror: ‘The only choice’

For the pro-Labour *Daily Mirror*, ‘the only choice’ after Thatcher’s downfall is for Britain to have a new general election, and ‘the only choice’ in that election is to vote for Labour and their leader Neil Kinnock. *The Mirror* comment is thus a classic example of a two-front

polarization. The Tories – and everyone associated with them – are per definition bad, whereas Labour and their gutsy leader Neil Kinnock are the materialization of everything good and constitute the in-group of the newspaper.

Mrs Thatcher herself is not overtly criticized in *The Mirror* comment, but as readers we can sense the hostility between the lines. In the editorial, the tabloid calls her ‘Mrs Thatcher’, in stark contrast to the adjacent article and page splash where she is simply referred to as ‘Maggie’. Thus, just as the technique of the informal address can be applied to exclude from as well as include into a community, formal address can produce the same effect. By calling her ‘Mrs Thatcher’, apart from common courtesy, *The Mirror* increases the distance between the Premier and her voters, especially the kind of voters who tend to read *The Mirror* (a survey shows that 60 per cent of the readers of this newspaper support Labour³⁷).

Furthermore, *The Mirror* conveys the notion that she is not in touch with reality, she has not come to terms with her resignation, her speech in the Commons was simply out of order, as she spoke ‘with the force of a Prime Minister taking office, not losing it’. *The Mirror* thus more than hints that Margaret Thatcher is no good for the British people and a person to whom someone ought to stand up³⁸.

Nevertheless, her ‘Cabinet colleagues’ are worse, indeed much worse. They are a bunch of evil, conniving ‘plotters’. They ‘panicked’ and ‘lost their nerve’ and thus ousted their no-nonsense leader. Now they gather to further dupe the electorate by forming a ‘new’ government, but there will be no such thing, *The Mirror* warns. What they will introduce, is more of the same, although in a different wrapping: ‘No amount of slick and costly window dressing ought to disguise that’. The imagery and wording are brutal: Firstly by the two adjectives ‘slick’ and ‘costly’ which stamps the Conservatives as glossy, superficial and only preoccupied with facade and image. ‘Window dressing’ is even worse; it refers to deceit and implies that behind that expensive exterior there is no substance. Heseltine, Hurd or Major might be dressed to kill, but it is only a ‘disguise’, an empty shell of more no-good policies; the three Tory musketeers all have a history of supporting Thatcher, and, ‘treacherous’ as they are, they are simply not be trusted.

³⁷ According to the MORI poll of 21,727 British adults, conducted between July and December 2004 (<http://www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2004/voting-by-readership.shtml>).

³⁸ Nevertheless, *The Daily Mirror* does nothing to tear apart her image as the Iron Lady although the tabloid clearly differs with her policies. Thus, one could argue that they, in many ways, leave her legacy as a strong and resolute leader intact.

The Mirror then repeats its call for a new election, Britain does NOT, in capital letters, need 'Michael Heseltine OR Douglas Hurd OR John Major at No 10'. In fact, the over-confident tabloid claims to hold the truth when making this assertion, that is why it 'has to be driven home'. Nevertheless, at least they put forth an argument: With Thatcher stepping down in the middle of a period of Conservative stranglehold of the parliament, it means that only the 372 Tory MPs are to decide on her successor. *The Daily Mirror* finds that extremely unfair and exclusionary, both in terms of their small number but also in terms of their positions: These are not men – or women – of the people, these are Thatcher's cronies detached from the harsh world of reality: 372 people of Britain's almost 60 millions inhabitants should not hand-pick the country's new leader, Britain 'needs' a new general election 'where ALL the people of Britain' can decide whom they want as Prime Minister.

Labour is not mentioned at all in *The Mirror* comment, except that party leader Neil Kinnock makes a guest appearance in the last paragraph. And indeed it is quite an appearance: *The Mirror*'s hero and rescuer is introduced in a boxer-like fashion; in the red corner, with 'guts and distinction', a man that 'has fought' the Iron Lady 'for years' with undaunted resilience, the indomitable NEIL KINNOCK. This is positive self-presentation, if ever there was one, and the complete opposite of the Tories' 'treacherous' transactions that will leave Britain with a PM only backed by 372 'deeply divided' MPs. *The Daily Mirror* can rest their case³⁹.

The Daily Mail: 'The final sacrifice'

As expected, the conservative *Daily Mail* is a loyal Thatcher ally even after her downfall. Their comment has only one purpose: to cement the Thatcher legacy. The mid-market tabloid is in a mood of reminiscence; it wants to dwell on things past, on work well done 'by the greatest peacetime premiership this century'. 'And what fine and glorious work it has been', *The Mail* adds. Today is a day for looking back, it will be 'soon enough tomorrow to assess the rivals who now vie to succeed her'.

³⁹ The Kinnock *The Daily Mirror* hails is the same Kinnock that *The Sun* (in)famously pictured inside a light bulb accompanied by the text 'If Kinnock wins today will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights' on the front page April 9, 1992 when he competed with John Major in the general election.

With the image of the ‘great oak’, *The Mail* carves out Thatcher’s strength, endurance, and responsibility. But ‘the woman who has given so much and done so much for Britain’ was ‘felled’ when she still had so much more to give. And even worse, she was ‘brought down’ by ‘the desertion of her own party supporters’. The conservative newspaper makes no attempt to hide its bitterness of the way her supposed loyal colleagues orchestrated her downfall, the comment therefore creates a polarization between the out-group consisting of the Tory backstabbers and the in-group with Margaret Thatcher, *The Mail* itself, and the entire nation as the tabloid attempts to speak on behalf of an embittered Britain with the repetitive use of the inclusive ‘we’. Not only has *The Mail* here established an implied readership, the tabloid addresses it by reporting the story ‘in a way that is designed to evoke one particular response, thus establishing a set of shared values, usually in opposition to another group who do not share, or who attack these values’ (Reah 2002: 35-40). For *The Daily Mail*, the conclusion is thus inevitable; the recent events are nothing less than a ‘tragedy’.

‘The final sacrifice’ is the title of the comment and *The Daily Mail* thus brings up another quality that has hitherto not been associated with the Iron Lady. The ‘stalwart’ Prime Minister who in 1980 famously stated that ‘the Lady’s not for turning’⁴⁰ has all of a sudden shown a more humble side. For once she has let her principles fall and not only turned around, she has retreated. Having said that, her motives were certainly not altruistic, ‘she surrendered her Office so that her work might live on’. She simply refused to jeopardize her post-political reputation by suffering a humiliating defeat in the leadership battle⁴¹. That would have hastened ‘trend-addicts’ and ‘novelty-mongers’ to stamp both Thatcher, her premiership, and Thatcherism as no more ‘than history’s cast-off’. Instead, she decided to bow out ‘as you would expect of her: With true grit’.

The Mail uses the latter part of their comment to pen out Thatcher’s political obituary. It is ceremonious and dignified in both contents and style. Thatcher has truly transformed Britain, but it almost sounds pompous to say that she has led the country out of the ‘slough of

⁴⁰ Thatcher made the famous comment on October 10, 1980 in a defiant speech to Conservatives at the party conference in Brighton. The quote was a riposte to speculations and demands for her to make an about-turn on counter-inflationary policies: ‘To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the U-turn, I have only one thing to say: You turn if you want to. The lady’s not for turning!’ The statement is a paraphrase of Christopher Fry’s 1949 play *The Lady’s not for Burning* and Thatcher’s clever retort to her alleged witch-like qualities. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/10/newsid_2541000/2541071.stm)

⁴¹ Note also how *The Daily Mail* reinforces the internal struggle in the Conservative party with the use of war imagery. She wanted to ‘fight on’, but could not prevail against the ‘pessimistic reports from the political front’. She was told that she ‘risked humiliating defeat’.

despond'. Like a modern-day Christian⁴², Maggie has undertaken her own progress, and rescued her nation from the sins of her predecessors, the hazards of state intervention and evil trade unions. She has moved Britain towards the Celestial City of the free market economy. Equally pretentious is the image of her having 'kicked' 'the sick man of Europe out of bed' and made him walk again. Nevertheless, the allegories are effectual and do serve to underscore the dimensions of Britain's 'recovery' under her period in office.

By highlighting the momentous transformations of Thatcher's reign, *The Daily Mail* also points to failings by governments past, which, of course, is also a sharp critique of Labour's achievements while in office during the 1970s. Thatcher's actual turnaround is depicted in an equally poetic manner, she 'banished the bureaucratic fug' and 'let in the fresh air of the free market philosophy'. The logic is shrewd, *The Daily Mail*, as is common conservative jargon, manages to present the term bureaucracy as an inherent value of Labour's socialism. Moreover, by connecting bureaucracy to 'fug', *The Mail* succeeds in making it exclusively negative. The contrast to the 'fresh air' of the free market economy is thus positive self-presentation at its best. In fact, one could almost hear a post-Kyoto Thatcher force Labour to purchase credits to pay for their emissions of bureaucratic pollution.

Whereas bureaucracy is intrinsically connected to Labour, 'freedom' and 'democracy' are per definition conservative values, as *The Daily Mail* terminology has it. And nobody holds those two notions in higher esteem than Margaret Thatcher. She is 'stalwart in defence of freedom' and did everything in her might to 'liberate' the Falklands from the 'foreign invader', including the sinking of the Argentinian gunship Belgrano which left over 300 casualties in its wake. The Falklands war is mentioned in the same breath as the government's conflict with the trade unions, as if the two events could be compared. According to the right wing tabloid they can, and Maggie thus also 'liberated' Britain 'from the tyranny of the trade union barons'.

Believe it or not, *The Daily Mail* also treats the issue of gender in their comment, but does, not surprisingly, claim that Thatcher has not competed against the odds: All that she has done, she has achieved 'not despite being a woman. But because she is a woman'. Thus, the image of her kicking 'the sick man of Europe out of bed' is one of the matriarch telling her useless

⁴² Christian is of course the protagonist of John Bunyan's 1678 allegorical novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

husband to get something done. However *The Mail* also attributes positive female qualities to her, like when she is true to her principles and refuses to be ‘subverted to the hearty embrace of chaps whose mutual interest is to make cosy deals rather than compete for the hard-earned rewards of real wealth creation’. Her refusal to cosy up to the old boys’ clubs might also have been her downfall. In the end all she got in return for her stubborn courage was a ‘relentless succession of pessimistic reports’ from her cabinet chaps⁴³.

In *The Daily Mail*’s never-ending tribute, Thatcher’s legacy is ‘priceless’. She has done nothing wrong as she has ‘fought’, ‘led’, ‘shook up’, ‘nagged’, ‘bullied’, ‘inspired’, ‘banished’, ‘let in’, ‘routed’, ‘scorned’, ‘kicked’, ‘liberated’, and ‘championed’ on behalf of the British people. This is a ‘strong’ and ‘sound’ lady that has never been ‘clubbable’ or ‘subverted’, as she has, with ‘her hallmark of courage’, ‘put the backbone back into Britain’. The impression of a vigorous, infallible and stern leader is not to be mistaken, if still in doubt, *The Daily Mail* sums up the panegyric testament as follows: ‘Quite simply, she renewed this nation’s self-respect and self-confidence’ and the 1980s will forever be ‘inseparable from her character and achievements’.

The Guardian: ‘Another closing, another show’

In contrast to the tabloid leader articles, *The Guardian* editorial discusses a broader array of issues connected to Thatcher’s resignation and it discusses them at a greater length. One reason for this is, of course, the fact that the comment itself is approximately five times as long as *The Sun* editorial and probably ten times as long as *The Mirror*’s, but the broadsheet also displays willingness to debate matters in a more civilized manner than its tabloid counterparts. Hence, whereas the tabloids, including *The Daily Mail*, tend to focus on one topic, *The Guardian* covers a variety of themes. The broadsheet starts with their interpretation of the recent events, move on to discuss Thatcher’s legacy, before it points to the challenges ahead, and which Tory PM candidate that is best suited to lead Britain in the future.

Traditionally a middle-ground to left-wing newspaper, *The Guardian* would be expected to oppose Thatcherism in particular and conservative policies in general. And there is indeed a

⁴³ The image of the firm and determined matriarch could easily be adjusted to also include the image of the big mum, the latter notion reinforced by verbs such as ‘nagged’ and ‘bullied’.

sensation of hostility towards Thatcher and her possible successors present from the very first paragraph of their comment titled 'Another closing, another show'. The enmity might be subtle at times, but some passages spell it out quite overtly. Thatcher's downfall, for instance, might have been experienced as 'the cruellest thing' by herself, but for *The Guardian* it was 'inescapable'. 'Suddenly', and at long last the newspaper adds, she herself faced the facts – and turned all the wiser in a matter of seconds. 'Suddenly', she 'listened' to her colleagues, she understood, and she realized what the word 'unity' meant – and that she had to prepare her 'valedictory oration'.

As for Thatcher's last parliamentary session, according to *The Guardian* it was all a 'show'. It was 'an occasion to remember' not because of the contents, but for her 'ebullience'. She used the Leader of the Opposition as a 'routine warming up act', 'the raucous bit part players' were almost 'groundlings'. She was the 'Star' with the capital S, as the 'groundlings' quite literally were 'slapped down'. But as she 'whooped on' with 'off the cuff' remarks like 'I'm enjoying this', Chancellor John Major 'flinched' as he clearly found Thatcher's 'show' inappropriate. Although 'the day was one of living theatre', it was also a day for 'evident personal tragedy'. The consistent use of metaphors from the world of theatre is cleverly outlined, not only is the full ensemble present, the play itself is labelled a tragedy. *The Guardian* seems to be alone in using such an imagery, which reinforces its effect, both to mar the importance of Thatcher's defence of her government, but also to highlight the increasing element of entertainment in the world of politics.

An 'evident personal tragedy', *The Guardian* labels Thatcher's last stand. That is a strong assertion, especially since it seems to imply that Thatcher herself is both the playwright, director, and star of her own tragedy. She has somehow masterminded her downfall, firstly by refusing to face the facts, then by staging a highly inappropriate farewell show; she has become a person bordering on delusion or megalomania and someone that cannot be taken seriously. Questioning someone's mental health is a common trait in the process of polarization or negative other-presentation (van Dijk 1998) and *The Guardian* here succeeds in othering Margaret Thatcher by hinting that she is not playing with a full deck.

However, *The Guardian* admits that she does undergo a 'transmutation' during her speech, perhaps the situation finally dawned on her and she refused to jeopardize her post-political reputation. At any rate, the broadsheet claims that she rids herself of the confines of being in

office and transmutes into ‘the roseate role of elder statesman’. Her rhetorical skills save the day and *The Guardian* acknowledges that she managed ‘to turn complete disaster into a kind of triumph’. Nevertheless, the comment is never in doubt: ‘it is best that she is gone’. In fact, Thatcher had become ‘a block to the future, a politician who had reached the extremities of what she could contribute’ – for a political obituary, such characteristics speak volumes of the antipathy *The Guardian* feels for the ousted Tory PM.

As for Thatcher’s legacy, it has obviously been eleven long years for *The Guardian*. Lest we forget, seems to be the message. Thatcher promised to substitute ‘discord’ with ‘harmony’ during her reign, but succeeded in neither. Instead of harmony, there is ‘only division’: ‘A bitterly divided party, and a divided nation beyond it’. And how could a leader that ‘lived and breathed discord’ rid the party of friction? As Thatcher leaves, there is no more harmony than when she arrived: ‘there seemed only gathering discord’. *The Guardian* gives Thatcher some credit for her achievements (she ‘changed many of the fatalist assumptions of Britain’), although they deem her a poser that enjoyed ‘swaggering’ in the ‘global spotlight’. But mostly the broadsheet takes pleasure in tarnishing her reputation. Her contribution to ending the Cold War is over-rated, she merely ‘mounted the crumbling barricades’. Back home she has left a ‘country returned to the toils of biting recession and mounting unemployment’ with an ever-increasing ‘gulf between rich and poor’. In fact, Thatcher is subjected to the ultimate insult in the world of politics: she is said ‘to have no vision’⁴⁴.

The critique, or othering, of the Conservative party is omnipresent throughout the article; *The Guardian* both undermines the party’s character and credibility, its achievements, and its prospect of governing Britain in the future. Firstly, the internal struggle has displayed a party with ‘intensely introverted deliberations’ unable ‘to reconcile tribal instincts with the over-riding, unappealing instinct of self-preservation’, and ‘a government hopelessly divided must serve the nation ill’. Then, there is their failure to face the real world, secluded as they are in their exclusive ‘smoking rooms and lobbies’. How can such a party by trusted, seems to be *The Guardian*’s rhetorical question. Especially since their eleven years in office has made the trade gap ‘yawn’ wider and Britain ‘plunging into a slump which every gathering speck of

⁴⁴ To add insult to injury, *The Guardian* also labels her cantankerous as she ‘had come to embrace merely what she knew she was against’ and that she seems to cultivate this quality without offering any alternative solutions.

evidence suggests may be deep and long'⁴⁵. As for Europe, there are meetings where British people 'must have something to say', as if to imply that neither Thatcher nor any of her possible successors can fill that role. What is more, *The Guardian* challenges the Conservatives' stranglehold of the notion of democracy: Britain faces far-reaching challenges and a divided bunch of Tory MPs are to make the crucial decisions 'on behalf of a haplessly disenfranchised electorate'.

The second part of *The Guardian's* editorial is devoted to an assessment of the three contenders for Thatcher's crown. The broadsheet does not really side with any of the competitors, it merely presents their candidacies. Although there are, of course, interesting passages regarding *The Guardian's* political affiliations and how its ideology is presented in the discourse, I will not dwell on their candidacies as they only indirectly touch upon how Thatcher has succeeded in her fight for her post-political legacy, which is the main scope of this section.

The Daily Telegraph: 'The best hope lies with Mr Hurd'

The Daily Telegraph presents a totally different editorial than the tabloids, as it is, predominantly, an evaluation of the three candidates fighting to succeed the ousted Thatcher. It also differs from *The Guardian's* comment as the conservative broadsheet takes a clear stance in the leadership battle; its sole intention is campaigning for Douglas Hurd's candidacy. Thus, *The Daily Telegraph* seems less interested in assessing the events that led to Thatcher's resignation, to credit her final parliamentary session, or to cement her legacy, the newspaper reserves its column purely for the important Tory leadership election to come.

One almost gets the impression that *The Daily Telegraph* refuses to discuss the highly controversial downfall of Thatcher. The up-market broadsheet will not condescend to wash more dirty laundry in public – that is way below their dignity. That leaves them with only one option; a thorough clean-up. However, all they can manage is to sweep the controversies under the carpet – and thus Heseltine's 'political assassination' still clogs the entire article, the presence of the untimely events is clearly felt throughout their constructive approach. At

⁴⁵ *The Guardian's* presents the Tory failings as well-known and factually based when little evidence is provided. The assumptions are merely presupposed to hold water.

first the unmentionable incident is referred to as recent ‘political turmoil’ and ‘difficulties’ which has left the party facing a ‘a critical moment’. However, the backcloth becomes more prominent as *The Daily Telegraph* continues, and at last it is spelled out directly as ‘the bitter and bruising leadership contest’ it was. Still, the broadsheet marks their distance from such outrageous behaviour, it has been, ‘frankly, a shoddy and unseemly crisis’ – as if they cannot accept that such an act of regicide has taken place among their trusted Tories.

Fortunately, *The Daily Telegraph* can stamp Heseltine as their nemesis. He has been the instigator of what ‘a large body of Conservatives’ sees as ‘a political assassination’. Thus, by use of this negative other-presentation, the broadsheet manages to distance themselves from the culprit who is firmly placed in the newspaper’s out-group. Heseltine would be ‘hard to forgive’, and his selection is ‘likely to make party unity impossible’. With the latter claim, *The Daily Telegraph* also accepts the presupposition that there is indeed a divided party that awaits its new leader. The editorial also insinuates that Mr Heseltine only represents a slick façade, he possesses neither substance nor principles as his popularity only ‘reflects his high national visibility’.

As for John Major, *The Daily Telegraph* brushes him aside as ‘a relative newcomer to politics’ and thus ‘untried’, claiming that even his supporters have ‘doubts about whether he is yet ready for the premiership’. Mr Hurd, however, is ‘a politician of the highest intelligence, experience and integrity’ with ‘deep-rooted decency and common sense’. Furthermore, he is ‘tough’ and has shown ‘sure-footedness under pressure’. By listing the Foreign Secretary’s numerous good qualities, but few facts to prove them, *The Daily Telegraph* indirectly criticizes the other two candidates. Towards the end of the article, this is further reinforced, first by saying that a new PM and Government should be judged by ‘what it does, rather than how it looks’ (which seems particularly aimed at Heseltine), then by belittling Hurd’s challengers by saying that ‘Mr Hurd seems to be more substantial than Mr Heseltine, more mature than Mr Major, and ultimately more politically convincing than either’⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ The only mention of Thatcher’s legacy seems to be in the penultimate paragraph where *The Daily Telegraph* states that Mr Hurd is the only one of the three contenders that has ‘the will and the ability’ ‘to sustain Mrs Thatcher’s great achievement’.

Summary of the Thatcher editorials

Given the dramatic circumstances, Thatcher's resignation was the obvious theme for the leader writers in all the British national newspapers November 23, 1990. The various newspapers have however approached the topic differently, mostly due to their diverse political affiliations. Indeed, looking for polarization in the editorials, the ideological bias becomes quite conspicuous. Tory friendly *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* thus deliver a panegyric tribute to Margaret Thatcher. They both place themselves, and the British people, firmly in the in-group alongside the ousted PM, whereas the out-group consists of the Conservative rebels – and the Labour party if they have to be included at all. *The Daily Mirror* looks ahead in their comment. The pro-Labour tabloid wants a new election, a new course, and a new leader; for them the polarization is between the good Labour party on the one hand, and everybody associated with the Conservatives on the other. As for the broadsheets, they approach the matter differently. *The Guardian's* long editorial handles a number of topics, spanning from the recent events, Thatcher's legacy, the challenges ahead, to the battle for her crown, but throughout the article there is an unmistakable sensation of hostility towards the Conservative party. However, it is not obvious who constitutes the in-group of the newspaper. Labour is not mentioned at all, neither are the Liberal Democrats, but, traditionally and based on their ideological opposition of Thatcherism, these two parties seem likely candidates for membership in *The Guardian's* in-group. Whereas the right wing *Daily Mail* chooses to ignore the leadership battle completely, the conservative broadsheet, *The Daily Telegraph*, exclusively focuses on who is best suited to follow Margaret Thatcher. Their editorial is an assessment of the three combatants fighting to move into number 10 Downing Street. Although *The Daily Telegraph's* world might not be black and white, they are far too civilized to indulge in such categorization, the broadsheet does create a polarization between Douglas Hurd and Michael Heseltine, where the newspaper itself and the respectable Conservatives should all be giving their support to the former.

There are more differences between the tabloids (including *The Daily Mail*) and the broadsheets than just the length of the leader articles and the number of topics treated. The former use language in a markedly different manner than their up-market counterparts. Especially *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror* excel in colloquialisms and in using informal nicknames of even the most prominent characters, their style tend to be more outraged and emotive than the more argumentative and well-considered columns in the broadsheets.

However, I will discuss the notion of tabloidese as well as the differences between the lingo used in the tabloids and the more high-brow jargon of the up-market papers at a greater length in the summary of this chapter (3.3.).

Although Thatcher's defence of the confidence of the government was a memorable performance, it is not the main topic of the editorials the following day. Perhaps the speech was held too late the evening before, or the dramatic circumstances that led to her downfall demanded more attention, at any rate the editorials scarcely comment directly on the proceedings in the Commons the previous day. *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* write tributary political obituaries, *The Daily Mirror* stubbornly refuses to face reality with their insistence on a new general election, whereas *The Daily Telegraph* focuses solely on the leadership contest. Only *The Guardian* comments on her speech in the Commons, but not even the respected broadsheet discusses Thatcher's own summary of her premiership, it simply brands it a show⁴⁷. Although Thatcher's fight for her post-political reputation is not found worthy of enormous acres of editorial space the following day, she could still sit back and enjoy her loyal friends in *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* do most of the job for her with their panegyric tributes. So be it then, that *The Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian* emphatically expresses their antipathy.

3.2.2. Analysis of the newspapers' coverage of Blair's speech

The leader articles analysed below are collected from *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* on September 27, 2006, the day after Tony Blair had delivered his last speech to the Labour party conference as leader of the party. The full text of all the editorials could be found in the appendix.

The Sun: 'Labour will miss Blair when the tears have dried'

Populist, but Labour supportive, *The Sun* takes a clear pro-Blair stance in their extended editorial the day after Blair's speech at the party conference in Manchester. And in the black and white world of a popular tabloid newspaper, the editorial writer is eager to create a

⁴⁷ It must be added that I have not included a study of the newspapers in question from the days prior to her resignation or the editions from the immediate aftermath of her stepping down.

polarized account of the Labour conference, of Tony Blair versus his own party, not to mention Blair versus Gordon Brown.

This polarization is shown in the lexical choice used to describe the combatants. Tony Blair is portrayed like a king, he is ‘the most successful leader’⁴⁸, a great orator and politician who ‘rescued’ his party from ‘18 years in Opposition’⁴⁹. He is ‘stern’ when needed, but mostly ‘warm’ and generous. Clearly, the lexis used to describe his fellow party members are of a different character. They are the mob who have ‘forced’ and ‘bundled’ Blair out of office in a ‘monstrous act of ingratitude’. They are ‘executioners’ who have committed an ‘act of regicide’. They have quite simply ‘gone stark staring mad’. It is a classic example of polarization, of setting two groups/ persons up against each other, where Tony Blair is associated with positive values such as great leadership, democracy and rationality, and ‘they’ with mob rule, violence and irrationality.

The tone is set immediately, the intro, in bold, consisting of the populist rhetorical question ‘Has Labour gone stark staring mad?’ Neither does *The Sun* beat around the bush when it says that Labour delegates committed a ‘monstrous act of ingratitude’. The quotation serves to remind us of what a compressed noun-phrase structure can do in the tabloidese language. According to Conboy (2003), ‘the compressed nominal phrase is the predominant tabloid agenda-setting instrument and, in its influence, on sound-bite political campaigning, this linguistic device has profound implications for the public sphere. It acts to destabilize deference for the political process, as well as the politicians personally involved, thus fulfilling, after a fashion, the newspaper’s traditional role as watchdog, but with a more populist, irreverent agenda’ (Conboy 2003: 46) – and nobody does this better than Britain’s number one selling tabloid, *The Sun*.

The tabloid not only describes the Labour members as madmen, the newspaper also labels them ‘executioners’ to highlight their calculated evilness⁵⁰ and active role in Blair’s resignation. What *The Sun* does, then, is to compare the target enemy (the Labour mob) to

⁴⁸ Quotations from the editorials are placed in inverted commas throughout this section.

⁴⁹ The description almost reaches biblical proportions here, one can formally see Labour wandering around without direction, spending years in Opposition, reinforced by that capital O, before the God-sent Blair, like a modern day Moses, rescued them from years in the political wilderness.

⁵⁰ They are almost depicted as sadistic as they take great satisfaction from their political assassination, although they were denied the ‘pleasure’ of tears from the PM.

another, certified enemy (the hangman) to further dehumanize and verbally outcast the out-group (van Dijk 1998: 59-60).

Irrational as the Labour dissidents may be, the article is still quick to point out that they are responsible agents. Otherwise it will be impossible to attribute the negative actions to their name. Hence, the Labour members who have ‘forced’ Blair out of office, which is in itself a contestable assumption, are seen as consciously, intentionally and cynically aware of what they did and of the consequences of their actions, even if these actions at the same time may be branded irrational or even crazy (van Dijk 1998: 58). However, in this article, *The Sun* doubts if they really have grasped the full ramifications of their deeds. The reference to how the Tories ‘brought down’ Margaret Thatcher in 1990 should act as a reminder: That act ‘sowed the seeds of their own destruction’ – as if *The Sun* is more than implying that Blair’s exit could be Labour’s downfall⁵¹.

Many of the conference delegates must have been sharing this assumption, or getting second thoughts during Blair’s ‘headmasterly’ and flawless farewell – or perhaps it was simply double standards that led to the standing ovations, the tears and the pleas for him to stay. At any rate, it is ‘too late now comrades’, as *The Sun* puts it. Note the lexical choice of ‘comrades’, a word particularly associated with communism or left-wing socialism, an expression that serves to further cement the Labour crowd in the negatively connotated out-group: *The Sun* would never embrace such values.

Being a tabloid newspaper, *The Sun* thrives on political conflicts and feuds. That is probably one reason why the article also creates a polarization between the PM and his Chancellor, Gordon Brown. Whereas Blair paid tribute to Brown’s ‘remarkable’ contribution, there was ‘no endorsement of Gordon as successor’ or even a handshake afterwards. Hence, *The Sun* focuses on what was omitted, what was left out of Blair’s last performance – and that the two friends, or is it rivals, are currently on different wavelengths. Furthermore, *The Sun* makes it shinningly obvious that Blair is different class than his possible successor. Blair not only ‘utterly eclipsed the Chancellor’s own low-key speech the previous day’, he was a ‘maestro’ compared to the barely competent Mr Brown. What really gives *The Sun*’s opinion of Gordon Brown away is the fact that the newspaper believes Tory leader David Cameron is ‘the only

⁵¹ Applying Wodak’s argumentation theory, one could say that *The Sun* uses the topos of history: Labour is about to repeat the mistake the Tories made in 1990 when ousting Margaret Thatcher.

man breathing a sigh of relief' after Blair's resignation – he knows that whoever follows Blair, the odds for a Tory election victory have plummeted.

Although *The Sun* sings the praises for Blair's speech and his premiership, the newspaper dismisses his supposed success over immigration and crime as 'cheeky'⁵², implying that the claim is not only wrong, it is both insolently bold, impudent and shows that Blair has got some nerve when giving his account of reality. Ideologically, this is not a surprising statement from *The Sun*, a newspaper that has an agenda of its own and that has fronted numerous campaigns to be tough on crime.

Even though *The Sun* has a couple of reservations (as shown above), with respect to the war in Iraq, the tabloid and Tony Blair are equally supportive. The newspaper thus applauds his decision to take the party 'head-on over the issue', not only without remorse, but even without a 'hint of apology' (my emphasis). By stating that Iraq was the 'issue that cost him his job', *The Sun* expands the gap between the Labour mob and their commander: they made him retreat for all the wrong reasons. And, what is more, Blair himself 'doesn't want to go'. According to *The Sun*, Blair believes he could have won an unprecedented fourth term, a victory which is now jeopardized by his forced resignation. Nevertheless, Blair the warrior may be on his way out, but he is not defeated, as shown by the 'swipes' he made at maverick ex-ministers, and the way he 'tore the Tories' to pieces with a dozen of 'searing' sentences.

He bows out in style, according to *The Sun*. In 'the speech of his life', the PM was a 'maestro', 'pitch perfect with lots of funny lines' as he 'played skilfully' on the audience. The imagery is borrowed from the entertainment industry with Blair being portrayed as an actor, artist or musician, an out-and-out entertainer. Using such an imagery, *The Sun* implicitly says that politics contains more than an element of entertainment, politicians are showpeople ('they smile when they are low'⁵³) in an ever-increasing focus on form rather than contents. If we are to follow this analogy, politics is but a game, where the world, quite literally, becomes a stage and politicians merely players who get their performances duly rated by the critics and reviewers in the media after their shows. The showbiz vocabulary is equally present in the other editorials as well, and I will return to this issue in the summary of this section.

⁵² *The Sun* might contest this claim, but they accept the implicit link between the two concepts.

⁵³ From the song 'There's no business like showbusiness' from the musical *Annie get your gun*.

The Daily Mirror: 'Make Blair dream live'

The pro-Labour, but anti-Iraq war, *Daily Mirror* has the shortest leader article concerning Blair's farewell speech of the five newspapers under scrutiny. *The Mirror* also produces the least controversial article with virtually no polarization; in their world it is all a bed of roses.

From the very start with the interjection 'phew', it is obvious that this article serves only one purpose: to pay tribute to what they consider a great and historic Prime Minister. Breathlessly, the leader writer hails Blair's 'performance' – and his nine-year-premiership. None of the controversial issues he addressed are worthy of a mention in *The Daily Mirror*, their piece is simply a one-sided defence of the legacy of Tony Blair, vividly shown in their choice of title: 'Make Blair dream live'.

The only tiny gap in *The Mirror*'s closed ranks around Blair's policies is the modifier 'largely' in the claim that the PM 'has changed Britain largely for the better over the past nine years'. In what seems like a gentlemen's agreement, those disputable changes are quietly omitted: Don't mention the war seems to be, quite literally, *The Daily Mirror*'s policy. After all, this is Blair's farewell party, his swansong, his political obituary if you like, and a tributary poem is more appropriate according to the courteous tabloid.

However, behind the smiley facade, the Conservatives lurk. And *The Mirror* reminds their readers that whereas there might be a 'battle' for Blair's 'crown', the Tories are still, and will always be one might add, the overarching 'enemy'. Thus, the newspaper does flirt with polarization, the in-group, 'us' Labour voters, are contrasted with the out-group, the 'toff' Tories. Note especially, the use of the adjective 'toff' to describe David Cameron and his Conservatives. That one word really says it all, it is economical language at its best: it derogatorily brands the Tories snobbish, and it categorizes them as upper middle class, if not upper class, with absolutely no bonds to the ordinary man in the street. *The Daily Mirror* thus manages to create a union, not only with all their Labour readers, but the newspaper also offers an outstretched hand to all the readers from the working class and lower middle class.

Ideally, the aristocratic snobs of the Conservatives should, as Blair himself pointed out, be easy to 'take apart' – if not, the Labour party should not be in the 'politics business' at all. This is 'spot-on' according to *The Mirror*, and again a reference to Conboy's tabloidese

seems appropriate. ‘Spot-on’ and ‘toff’ might not be slang, but they are definitely colloquialisms and in this setting they seem to serve the same function as slang: They ‘appear to endorse the impression that the outrage expressed by the tabloid is spontaneous and in keeping with the model of a public whose language it claims to share’ (Conboy 2003: 53).

Like its tabloid counterpart, *The Daily Mirror* also depicts Tony Blair as the undisputed leader, the king, on the one hand, and as an entertainer, a ‘showman’ on the other. However, it is the latter imagery which is fully explored: This was ‘a superb performance’ by ‘the showman Prime Minister’, he was ‘funny’ and ‘emotional’ and delivered ‘a barnstormer of a speech’ – for which he got ‘fully deserved’ ‘standing ovations’. As this imagery was common for all the five articles, I will return to the subject in the summary of this chapter.

The Daily Mail: ‘Rhetoric and reality in Blair’s Britain’

The Daily Mail is by far the most Blair critical of the selected newspapers. With their right wing political orientation, *The Daily Mail* applies an extreme pattern of an ‘us versus them’ ideology in the editorial – where, as opposed to the down market tabloids, Tony Blair and the Labour party constitute the out-group.

Already in the title, ‘Rhetoric and reality in Blair’s Britain’, *The Daily Mail* reveals their ideological stance. The newspaper manages to create a huge gulf between the concepts of ‘rhetoric’ and ‘reality’ – what Blair says is merely empty words devoid of any meaning whatsoever, as they are completely removed from the real world, his rendition nothing to do with the naked truth. The mismatch between these two notions is further reinforced by the doubleness implicit in the noun phrase ‘Blair’s Britain’; it serves to remind the readers that this is indeed Blair’s view, a view which *The Daily Mail* claims has little foundation in facts, it is not objective at all. Thus, one might conclude that the newspaper has succeeded in fulfilling what Teo (2000) claims is the function of the headline: ‘to form a cognitive macro-structure that serves as an important strategic cue to control the way readers process and make sense of the report’, ‘it encapsulates an ideology that biases the reader to one particular reading, thereby subjugating all other possible interpretations of the news story’ (Teo 2000: 14).

However, ostensibly, *The Daily Mail* starts off with praising Tony Blair. 'His delivery was simply brilliant', it 'was a vintage performance' from 'the greatest actor-politician of our time'. At first glance, these are positive characteristics of the premier (and probably a clever way to get their readers amiably inclined towards Blair, and therefore make the following degradation more effectual), but, if we examine the wording more closely, the intended message seems to be quite the contrary. Note especially, that it was his 'delivery' and his 'performance' that were 'brilliant' and 'vintage', an assessment of the contents of Blair's speech is shrewdly omitted. Also his authenticity is questioned, he is only 'oozing sincerity' as the 'actor-politician' or the artful dodger of political oratory he is.

Having already cast doubts on his political achievements, *The Daily Mail* continues by spelling it out in explicit terms, Tony Blair is no statesman; he is Britain's nemesis, a demented madman and megalomaniac. With Tony Blair firmly placed in the right-wing newspaper's out-group, the rest of the article is a notorious attempt to other the Labour PM even further. Firstly, they make clear that the contents of his speech were 'utter, Alice in Wonderland make-believe', suggesting that Blair is now 'totally in the grip of self-delusion'⁵⁴. Questioning a person's sanity is a common trait when othering an opponent and *The Daily Mail* consistently make use of such imagery: Tony Blair is not only unstable, he has quite simply 'lost the plot', he lives in a 'fantasy world' and is thus a threat to Britain.

The Daily Mail continues their negative other-presentation by branding him a boastful, 'hypocritical', delusive, 'risible' and poisonous spin doctor. One could of course claim that many of these qualities are contradictory as it is indeed difficult to be both a deranged maniac and a calculated evil-doer at the same time, but Daily Mail's point is nevertheless taken. He is also sinister (by closing hospitals earmarked for the constituencies of his political opponents) and dangerous ('the Armed forces' must 'pay such a heavy price for his posturing on the world stage') and thus a threat not only to Britain but the world, where he is 'distrusted' and 'ignored'. Moreover, he is spineless and has no 'leverage left', in fact he has become US President Bush's 'lapdog'. This one-sided negative presentation of Tony Blair is almost too much, it creates an effect of over-lexicalization, it 'results when a surfeit of repetitious, quasi-

⁵⁴ When the Mail points out what they consider to be a huge gap between the PM's rhetoric and reality, they are of course using exactly the same rhetorical devices and the same pattern of polarization as Blair, often in even harsher words than the premier.

synonymous terms is woven into the fabric of news discourse, giving rise to a sense of “over-completeness” in the way participants in the news discourse are described’ (Teo 2000: 20).

‘Blair’s Britain’ is described in equally negative lexis as all the facts he presented are contested. In the ‘filthy wards’ of ‘our’ hospitals ‘lethal superbugs flourish’, British graduates are not the best educated ever, OECD reports show that Britain is ‘plummeting’ compared to other nations, and crime has not fallen, ‘violent crime is up for the seventh year in a row’. Then, *The Daily Mail* lists all the facts Blair did not mention. According to the newspaper, ‘all inconvenient facts were ignored or turned on their heads’. There was ‘no mention’ of the importance of stable families, ‘not a squeak about’ the pressures of mass immigration or the ‘scandal’ of an ‘inept’ Home Office that ‘lets killers loose instead of deporting them’, and he ‘didn’t think to mention’ the hospital closures all over the land. *The Daily Mail* even claims that ‘nothing is true or worth saying unless it suits Tony Blair’ – how appropriate, it concludes, for his ‘politics of mendacity and poison’⁵⁵.

The Daily Mail, like their fellow Conservative Margaret Thatcher, also tries to brand Labour undemocratic and full of internal plotting and conspiracies. They claim Blair’s wife Cherie and the ‘equally unelected’ Peter Mandelson ‘indulged in yet more back-stabbing’ of Blair’s likely successor Gordon Brown, fittingly enough, as Blair’s ‘reign’ is one of ‘cronyism, sleaze and spin’.

The leader article is also packed with irony, as when *The Daily Mail* exclaims ‘Nice Labour touch, that’ when talking about hospital closures, or when listing the bad things about the NHS, *The Daily Mail* suddenly cries out, ‘Oh yes’, there is even more. Being an advocate of traditional conservative values, the newspaper is also morally disgusted on behalf of its readers of Blair’s supposed ‘hypocrisy’, his ineptness and his ‘mendacity’: ‘How dare he say’, the article exclaims at one point and one could practically see the writer’s raised warning finger. The conservative *Daily Mail* even includes God in their in-group, ‘why in God’s name’ doesn’t Blair protect his soldiers. In fact, there was only one sentence *The Daily Mail* could applaud, with which they could fully agree, which they believed ‘rang with truth’, and

⁵⁵ *The Daily Mail* accuses Tony Blair of positive self-presentation, whereas the newspaper itself consistently uses the flipside of the technique, negative other-presentation, in their article. I cannot but think that this sounds a bit hollow, and perhaps even hypocritical.

which they could not see fulfilled soon enough: It was, of course, when Blair said ‘it’s right to let go’.

The Guardian: ‘The long goodbye’

The Guardian editorial, titled ‘The long goodbye’⁵⁶, is much more balanced than its tabloid counterparts. With its supposed left-wing leaning, the up-market newspaper is perhaps inclined to Blair sympathies, but it also goes a long way in criticizing him. However, from the start, it is all more than rosy. Blair is quite simply portrayed as a grand statesman. He excels with his ‘oratory and intellect’, but without falling for populist shortcuts (he has a ‘political purpose’, ‘his ambition for change run deep’) and could safely be ‘placed in history’: ‘For a moment’, he even ‘raised politics above the merely temporal’.

In fact, *The Guardian*’s description of Blair almost reaches biblical proportions. ‘Shining the bright beam’ of his oratory and intellect, Tony Blair ‘illuminated’ New Labour’s achievements while leaving its weaknesses ‘in the shadows’. Moreover, as he ‘outshone’ anything else at the conference, we can virtually see the halo above his head. Added to his already ‘majestic’ figure, the light imagery conveys the notion of a modern day Jesus who has ‘swept back into’ the heart of his disciples, and who is now on the eve of his ascension (he managed to ‘climb above’ trivial questions and ‘raised’ politics above the merely temporal). The saviour has not only won over his doubters, he knows ‘he has achieved significant things’ and gives ‘a lesson’ of things to come: They ‘are the future now’ and must complete his work.

The positive presentation of Blair turns a bit sour after the first few paragraphs. Perhaps *The Guardian* makes use of the common media dramaturgy of first building someone up, before breaking them down. So when *The Guardian* continues by saying that although captain Blair ‘steered clear’ of many politically hazardous rocks in his speech, he has been hampered by an ‘undercurrent of evasiveness’, and some of his wrong-doings are so significant that ‘they will determine how he is seen by history’. And not even the ‘artifice’ he deployed in his farewell speech will prove sufficient ‘to hide his failings’ when his legacy is to be decided.

⁵⁶ Note also that the *Guardian* calls their editorial ‘The long goodbye’, an echo of 1973 film adaptation of Raymond Chandler’s novel by the same name, a film that, according to Daniel O’Brien and Wikipedia, is ‘a study of a moral and decent man cast adrift in a selfish, self-obsessed society where lives can be thrown away without a backward glance ... and any notions of friendship and loyalty are meaningless’ ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Long_Goodbye_\(film\)\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Long_Goodbye_(film))).

But as an entertainer and showman Blair is still the best in the business. ‘He conversed with his party in a way no other British politician can’. The ‘pounding music’ that accompanied his ‘rock-star encore’ topped a brilliant ‘delivery’ and ‘performance’; it was ‘a piece of theatre that ranked with his best: skilled, forceful and focused’⁵⁷. Amidst all the ‘drama’, Labour would surely miss their star performer, but they would still know that his timing was right, *The Guardian* concludes.

The Guardian is in its most critical mode when it comes to the Iraqi war and Blair’s justification is labelled ‘slippery’ and untrue, which in fact, following the logic of the topos of name-interpretation, brands him a liar. Although it seems that Blair may have succeeded, as was his intent, to glorify his premiership and thus his post-political reputation in this historic speech, his leniency with truth and his lack of humility would be his eventual downfall, *The Guardian* claims. And history ‘will prove insufficient to hide his failings’, is their brute verdict.

Polarization as such is not overtly present in *The Guardian*’s leader article. The newspaper presents, as we have seen, a balanced version of Blair and his premiership. The article does, however, acknowledge the grudges between Blair and his party, Blair and Brown, as well as the political battle between Blair and David Cameron’s Tories. However, in contrast to the tabloid newspapers, *The Guardian* does not side with any of the combatants; the newspaper simply comments soberly on the troubled relationships.

The Daily Telegraph: ‘Blair’s swansong shows he’s a tough act to follow’

The Daily Telegraph is the best-selling newspaper of the British broadsheets, or the papers included in the up-market category, with a certified average daily circulation of almost 900,000⁵⁸. Its conservative allegiance seems equally certified, both among the majority of its readers⁵⁹ and amongst its commentators and leader writers. In fact, *The Telegraph*, or the ‘Torygraph’ as the British satirical magazine *Private Eye* tends to call it, has the biggest

⁵⁷ Note also the word ‘ranked’, it draws our attention towards the reviewer. The editorial, thus, just like a theatre critic, evaluates the ‘performance’ and rate it according to previous ‘shows’.

⁵⁸ According to the British Audit Bureau of Circulations.

⁵⁹ According to the Mori readership survey conducted in 2004, see <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2004/voting-by-readership.shtml> for more details.

discrepancy in political affiliation among its readers, with 61 per cent Tory voters compared to only 15 per cent Labour supporters.

Nevertheless, the conservative broadsheet is, ostensibly, quick both to acknowledge and give credit to Blair's political capacity. However, a closer scrutiny of the text discloses that the Blair praise is really a zero-sum game on Labour's behalf. For every acclaim Blair gets, Chancellor Brown is discredited (Blair's speech 'was everything that Gordon Brown's the day before had not been'). Actually, they insinuate that Blair's address was tailor-made to 'point up to the chancellor's weaknesses' and that 'it would not be difficult to construe some of Mr Blair's remarks as acute observations on the capacity, not to say character, of his presumed successor'. Thus, Blair is all of a sudden responsible for character assassination, his attack is 'aimed' directly at 'well-known' Brown failings', the Chancellor is neither loyal, nor a man of the people – and this is presupposed as a fact, something that everybody knows⁶⁰. The broadsheet even questions Blair's 'one homage' to Brown and claims that it 'sounded ambivalent and rather gnomic'. Thus, they cleverly manage to include Tony Blair in the in-group of Brown critics, which obviously does Labour more harm than gain.

Blair's claim that he and Labour have changed the country to the better is not acknowledged by *The Daily Telegraph*. The only thing they can see he has changed is the electoral prospects of the Labour party. They do, however, recognize his political moves that seem to adapt well with a conservative ideology (his focus on individualism and consumer interests). On the other hand, it is not obvious that these were Blair's intended aims. Perhaps it is only *The Daily Telegraph's* interpretations that go down well with conservative values, and that these interpretations have been construed to suit their own interests. As for the PM's foreign policy, they applaud him for being direct and 'courageous' (no surprise, as the Iraqi war was approved by *The Daily Telegraph*), and even say that Blair delivered a 'well-aimed attack' on the 'inadequacies' of David Cameron's opposition programme. *The Daily Telegraph* notes that Blair tore into David Cameron's weaknesses with 'painful acuity', the wording really gives away newspaper's political allegiance. Luckily, they conclude, this was the 'swansong' of 'the proven winner' – otherwise Labour would have won a fourth election victory 'easily under his leadership'.

⁶⁰ The Telegraph also implies that Blair's wife Cherie actually called Brown a liar the day before, and it serves as further evidence of the presumed bitter feud between the two men.

Summary of the Blair editorials

The five newspapers analysed in this section all approach Tony Blair's speech differently. The element of polarization is present throughout, with the possible exception of *The Guardian*, but the in-groups and out-groups vary according to the newspaper's political stance. So whereas *The Sun* sides with Blair against the Labour dissidents that forced him out, *The Mirror* is pro-Blair, but sees the Tories as the enemy. The table is turned when it comes to *The Daily Mail*, for them the Conservative party constitutes the in-group and Tony Blair is consistently 'othered'. For the broadsheets, the polarization is more subtle and balanced. Nevertheless, my analysis shows that *The Daily Telegraph* includes Blair in their in-group in a sly attack on Chancellor Brown. *The Guardian* remains very much in balance, and can certainly not unequivocally embrace Blair's legacy, although they do applaud many of his qualities.

Comparing these five editorials, I find the differences between the tabloids (including *The Daily Mail*) and the broadsheets (including *The Guardian* in their new berliner format) quite conspicuous. Not only do the two up-market newspapers contain longer editorials, they use more complex language, more imagery, their arguments are subtler and more balanced, and they are more interested in the contents of Blair's speech than their tabloid counterparts. In the three tabloids, the editorials are shorter, even though *The Sun* has an extended version, they rely on a more colloquial and vernacular style, the polarization is sharper thus making the language more emotive. In sum they are true to what can be referred to as tabloidese, a term that will be more thoroughly discussed in the next section (3.3).

3.2.3. Summary and comparison of the editorials

Conboy (2003: 45-46) describes the language of the tabloid press as influenced by vernacular and everyday language, but to such an extent that it has developed a distinctive style of demotic speech. '[It] has stylised working class language into parody ... ever unbridling the radical conscience that, once, had helped its readers to recognize and accept their own political responsibility' (Smith 1975: 238 qtd in Conboy 2003: 45). And this shift has prompted the readers to willingly participate in it as a more playful form of identification, perhaps as a retreat from the homogeneity of class identities. Tabloids like *The Sun* also use

poetics in public language as an enactor of community, not only for working class readers, if we are to believe Fowler (1991):

Interestingly, *The Sun* indulges in ‘poetic’ structures in places where it is being at its most outrageous about politics or sex. Cues are foregrounded to the point of self-parody. Deplorable values are openly displayed, pointedly highlighted; even a critical reader can be disarmed by pleasure in the awfulness of the discourse
(Fowler 1991: 45 qtd in Conboy 2003: 46)

The vernacular voice in the tabloid editorials is often coupled with cultural allusions from everyday life or vivid use of imagery, resulting in the collapse of complex arguments into a one-liner point-of-view, like when *The Daily Mail* considers Cherie’s supposed remark to put ‘an authentic seal of [Blair’s] reign of cronyism, sleaze and spin’. Furthermore, by dividing the world into caricatured, black-and-white, either-or categories, the tabloids take part in a narrowing of cultural and linguistic reference. It results in a cultural compression, with a set of fixed and predictable allusions to the way the world works. Consequently, in such a compressed style of debate any rational political debate implodes (Conboy 2003: 46-47).

Typical of the tabloids is that their language often shifts from reporting to an engaged, if not enraged, personalization of the political sphere. *The Daily Mail*, for instance, is morally disgusted on behalf of its readers and thus their editorial becomes a ‘voice of popular, carnival disrespect and irreverent jesting and flippancy’, but ‘one which is often employed to serve the ends of powerful groups whose interests overlap with the frustrations and annoyance of a more excluded/ marginal political class’ (Conboy 2003: 47).

Another striking element present in all the five Blair-editorials, regardless of whether the newspapers are supportive or critical towards the Prime Minister, is the use of imagery from the world of entertainment. In the Thatcher comments, only *The Guardian* uses such imagery, although it is used consistently and coherently in the one paragraph it was found. Nevertheless, it seems like *The Guardian* has different motives for using theatre metaphors than the newspapers of today. Based on my relatively small corpus, it does not seem that such imagery was the norm when describing politics in 1990. In *The Guardian*, it seems like the metaphors are used for literary effect, in order to create an analogy that was then more noticeable and original than today. This confirms my hypothesis that not only has the role of politicians changed, so has the way the newspapers cover politics.

In the Blair-editorials the showbiz imagery seems more widespread, it is used both by the tabloids and the broadsheets, as if it has become an accepted jargon when covering politics. Politicians are, quite consistently, depicted as actors or artists, they deliver ‘funny lines’, ‘good jokes’ and ‘political gags’, the latter, of course, not being gags about politicians as one might expect, but a politician delivering gags. The showbiz imagery almost conveys the impression that politics is all about acting, it is nothing but a show. This lexical cohesion, defined as ‘the overt linguistically-signalled relationship between propositions’ (Widdowson 1978: 31 qtd in Teo 2000: 31), is cleverly executed by the editorial writers. Teo (2000) argues that this deliberate interplay, or repetition, of lexical items that are collocationally related, adds another level of meaning that supersedes the sense of what each word in isolation can create.

In this way, lexical cohesion transcends its cohesive role as textual linkers and assumes a role in the ideational function of language, re-shaping and re-contextualizing meaning and experience. This view of lexical cohesion shades into the realm of metaphors which can have the effect of re-structuring our thinking, causing us to perceive ‘reality’ in a new light
(Teo 2000: 34)

As Fairclough (1998: 142) argues, political discourse is an ‘order of discourse’ which is continually changing within wider processes of social and cultural change, and in turn affecting the media themselves as well as other social domains which are linked to them. This could help explain why the newspapers are using slightly different vocabulary when reporting from Tony Blair’s speech than they were when Thatcher bowed out some 16 years earlier. In fact, the extended use of theatre imagery in the newspapers might be seen as an example of what Fairclough (2001: 127) calls restructuring or rescaling, where new structural relations are being established between domains of social life. In media’s coverage of Tony Blair’s speech, the order of discourse used in political reporting is heavily leant towards the reviewer’s style; there has been a restructuring of relations between the field of showbiz and the field of political reporting, which involves an extensive colonization of the latter by the former.

However, what is problematic about the extent of theatrical imagery in the editorials is that one might, to a certain extent, claim that this is a just observation: Politicians of today could be seen as actors, they are constantly on stage performing in order to please their audiences and are duly reviewed and rated by the media after the show. Extensive television coverage and massive PR campaigns also serve to erase the boundaries between the two fields, and, not to forget, so do a few high-profile actors that have turned politicians; former US President

Ronald Reagan and current California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to name but a couple.

Or it could be said that this is a willed development from members of the ‘politics business’. After all, Tony Blair, as *The Daily Mail* puts it, could be seen as one of the ‘greatest actor-politicians of our time’ and when he is delivering jokes and funny lines accompanied by pounding music, which signal is he then transmitting? What other metaphors or imagery could possibly be used to describe him? El Refaie (2001) supports this assumption: ‘Research into metaphors must always take the socio-political context into consideration, and that use of metaphors cannot be seen in isolation from the interests and motivations of the main discourse participants’ (El Refaie 2001: 368).

Perhaps then, with the newspaper industry becoming increasingly obsessed with entertainment, portraying political affairs as a theatre is a willed development from the editors and owners of the media conglomerates as well. According to Conboy (2003: 48), entertainment and information go hand in hand in the language of the popular press, where for instance *The Sun* has developed a lingo ‘positioned at a particularly productive intersection between the formation of an idiom of vernacular English and the politics of the popular’. Combined with portraying politics as a battle and progress as a journey, the entertainment vocabulary does indeed serve the press well: The showbiz imagery provides the entertainment, whereas the war and battle metaphors add conflict and create a polarized world, and the journey metaphor applies the necessary means to explain abstract politics in a concrete and comprehensible manner.

But: ‘When conventional metaphors are constantly repeated, this, in turn, seems to act as a frame for the way in which events and groups of people are perceived’ (El Refaie 2001: 368).

Teo (2000) agrees:

[O]ne way by which the people’s hearts and minds could be changed is through constant exposure to discourse that tints our perceptions in a subtle, almost subliminal way. Discourse, especially the sort that we encounter everyday, in an almost routine and hence unremarkable way, can change our perceptions and attitudes regarding people, places and events and therefore becomes a potentially powerful site for the dominance of minds
(Teo 2000: 9)

Applied to this thesis, what they are saying is that when newspapers are portraying politicians as entertainers, they are implying that this is a legitimate comparison, a comparison that, in

turn, might perfectly well be adopted by the public. ‘Put simply, how we categorize a social group affects the way we perceive and relate to them. The ideological significance of this is that the less evaluative and more factual generalizations appear, the less questionable and more naturalized they become’ (Teo 2000: 17)⁶¹.

However, we must keep in mind that a metaphorical mapping could also distort, because such mappings are over-simplifications. Life, of course, is inherently more complicated and complex than a literal journey, as politics, of course, is a much more complicated and far-reaching matter than mere theatre. Aspects of the topic are lost, and an artificially simple understanding of it is suggested (Deignan 2005: 23). In a broader perspective, this could be said about certain sections of the tabloid press in general: the big picture is lost when entertainment, personification, constructed conflicts and over-simplified abstractions get to dominate the columns.

When such an influential industry as the written press chooses showbiz vocabulary to describe politics, it will affect not only how we, as readers, understand and relate to politicians, but it will give us a new and appropriate terminology in which to discuss the topic. After all, the five newspapers in question have a presumed readership of more than 20 million people – every day⁶². ‘If all metaphors present a partial picture, then the frequent metaphors of a community must contribute to a collective bias in understanding the world’, Deignan (2005: 24) argues. This could have ‘a normative and reinforcing effect, limiting our understanding as well as developing it’ (ibid). What she notes seems unavoidable, not least because both media’s use and the public’s perception of metaphors are sometimes conducted unconsciously.

So for Tony Blair’s eventual successor, or any other aspiring politician, there seems to be, similar to young Luke Skywalker, only one thing to hope for: Metaphors be with you.

⁶¹ However, we must keep in mind that Teo here talks about ethnic minorities that are consistently being ‘othered’ in the press. Newspapers still tend to draw on a large array of metaphors when it comes to describing politicians.

⁶² The five newspapers had a daily total net circulation of just over 8 million copies in December 2006, according to the British Audit Bureau of Circulation (<http://www.abc.org.uk>). A newspaper’s assumed readership is calculated by timing the circulation figure with three.

4. Concluding remarks

In their farewell addresses both Margaret Thatcher in 1990 and Tony Blair some 16 years later were eager to sum up their political achievements during their decade-long premierships. They wanted to bow out in style, and Thatcher did so by delivering a flawless performance in parliamentary eloquence in the House of Commons, whereas Blair's barnstormer was thoroughly prepared, if not to say a sexed up verbal dossier (with tongue slightly in cheek)⁶³, as he addressed his own party for the last time. They both leant on the extremely polarized view of the world that is so common in two party political systems. Both Thatcher and Blair, although from complete opposite perspectives, glorified their own good achievements, omitted the dubious ones, but heavily criticized and blamed the opposition for almost everything that is/was wrong in Britain. In short, both speeches were brilliant tokens of the most central technique of polarization: positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. This confirms my hypothesis that both Thatcher and Blair tried to cement their legacies via the language they used, by access to influential discourses, and through power of definition – and that the two farewell addresses mirrored each other. Blair may have used the same tools and framework as Thatcher, but his account of the world was the exact opposite.

I also proposed that there have been considerable changes in newspaper discourse over the last twenty years, and that the roles of politicians have undergone connected transformations. Based on my findings, it seems like the most central traits of tabloidese (see section 3.3.) have increased, and that some of these elements could today also be found in the former broadsheets. Specifically, I have found that the showbiz imagery has developed from being a rare and original tool (it was only used by *The Guardian* in the Thatcher editorials) to become what seems to be the common terminology to describe political affairs. In fact, when Tony Blair finally made his announcement on May 10, 2007 that he is to resign come June, the editorials in the five newspapers scrutinized had the following titles: 'Tony's legacy' (*The Sun*), 'The final act ... exit stage left' (*The Daily Mirror*), 'The longest goodbye' (*The Daily Mail*), 'He knew he was right' (*The Guardian*), 'A great showman, but an average statesman' (*The Daily Telegraph*). If we add the fact that the main article in *The Daily Mail* was titled 'Showman to the final curtain', these titles are further evidence of a jargon in political writing

⁶³ I am referring to Tony Blair's September Dossier from September 2002 which was part of the Government's attempt to prepare the ground for an invasion of Iraq. BBC later ran a story where a senior British official claimed that the dossier was 'sexed up' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_Dossier).

that seems increasingly influenced by showbiz imagery, and could thus be taken to support my hypothesis that newspaper language has undergone a transformation since Thatcher resigned in 1990.

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Audit Bureau of Circulations (<http://www.abc.org.uk>)

BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk>)

The Churchill Centre (<http://www.winstonchurchill.org>)

Daily Mail online (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk>)

Guardian Unlimited (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>)

Ipsos MORI (<http://www.ipsos-mori.com>)

The Labour Party (<http://www.labour.org.uk>)

Margaret Thatcher Foundation (<http://www.margaretthatcher.org>)

Mirror.co.uk (<http://www.mirror.co.uk>)

The Sun Newspaper online (<http://www.thesun.co.uk>)

Telegraph newspaper online (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk>)

Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)