



**LACUS  
FORUM  
XXXI**

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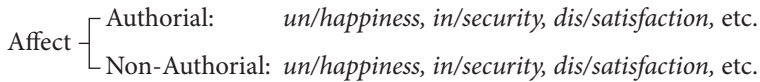
## EVALUATING THE DISCOURSE OF WAR: EXAMINING THE SYSTEM OF ATTITUDE IN THE PRINT MEDIA

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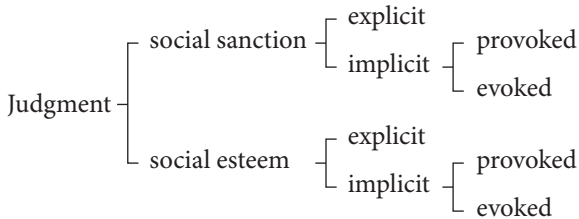
THE LANGUAGE OF NEWS REPORTING has always been easy to twist and spin, and nowhere has this been more evident than during a time of war. In fact, survivors of World War II and the subsequent Stalinist oppression of half of Europe know this fact much too well (Makkai, personal communication). Remarkably, that the print media is evaluative in its reporting is a notion that many in the West apply specifically to Eastern block countries. However, the discourse of war is always about the language of war, and in this respect, it makes very little difference if the topic is World War II, Stalin, Bosnia or Kosovo. Nor does it matter whether the paper is German, Russian, Serbian or American. What matters is that in a discourse of war, writers use language to represent the world from a specific ideological perspective; one that requires clear villains, victims, and heroes.

News in the press is laden with evaluative language; language that allows the writer to express a position on a topic both objectively and subjectively. Often, the choice of language is strategic, with an end result in mind: it is not only to present the news, but to do so in a specific way. This paper is concerned with the discourse of war from the perspective of Appraisal theory, specifically the system of Attitude (hereafter AT). AT is based on the work of Australian functionalists Peter White (1994, 1998, 2004) and James Martin (2000). (See also Ideema et al. 1994). AT examines how writers use language to evaluate a text, a situation, a thing, an event, or a person. The analysis shows that the language of the press influences not only how the news is internalized by a reader but also the opinions that a reader forms. The paper first offers a brief description of AT with a focus on the system of Attitude and then applies the system of Attitude to the April 2, 1999 *New York Times* account of the emptying of Priština by Serb military and militia. Second, it demonstrates that writers can and do exploit language to construct particular views of the world by heightening a reader's awareness of one situation or position, while at the same time suppressing other possible interpretations.

1. APPRAISAL THEORY AND THE SYSTEM OF ATTITUDE. The system of Attitude examines how writers express emotional points of view, pass judgment on people and/or on the aesthetic quality of a process, phenomenon, or text (White 2004). Attitude is divided into three subsystems: Affect, Judgment and Appreciation. Each is concerned with how writers attach an intersubjective value or assessment to participants or processes (White 1998, Ideema 2004).



**Figure 1.** Attitude: Affect.



**Figure 2.** Attitude: Judgment.

1.1. ATTITUDE: AFFECT. Affect is the semantic resource for construing emotion (Martin 2000). In the system of Attitude, the subsystem Affect is by far one of the most obvious ways that a speaker or a writer can adopt a position towards some phenomenon. Since Affect is concerned with emotional response and disposition, it is typically realized through mental processes of reaction or attributive relational affect (White 1994, 1998). Affect has a positive and negative dimension. The three main types of Affect are happiness/unhappiness, insecurity/security, and satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Egins & Slade 1997; White 1998). The system of Attitude: Affect is mapped in **Figure 1**.

1.2. ATTITUDE: JUDGMENT. Judgment examines how writers evaluate human behavior on the basis of predetermined cultural and ideological norms. Judgment is divided into two major rubrics based on culturally specific preconceived social norms: social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem assesses behavior as normal or abnormal, capable or incapable, and dependable or undependable, while social sanction assesses behavior as moral or immoral, legal or illegal (Egins & Slade 1997; White 1998). Judgment may be inscribed, provoked, or evoked. Inscribed Judgment is presented explicitly, while Provoked Judgment and Evoked Judgment are implicit. The differences between Provoked Judgment and Evoked Judgment are essentially one of degree. Although both are implicit in nature, Provoked Judgment includes some evaluative language. Conversely, in Evoked Judgment a proposition is presented as a factual description which nonetheless has the power to lead to some inference of praiseworthy or blameworthy behavior (White 1998). The system of Attitude: Judgment is set out in **Figure 2**.

1.3. ATTITUDE: APPRECIATION. Appreciation is the subsystem where evaluations are made of products and processes such as plans and policies; it may also evaluate people. Appreciation is grouped into the following categories: reaction describes the emotional impact of the lexicogrammatical target under evaluation; composition evaluates the aesthetic value of the product or process, and valuation, which evaluates

Appreciation	valuation:	<i>depressing scene, boring book, etc.</i>
	composition:	<i>balanced, inharmonious, etc.</i>
	reaction:	<i>beautiful, horrible, etc.</i>

**Figure 3.** Attitude: Appreciation.

the product or process according to such conventions as whether it is important, newsworthy or significant (White 1998, 2004). Appreciation is mapped in **Figure 3**.

The analysis of the text is based on the systems given in Figures 1-3.

## 2. THE TEXT.

### **Refugees Tell of Methodical Emptying of Priština**

by John Kifner, April 2, 1999, *New York Times*, sec. A1 & A9

KUKES, Albania, April 1 —

*In a chilling display of force, Serb gunmen are systematically emptying Kosovo's capital city, Priština, marching its ethnic Albanians out through gantlets of masked, heavily armed Serbs, refugees crossing the border today said.* (2)

*More than 10,000 Kosovars arrived here today, stretching at times more than a dozen miles back into Serbia in a heart-rending line of farm tractors, frail old people being pushed in wheelbarrows and weeping village women on foot clutching their children and sometimes a blanket or plastic bag with a few clothes.* (3) *An elderly man died of exhaustion crossing the border this morning.* (4)

*They were people of Priština, once an urban center with a university, coffee houses, cinemas and newspapers.* (5) *And they told in almost identical accounts—as other refugees have in previous days—of the latest Serbian tactics.* (6)

*This is what they said.* (7)

*In homes throughout the ethnic Albanian neighborhoods that comprised most of the city there was a knock on the door yesterday afternoon.* (8) *Sometimes it was only one gunman—from the special police or paramilitary—with a black ski mask over his face.* (9) *Leave now, they were told.* (10) *Many were quickly and roughly thrown out of their houses.* (11) *They were robbed of their money in the process.* (12)

*Once in the street, they joined their neighbors in a forced march between lines of masked, uniformed Serbs draped in weaponry.* (13) *At one point the Serbs videotaped the march.* (14) *Two days ago, Serbian state television broadcast just such a forced march in Priština.* (15)

*They were split into groups, one taken to the city's railroad station, the other to a soccer stadium.* (16)

### **At Albanian Border, Fleeing Kosovars Tell of the Emptying of Priština (Headline on p A9)** (17)

*It was difficult to estimate from the refugees' accounts exactly how many people were involved, but they clearly numbered tens of thousands.* (18) *One trainload was sent to*

the Macedonian border. (19) At least three babies were born last night in the railroad station. (20)

During the night, the refugees said, the Serbs brought in fleets of buses and large trucks, including freezer trucks of the kind used to transport sides of beef. (21) Many refugees spent hours packed into the buses and trucks until they were driven out past burning villages early in the morning and dumped out at the last village, Szhur, to walk the final few miles to the border. (22)

"You cannot imagine what happened," wailed Suzana Krsnigi, collapsing in tears a few steps over the border with her elderly parents. (23)

"I was watching television, Sky News, and I walked out into the garden and there were three people with black masks and big guns," she said. (24) "They wanted to kill my mommy," she said. (25) "They said you give me money or I will kill her. (26) I had 550 Deutsche marks hidden in my sock and I gave it to him. (27)

"They were not policemen. (28) They were criminals Milosevic let out of jail. (29) It is not so easy to earn money. (30) But I don't care about the money. (31) They wanted to kill my parents. (32)

"In every house they broke the doors," she said crying. (33) "When we went out everyone was in the street walking between men with black masks and big weapons." (34)

She described the forced march and a sleepless night at the railroad station. (35)

"All Priština is empty today," she said. (36) "No Albanians. Only Serbs with guns, they all have guns. (37) Can the world see what they are doing?" (38)

The long lines of silent, shaken refugees, many crying, stretched all around her. (39) Among the seemingly endless procession of people atop carts pulled by tractors was 98-year-old Shahin Jhabani, stretched motionless on a wheelbarrow, his feet in maroon socks dangling over the wheel. (40) Tucked around him were a few family possessions: a blanket, a pair of women's high heels and a bright child's jacket. (41)

By 7 o'clock tonight, some 13,000 people had crossed over the border, a process made painfully slow for much of the day by the Albanian authorities' insistence on a new procedure for registering the refugees. (42)

What they were registering mostly were the refugees' automobiles—which had been stripped of license plates by the Serbs—and they issued mimeographed pieces of paper good for a month. (43)

Late in the afternoon, after pressure from European aid officials and the flood of people on foot, the system quickened somewhat. (44) But in the darkness there were still thousands of people waiting to cross the border, backed up in a line nearly 10 miles into the Serbian territory. (45) And even as it inched forward, the line lengthened, with people from Priština and areas to the north. (46)

"They exploded something at the main door of our house," said one, Ruzhid Morina, 56. (47) "Four police with masks came in. (48) Their first demand was money. (49) The children were frightened and started to cry. (50)

"We took only the things we hand at hand, two blankets for the kids and a plastic sheet in case it rains," he said. (51) "All this happened in just five minutes, and we were made

to leave the house. (52) On both sides of the street were long lines of Serb police in masks and we had to walk between them to the train station.” (53)

As the procession passed a movie theater, he said police officers in a white Opel Cadet cruised alongside videotaping him. (54)

After the march and the long night in the train station, Arsim Rahmani, 26, said, he could see from the windows of the bus that there were no ethnic Albanians. (55) “Our shops were looted,” he said. (56) “There were only Serbs, driving our cars.” (57)

At the border, many refugees seemed shattered at the thought of all that they had lost. (58) And yet many also experienced relief, like Mr. Rahmani and his wife, Aferdita, who was three months pregnant. (59)

“It is not important that now we are poor people,” she said, leaning close to her husband. (60) “What is important is now I am not afraid.” (61)

2.1. FINDINGS CONCERNING ATTITUDE. The *New York Times* article offers an example of how language may be used to evaluate a situation and present it as a piece of objective news. It also offers an opportunity to examine the rhetoric of war from the perspective of lexicogrammar and reader/writer solidarity. Highly evaluative, the text has a total of 62 examples of Attitude. In fact, language is used effectively to position the reader attitudinally toward adopting a pro-Albanian and anti-Serbian stance.

2.2. ATTITUDE: AFFECT IN THE TEXT. Within the system of Attitude, the subsystem Affect allows the writer to achieve one of the highest degrees of solidarity with the reader, since it is through Affect that the writer ultimately attempts to create a bond with the reader. There are only 11 examples of Affect in the text, but since Affect is concerned with how writers express emotion (either their own, or that of others), the evaluative target of Affect is therefore very important. In this case, the source of emotion is always the Kosovo Albanian Refugees, while the catalyst of that emotion is Serbian actions. Moreover, since a very specific incident is being depicted—the methodical emptying of Priština—all examples of Affect become relevant, but particularly those which offer authorial Affect, because they describe the author’s own perspective and in that way position on the event. The only case of authorial affect in the text is (3) but it is couched within an example of negative Evoked Judgment. Nevertheless, that the author decides to depict the scene of Kosovo refugees as *heart-rending*, represents his feelings on the matter. Examples of non-Authorial Affect further serve to bring the reader closer to the scene; hence, specific emotional states of distress such as *wailing* (24; non-authorial Affect: distress), *collapsing* (24; non-authorial Affect: distress), and *crying* (34; non-authorial Affect: unhappiness) not only draw the reader in affectually, but present the reader with the writer’s position towards this phenomenon. Coupled with the description of ‘*sleepless nights at a railroad station*’ (35; non-Authorial Affect: insecurity, anxiety), and the image of *silent, shaken refugees crying* (39; non-Authorial Affect: insecurity: distress), the reader has no reason to doubt that in these cases the target of negative evaluation is none other than the Serbs, particularly since the emotional responses and dispositions of the Kosovo refugees

are being described as a direct result of the Serbia military or militia. Hence, in the context of situation with which it is presented, the reader has no reason to doubt the response as valid and justifiable.

2.3. EXAMINING ATTITUDE: JUDGMENT. There are 40 examples of Judgment (4 of Judgment: inscribed, 15 of Judgment: provoked and 21 of Judgment: evoked) and most are a negative evaluation of Serbian actions towards the Kosovo Albanian refugees. This is important, since judgment reflects a reader or writer's cultural and ideological perspective. Therefore, how a proposition is internalized has everything to do with the writer's representation of the information in the proposition and the reader's interpretation of the proposition. In order to achieve solidarity, the reader and the writer must both judge the actions of the Serbs as blameworthy. Hence, since Judgment may be expressed either explicitly or implicitly, the lexicogrammar becomes the deciding factor in solidarity because the writer always has the choice to present propositions explicitly, thereby using language which highlights his views, or implicitly, thereby letting the reader make his or her own evaluations of the target in question (White 2004).

2.3.1. JUDGMENT: INSCRIBED. Explicit or inscribed Judgment is the writer's way of sharing with the reader just how he or views the behavior of a person or group. Therefore, Judgment: Inscribed puts at risk the bonds of solidarity that the writer is trying to create with the reader. This risk is valid, because the writer always has choice with respect to how he intends to present information. This choice is important, since it tells the reader that the writer is about to assess the behavior of a person or group based on a set of arbitrary rules which categorize behavior as either appropriate or inappropriate, brave or cowardly, right or wrong, etc. If the reader does not agree with the writer's assessment then solidarity is at risk.

In order for the writer's evaluations to be effective in this text, for example, both the writer and the reader must agree that in each of the cases of Judgment: Inscribed (e.g. 2, 29) some value revered by society has been breached. Thus, in clause complex 2 (*In a chilling display of force, Serb gunmen are systematically emptying Kosovo's capital city, Priština, marching its ethnic Albanians out*) what is at stake is the realization that the Serbs are systematically emptying Kosovo's capital city, an act of violence likened to the actions of a totalitarian regime. Similarly, 29 (*They were criminals let out of jail*) has the value laden term *criminals*, which not only categorizes the act but labels the individuals charged with it. Hence, in order for the writer's evaluation to be effective and to maintain reader solidarity, the writer must guarantee that the reader is as likely to feel offended, disgusted, appalled by the behavior of the target of evaluation. Clause complex 2 provides an example of Judgment: inscribed: negative: social sanction: propriety, because the writer has put himself on the line by evaluating the actions of the Serbs as *chilling* and *systematic*. Since both terms imply a calculated and intended harm, the assumption is that his explicit evaluation will initiate a negative response towards the target of the evaluation (Serbian men, military, and militia). Couple this with clause complex 3 (*More than 10,000 Kosovars arrived here today...*)



(Judgment: evoked: negative: social sanction: propriety), and it becomes clear that the writer has effectively managed to heighten the reader's awareness of the blameworthy actions of the target of his evaluation: the Serbs.

2.3.2. EVOKED AND PROVOKED JUDGMENT. It is through the use of evoked and provoked Judgment that the writer takes his greatest risks. This is so because assessment of Judgment is based to a large degree on the cultural and ideological backgrounds of the reader. In order for the writer and reader to see eye to eye, the writer must assume that the reader more or less shares the same perspectives of what he deems either ethically and morally right and wrong, and/or culturally correct or incorrect behavior. Unlike Judgment: Inscribed, which uses an explicit evaluative term or phrase to position the writer's stance, provoked and evoked judgment present the proposition in either an indirect or factual way. Therefore, from the position of solidarity, there is more at risk.

2.3.2.1. JUDGMENT: PROVOKED. Judgment: Provoked is that type of Judgment which employs tokens. These tokens are types of evaluative wordings which act to direct the reader towards creating a Judgment response. In cases of Judgment: Provoked the reader is recognizing inferences in the form of evaluative language and these inferences lead to a judgment of one kind or another. In the case of this specific article, there are 17 examples of Judgment: Provoked (1, 6, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 22, 25, 26, 32, 34, 44, 47, 48, 56, 60). Each requires that the reader make his or her Judgment call on the basis of an implicit token. How a reader interprets these examples is directly effected by his or her own interpretation of the situation based on personal, ideological, and socio-political factors.

The very first case of Judgment: Provoked is found within the headline itself: 'Refugees tell of Methodical Emptying of Priština' (1). As a term, *refugees* is value laden, since it is used solely to apply to a group of people who are fleeing their own country and seeking refuge elsewhere. Often, refugees flee to avoid persecution or death. Methodical emptying describes not only the process of events, but also supplies the reader with an image akin to a totalitarian regime and the transport of parts of the population to camps for political or racial reasons. Together, the two function as an excellent example of negative Judgment: Provoked.

Another case of Judgment: Provoked is that of clause complex 22, which uses evaluative language such as *refugees* and *dumped out* as well as the type of historical inference mentioned above to evaluate Serb military and militia: *Many refugees spent hours packed into the buses and trucks until they were driven south past burning villages early in the morning and dumped out at the last village, Szhur, to walk the final few miles to the border.*

2.3.2.2. JUDGMENT: EVOKED. White (1998; 2000), defines cases of Judgment: evoked as any purely factual information presented to the reader, but which nonetheless has the potential of inference. There are 25 examples of Judgment: Evoked (3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15,

20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 33, 37, 38, 43, 45, 46, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57) and each relies heavily on reader interpretation of the information given. Essentially, what is at stake here is the writer's ability to present factual information in a strategic way, so that the reader can make an assessment on the basis of shared ideological and cultural views.

Clause complex 20 is an example of Judgment: evoked: negative: social sanction: propriety, because the reader is required, without the use of evaluative markers, to grasp the proposition as an example of an extreme, inhuman situation. Therefore, if in clause complex 20 (*at least three babies were born last night in railroad stations*) the reader judges the Serb actions as examples of negative: propriety, he or she will do so on the basis of his or her own cultural expectations and the assumption that most people require better treatment of pregnant women and innocent babies. The same may be said of clause complex 21 (*During the night, the refugees said the Serbs brought in fleets of buses and large trucks, including freezer trucks of the kind used to transport beef*). The importance is one of association between the actions of the Serbs and those of a totalitarian regime. Moreover, although nothing specific is being said to compare the two explicitly, there are innuendos. Further, there is an agenda here, since a comparison may be made between the type of trucks used (*freezer trucks*) and the value of the people (being herded into them like cattle). In other words, if the writer intended that the reader be impacted by this information, then the effect of the words combined with the visual image is just so.

3.0. EXAMINING ATTITUDE: APPRECIATION. The subsystem Appreciation is concerned with assessments that are made of products, processes, plans, policies and/or people when they are viewed as objects (White 1998, 2004). Appreciation is grouped into three subcategories: valuation, composition, reaction, and the text carries examples of each: four of valuation (see: 34, 36, 37, 40), four of composition (see: 5, 30, 42, 44) and three of reaction (see: 2, 3, 42). Examples of each are given below.

3.1. APPRECIATION: VALUATION. There is a particular relevance to the fact that the text contains four examples of Appreciation: valuation because the subcategory of valuation is concerned with values which refer to or are somehow derived from emotion. When something is classified as valuation what is being assessed is how an object or a process is evaluated according to social conventions from the perspective of whether it was either particularly significant (important, noteworthy, crucial) or harmful (damaging, dangerous, unhealthy) (White, 2004). In clause (36) *All Priština is empty today*, attention is now on the city of Priština and not on the Serbs who emptied it. Priština has become the object of concern and from the perspective of social convention this is both noteworthy and worrisome, since a city is not meant to be empty; it is meant to be full of life. Clause (37) reiterates the desperation: *No Albanians. Only Serbs with guns, they all have guns*.

3.2. APPRECIATION: COMPOSITION. Rhetorically, all of the instances of Appreciation within the text work towards strengthening the writer's evaluative stance and creating

a bond of solidarity with the reader. However, clause complex (5) threatens the writer's position, since it alludes to the destruction of a city and thus, opens up the issue of who has done the damage: *They were people of Priština, once an urban center with a university, coffee houses, cinemas and newspapers*. Hence, the writer is evaluating the discordant structure of the city at the same time as he is alluding to who may be the cause of Priština's demise. By classifying this clause complex as an example of Appreciation: composition: negative: discordant the concern is with how well the city fits together and not on who caused the downfall of Priština. However, since Appreciation and Judgment are at times intricately linked, much of what is interpreted depends not only on the reader's own cultural and ideological expectations, but on the context of the information as well. The problem in this clause complex has to do with interpretation, since Priština was an urban center until NATO bombs started falling. Thus, depending on whether a reader is for or against NATO intervention, solidarity may be at risk.

3.3. APPRECIATION: REACTION. The text also contains three examples of Appreciation: reaction: negative (2, 3, 42). In clause complex 2, '*...through gantlets of masked, heavily armed Serbs*', the subclassification of reaction: negative assesses the Serbs as objects, making them a property of the evaluated entity. Therefore, what is being evaluated is the presentation of the spectacle, how it effects the senses: Appreciation: reaction: negative: appalling. The description of the Serbs, taken with the information provided by the headline and the first part of the clause complex, increases the reader's negative reaction to the entire process of the Kosovo Albanian evacuations. In this way, Appreciation also further enhances writer and reader solidarity, since this instance of Appreciation:reaction is consistent with the overall attitudinal purposes of the text—namely encouraging a pro-NATO, anti-Serb stance.

4.0. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION. This article uses language in a strategic way to create a divide between the amoral and unacceptable behavior of the Serbs—Milosevic's criminals (29)—and the brave Kosovo Albanian victims (60). In fact, the reader is told that Serbs draped in *weaponry* (13) are *methodically* (1) and *systematically emptying Kosovo's capital city Priština at gunpoint* (2), at the same time as Serbian *tactics* are compared to a those of a totalitarian regime (6), which is never explicitly identified, just alluded to. Hence, the reader walks away with specific propositions in mind: that *tens of thousands of refugees are arriving in neighboring states in search of sanctuary and shelter* (18) and that *families have been divided, split into groups and packed into freezer trucks* (21)—stark and eerie reminders of totalitarian tactics.

Affect and Appreciation, like Judgment, further create a divide between the two actors in this conflict, the Serbs and the Albanians. The author himself depicts the scene as heart-rending in clause complex 3, while 5 describes Priština's demise from an urban center to a ghost town. In all, the rhetorical effect of the article is clearly one where the writer has set about representing the brutality of the Serbs and creating a very specific divide between the good guys and the bad guys. Further, the situation

is depicted as one where the negative targets of evaluation can only be Serbian. And although reference is made to an empty Priština, the possibility of the emptiness being a direct result of NATO bombs is avoided.

In a rhetoric of war, how information is expected to be interpreted has everything to do with how it is presented, and therefore, evaluative targets are meaningful (White 1998, 2004). From the position of the system of Attitude, what becomes obvious is that the language of war discourse presents not just facts; it presents informational utterances—propositions that have Interpersonal value. This Interpersonal value is effected by the reader-and-writer relationship, since by making evaluations, passing judgments and appraising situations the writer is counting on the reader's support and agreement. The problem is that this text is one-sided. It takes a pro-NATO, pro-Albanian perspective and focuses entirely on an Albanian representation of events. Moreover, although it may be that Serb gunmen, military and militia did in fact exacerbate the refugee situation, there is also much to be said about the constant barrage of NATO bombs which had been falling on Priština at that time. Furthermore, although the reference to totalitarian tactics is obvious, there are specific differences which are not spelled out, specifically that when the Serbs split the Kosovo Albanians into groups they did not do so on the basis of sex but rather, randomly (16). Finally, under the NATO bombardment, no one remained in Priština: not the Gypsies, not the Serbs and not the Albanians.

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