Politics and propaganda

Weapons of mass seduction

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Preface

This book is not an attempt to commission a new concept but to recommission an old one. The term 'propaganda' faced conceptual extinction because it had become an anachronism. How could a cynical, media-literate cadre ever respond to its histrionic excess as earlier, more naive generations had done? The word had disappeared because the reality it signified was apparently no more. Yet ideas do not die, they merely hibernate. From the taunting videos of Osama bin Laden to the euphorias of the embedded journalist, from the lucid rhetoric of the anti-globalisation movement to the empire of spin to the scalding polemics of US campaign advertising, propaganda is back, centre-stage. What other literary formula might we use to evoke the theatre of imagery which we inhabit today? The whirligig of fashion applies to concepts as well as clothes.

This book is thus an analysis of the meaning, content and significance of the word 'propaganda' today. Its focus is primarily on the current world order, though history, and indeed the history of the word, is a constant presence. The content of its subtitle, 'seduction' (in Latin, a leading to oneself), is deliberately chosen because that describes the *art* of the process. Effective propaganda is often seductive propaganda. Propaganda is not usually a lie (because a lie is not instrumental to its ends), but persuasion, and not the seeking of truth, is the objective. In fact there is no 'unvarnished truth' anywhere, and even the success of ideas is inseparable from the fact and process of their propagation. If our current reality is indeed socially constructed, in Searle's sense, then this must imply a formative role for communication, and for propaganda as a sub-set of communication.

There is an ideal book about propaganda that has yet to be written. This is not it, neither does it pretend to be. But it is original in a number of ways. It applies a conceptual approach to propaganda, and then grounds this analysis in a series of contemporary case studies, ending in an assessment

of the role of propaganda in the remorseless new conflict which began on 11 September 2001. The book also recognises a need to treat the subject more broadly than hitherto, since its conceptual identity has become localised in totalitarian regimes or wartime hyperbole. As Rampton and Stauber (2003) suggest, 'what mass media, public relations, advertising and terrorism all have in common is a one-sided approach to communications that can be best thought of as a "propaganda model"'.

Moreover the book focuses not just on describing this phenomenon but according it some explanatory depth. The approach is both descriptive and analytic. For example, one key idea is that, like the seducer, the effective propagandist will not assault but insinuate, not challenge values directly but package the thought to fit the perspective. And we argue that propaganda texts are not necessarily meant to be taken literally but rather represent a fantasy we are invited to share (often a fantasy of enmity, where we seek self-definition through constructing our antithesis).

Finally, I would like to thank my many friends, mentors and colleagues, but in particular Morris Holbrook of Columbia University, Jeannie Grant Moore of the University of Wisconsin, Nigel Allington of Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, Bruce Newman of De Paul University and Phil Harris of the University of Otago. They have waited patiently for this book. Here it is.

N.J.O.

Introduction

The idea of propaganda

Before the spring of 2003, propaganda as a concept had been relegated beyond the marginal to the irrelevant. Its conceptual identity was lost amid the new academic lexicon of persuasion, communication theory and the manipulation of consent; the concept of propaganda in popular imagination relegated to the monochrome, stuttering imagery of bolsheviks and storm troopers. Then began an awakening recognition, a cumulative cultural drift; for in a culture where image is sovereign, where symbols matter, where the hair of public figures becomes a nexus of political symbolisation, it could not be long before an old word that could interconnect these phenomena would be rehabilitated. For we seemed bereft of a concept that could give a unitary understanding to the perplexing new realities of our own social back yard – from Wall Street analysts wrapping dot.com and high-tech shares in a cling-film of myth to the evolution of the accounting and finance profession (Arthur Andersen, Enron, Worldcom, Tyco) from purveyors of fact to narrators of fiction, to the ascent of 'spin' (the affixing of determinate labels on to indeterminate events).

Then there was Iraq. The word propaganda, like a lexical Rip Van Winkle, awoke to a new era. Everywhere, commentators claimed to detect the hand of the propagandist – in the embedded journalist, the elaborate propaganda ministry at Qatar, the 'Coalition of the Willing' and other rhetorical bric-a-brac of the allies, and in the myths – of the Hussein /Bin Laden link, and of the Weapons of Mass Destruction.

This book differs from other books on propaganda in the elasticity it attributes to the term: orthodox literature has erred in restricting meaning to explicit texts such as the polemical tirade or 'black' propaganda (like the secret wartime radio station, Gustav Siegfried Eis). So the proposition is that 'propaganda' is not synonymous with mere overt polemicism, but informs many cultural products, including such apparently politically neutral areas

as entertainment or documentaries – and, while this explanation via cultural phenomena complexifies the subject, it enriches it as well. Goebbels himself would have agreed, since he attempted to conceal propaganda in entertainment vehicles like *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* or *Lucky Kids* (Rentschler 1996).

One clear problem in the recognition of propaganda is the frequent difficulty encountered in distinguishing it other than retrospectively. Propaganda in the social environment is often 'naturalised' and we are unaware of it. The merit of seeking to redeploy the term in critical discourse once again is that it does duty as a sensitising concept. Foulkes (1983) drew attention to 'invisible propaganda perpetuating itself as common sense', and quotes Orwell: 'all art is to some extent propaganda'. Thus for Foulkes the Nazi:

> has long ceased to be a real historical being. He now inhibits the demonic twilight of the entertainment world; the mass-produced collective subconscious within which Zulu Warriors coexist with invaders from outer space and the Waffen SS ... Propaganda does not often come marching towards us waving swastikas and chanting 'Sieg heil'; its real power lies in its capacity to conceal itself, to appear natural, to coalesce completely and indivisibly with the values and accepted power symbols of the given society.

The explicit propaganda of earlier generations would strike people today as merely comical.

The role of propaganda in human affairs has been underplayed by the limitations of its contemporary definition. The aspiration here is to refresh propaganda as a distinct generic entity, and claim new territory for it as a pervasive attribute of technological mankind. For words direct perception. What we lack a word for we fail to perceive, and for a considerable period of time the word 'propaganda' appeared to have become defunct, to be replaced by terms like 'persuasion' or 'advocacy'. We view reality through the language and conceptual formulations currently in circulation, which integrate the apparently disconnected into coherent patterns, and thus enhance the conceptual richness through which we see things. Otherwise we neglect the interconnectedness of modern communications phenomena, from 'spin' to the Afghan and Iraq wars.

The attempt to insert a new phrase into the political lexicon, as well as elucidate the meaning and conceptual anatomy of that term, is no frivolous activity. With the 'right' terminologies, much else might follow – more nuanced debates and clearer and more rigorous bases for empirical studies. Words are our tools: for example, the phrase 'presidential government', something that Tony Blair has certainly been accused of, condenses many meanings and debates – on Americanisation, the cult of personality, the

demise of cabinet government and parliamentary accountability – into a perspective. Concepts may be right, wrong or half true, but without them argument would be the more impoverished as we search for verbose formulae to describe the phenomena that we can only dimly apprehend.

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The structure of the book is conceptual rather than narrative-descriptive in approach, and the text is organised round an explanatory schemata. Myth, Symbolism and Rhetoric, the foundation concepts of propaganda, are discussed in detail and seen as animating and structuring the core edifice, or integuments, of the concept, such as hyperbole, ideology, emotion, manipulation, deceit, the search for utopia, otherness and the creation of enemies. Then the focus moves to a series of specific case study analyses of recent political phenomena that embody these elements – the phenomenon of 'Symbolic Government', the rise of single-issue groups, negative political campaigning, and the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The organising paradigm is thus: foundation concepts – *myth, symbolism, rhetoric*; key elements – *hyperbole, fantasy, emotion, enemies, manipulation, deceit, utopia.*

Summary review of the key themes

Defining propaganda

The attempt is first, and necessarily, to try and define propaganda, an elusive mission, given the vernacular charge carried by the word. The problem is that in the vernacular 'propaganda' is merely a term of opprobrium. Yet definitions are critical – how we define something illuminates the theories that we hold. In one sense, of course, the entire book is a definition of propaganda and its domain. Is it merely, as Schumpeter (1966) says, any opinion with which we disagree? There is unintentional propaganda, press photographs for example, and what is propaganda to one person is not propaganda to another: meaning is negotiable. The issues of definition are also ones of scope: many things, for example a libel case (McDonald's), can be propaganda. Education, especially secondary education, is another theatre of propaganda, where state objectives are sought under the guise of the factual pedagogy of truth. This more elastic definition of propaganda also involves aspects of state activity that would not normally be included in more orthodox reviews, but such official vices as the manipulation of statistics, or the control of information, are surely legitimate candidates for a propaganda category. The state is inevitably one of the principal instigators of propaganda, since in a democracy it cannot resort to coercion alone or

even at all, and all governments, even non-democratic ones, seek at least the passive acquiescence of their people.

The claim is that 'propaganda' is emphatically not merely another word for advocacy, is distinguished from mere marketing by its didacticism and its ideological fervour. Whereas marketing is rooted in consumer response, propaganda asserts, and ideology is seldom submerged, although it may be reinterpreted to fit the particular cultural paradigms.

Explaining propaganda

The book then continues by seeking to explain the phenomena that it has sought to define. The essential argument is that the propagandist dramatises our prejudices and speaks to something deep and even shameful within us. Propaganda thus becomes a co-production in which we are willing participants, it articulates externally the things that are half whispered internally. Propaganda is not so much stimulus–response as a fantasy or conspiracy we share, the conspiracy of our own self-deceit. The force of propaganda is also the forcibility of the utopian vision.

We argue that utopian visions are the underlying presence in much propaganda – the thirst for utopia creates an illusion of a perfect or perfectible world order. This is manifest in phenomena as diverse as socialist realist painting or the advertising industry. And the successes of propaganda are unintelligible without the recognition that the persuasion strategies propagandists espouse are in the main emotional. Emotion is seen as the antithesis of reason, and the power of propaganda is largely the power of the emotional appeal. It is difficult though not impossible to speak of a 'rational' propaganda, and propaganda appeals proceed less by argument than by assertion and affirmation. Propagandists exploit, in particular, certain emotions such as fear and anger; and eschew models of man as a rational decision maker.

Foundation concepts: symbolism, rhetoric, myth

This review of what are seen as the foundation concepts of propaganda is extensive, and the conceptual basis for the applied case studies that follow on. It would be impossible to imagine a propaganda devoid of these elements. Effective propaganda is the synthesis and manipulation of all three. These chapters examine the definitions, meanings and debates over these terms, and their salience in propaganda.

Rhetoric

This chapter seeks to explain the enduring success of rhetorical forms of persuasion. We are concerned with how rhetoric works – the constituent

elements of good rhetoric: ideas such as the co-production of meaning, the power of ambivalence and the workings of rhetoric subversively within a value system rather than as an external challenge to it, and the distrust of the power of rhetoric from the time of Plato expressed in the half fearful, half admiring description of Pericles ('a kind of persuasion played on his lips'). Particular attention attaches to the importance of metaphor as the *key* tool of persuasive rhetoric.

Other ideas of particular interest: the concept of 'resonance' (Tony Schwartz): good rhetoric 'smoulders in the mind'; the notion that rhetoric is not merely a conduit of meaning but actively creates it; and, related to this, the concept of the Rhetorical Vision (e.g. 'Star Wars', 'Axis of Evil'); the Hall Jamieson thesis on the feminisation of rhetoric; the power of partisan language to embed itself in everyday discourse and thus appear natural, neutral and objective; the easily overlooked rhetorical forms such as 'bureaucratic' rhetoric (today the propagandist use of language often has obfuscation as its objective, such as the phrase 'no clear proof' of animal–human infection in Britain's BSE crisis); the propaganda use of language to change perceptions, as with the pressure group which says that it advocates the 'ethical theft' of mahogany products (a perverse juxtaposition that seeks to ethicise the unethical by a linguistic strategy that places it in a fresh perspective).

The political and social impact of rhetoric is critical – such as the language strategies used to persuade in the environmental and genetically modified food debates ('Frankenstein foods') and in the American 'civil war of values'; its historical impact, with examples of great rhetorical events like Reagan and the *Challenger* disaster; and the rhetoric of war, both the language of dynamic metaphor as in Hitler's images of blood pollution or Roosevelt's 'day that will live in infamy' to the evasive technical jargon of modern warfare which deliberately aims to detach people from the human realities, as with 'collateral damage'.

Myths

Nor could propaganda exist without the myths that rhetoric articulates. Myth, defined as the sound of a culture's dialogue with itself, expresses the key values of a society in story form. We see myths as critical to society's integration and sustenance, and to destroy a society's myths is to destroy society.

The impact of myths on history has been critical – for example, the German militarist myth of the 'stab in the back' by democrats at the end of World War I – and the core methodology of propaganda has been the creation and sustenance of myths, such as the myth that the US constitution enshrines the right to bear arms. It does no such thing, yet the popular

belief that such a guarantee exists has had incalculable impact on the debate over gun control in the United States. Yet myths are fluid. They can be created, fabricated, resurrected, and the art of propaganda is to do this, since myths always have open texture. Thus there can be myth entrepreneurship, such as the Goebbels manufacture of Horst Wessel, or the (alleged) Soviet authorship of the myth that AIDS was conceived by US scientists as a deliberate way of harming minorities.

And sometimes myths and history are elided. We view history not objectively but through the prism of its own self-presentation. Queen Elizabeth I ordained how we should see her: the imperious white mask swathed in silk and jewels. Our imagery of history is the creation of its propaganda – we imagine Lenin arriving at the Finland station in worker's cap to be greeted by the 'Internationale'. (Actually the train was not 'sealed', he was wearing a homburg and the band was playing the 'Marseillaise': Figes 1997.) The past is thus self-mythologised (sometimes with significant consequences for the present).

Symbols

A symbol is condensed meaning: consumer brands, for example, are symbols and their extraordinary power is the power of symbolism. A symbol is a heuristic or cognitive short cut: why read a treatise denouncing Nazis when that poster of a caricature German officer with a hanging corpse reflected in his monocle (Rhodes 1993) did it so much more vividly and concisely. As a pre-literate form of meaning, symbols can communicate with those for whom the act of reading is a chore. Symbols can and frequently do express, embroider, simplify or resurrect myths. The claim is that their attraction to the propagandist is as an immensely cheap form of gaining recognition, capable of endless duplication – for example, the wartime Victory V sign, and non-fixed in their meanings, eluding precise scrutiny and creating possibilities of multiple interpretation. They also have an inherent plasticity: they can be reinvented, endowed with new meanings.

Judicious choice or manufacture of symbols and symbolic strategies is an important part of the propagandist's work. Political propaganda texts are studded with symbols, such as Eisenstein's symbolic construction of the film *Battleship Potemkin* with its literally faceless Tsarist Guards, but so also is our popular culture – the Marlboro cowboy an obvious example. Symbols can be resurrected, as with the reworking of the raising of the Stars and Stripes from Iwo Jima to Ground Zero (with a detour via denim advertisements: Goldberg 1991). Or they can be given a new and even contrary interpretation.

Key elements of propaganda

The trinity of Myth, Rhetoric and Symbolism undergirds other major elements of propaganda, and we explore other principle themes in some detail, in particular:

Manipulation and deceit

To say that propaganda is manipulative is to define a necessary but not sufficient characteristic of the term. Propaganda in the populist vernacular sense of the term is equated with the idea of manipulation, even duplicity, but never truth seeking. Objective 'facts' are irrelevant, or at best subordinated to persuasive advocacy. Deception is not some essential essence of propaganda's definition, but it is critical to the popular understanding of propaganda. Deceit and forgery are widespread, from the 'Zinoviev letter' (its alleged forgery is now disputed) in the British general election of 1924 to the present day – for example, with the use of technological resources to distort, as in some modern US campaign commercials. One aspect of this manipulation explored by the book is the idea that in propaganda we are being invited to share a fantasy. Propaganda does not necessarily make the error of asking for belief: instead, exaggeration is presented for us to join in as a shared experience.

Another aspect of manipulation is censorship and the exclusion or control of information. In the first Gulf War, for example, licensed groups of journalists were strictly supervised, others were excluded altogether. Thus another important form of propaganda today remains state censorship, the denial of information. And then there is passive (bureaucratic) propaganda, the use of reports, statistics, etc., to manipulate perceptions.

The social construction of enmity

Propaganda is a consequence of our need for enemies: they are not just there but necessarily there: they give coherence and definition to our values and they motivate us to action. They provide someone to blame when things go wrong. Their common humanity is reducible to a mere cipher, such as communism's top-hat image of the capitalist. It is indeed difficult to imagine a propaganda without enemies, for enemies are essential to a compelling narrative structure, but the choice of enemies is inherently political, for Hollywood producers as well as newspaper editors.

Case studies in modern propaganda

The conceptual framework is applied in the second part of the book to a series of review analyses of contemporary theatres of propaganda. The list is hardly exhaustive, but does represent some of the significant phenomena

of propaganda that have structured and continue to direct our political culture. Today the old extrovert propaganda, in all its naivety, has been replaced by something more insidious – more akin to the art that conceals art. Spin and sound bite, negative advertising and single-issue groups suggest a pervasiveness of polemical forms of persuasion which amounts to the propagandising of our public culture: even business is drawn into the vortex.

Single-issue groups

We begin with single-issue groups since they represent an extraparliamentary political force of supreme power. They shape our times, and they do so through their mastery of the arts of propaganda. Victory goes not to the most, but to the most vocal. Their poverty makes them entirely reliant on the creativity of a visible public symbolism. The consequences of issue group propaganda, social and political, are very real and tangible. Since public opinion on many things is ambivalent, final victory often goes to those who possess the best propaganda. Many mainstream political issues – Green, feminists – originated not in political parties but in single-issue groups and their masterly proselytisation techniques. The major ideological and value civil wars such as abortion have been fought outside the parties and with the tools of propaganda.

Negative advertising

Never was the word 'propaganda' more apposite as descriptor than in the case of US election campaigns, and this is an area where our discussion of the enmity thesis would apparently have singular relevance. Negative political advertising is a tried and tested device and a sinister exemplar of propaganda today. At one time it seemed to have become the preferred mode of choice in US politics. Everyone knows about the Willie Horton advertisement, but the level of saturation of mainstream US politics with negativity is less well known internationally. Citizen alienation apparently does not find a lenitive in rational discourse but in thirty-second diatribes. A culture of contempt may be the achievement of propaganda even if it is not the objective: but negative advertising also has its cogent defenders.

Symbolic government

But campaigns cost. In most countries, politician and party are a materially impoverished actor limited in their ability to purchase media. The fight is therefore for a favourable media account, testing politicians' propagandist skills to the uttermost. The recognition that no public event is capable of one sovereign interpretation, combined with the observable susceptibility

of the media to bandwagon effects, has meant the expertise of governments increasingly becoming not operational management or policy entrepreneurship but communication skill, that is, 'spin'.

Democracy is a political system and a social ethos where we seek persuasion rather than coercion, and it is the recognition that the interpretation of events can be managed or even foreordained that has informed the work of the Blair government in Britain, which has become a supreme practitioner of this craft – replacing, for example, half the heads of civil service information offices with partisan evangelists. However, we identify spin as part of a broader idea, the Symbolic State, embodied in the apparent solution of problems at the rhetorical level alone, preoccupation among politicians with generated imagery, the manufacture of symbolic events and concomitant devaluation of the roles of ideas and ideology in politics.

Marketing war

Afghanistan/Iraq

Both the motivation and the conduct of these wars were inspired and structured by communication, i.e. propaganda, objectives. Again our conceptual formula is used to illuminate the meaning of these events. It seemed at times that 'asymmetric' warfare would be fought on an imagistic as well as a military plane. Uniquely for a terrorist organisation, Bin Laden spoke in a symbolic language instantly intelligible to his allies and enemies – to recruit, of course, but also to terrorise, not just by the act but by the imagery, specifically Bin Laden himself as serial role player and personality cult. There was the 'propaganda of the act' – Nine-eleven – but also classic polemicism – hyperbole, rage, an enemy to hate. Those vivid tapes, and the Taliban's posture as peasant underdog against the global superpower, made some commentators early on suggest that the Taliban/Al-Qaeda were winning the propaganda war. The US had been taken off guard. There was a general recognition that a global culture had sponsored global propaganda and the US had to master this if it was to retain hegemony in a global order. In Iraq the US sought to meld very old propaganda forms – battlefield leaflets, radio stations and the like – with some remarkable new ones: the 'embedded' journalist, the Hollywood stage set at Qatar and direct approaches via e-mails to enemy commanders, abetted of course (at least in the US) by shamelessly partisan media. New insights on propaganda emerge such as the importance of the coherent integrating perspective, or the problem of imagistic control in wartime.

Afterword

The book concludes with a brief review of the measurable impact of propaganda, both as an influence on the direction of current events and as a guiding hand in history. Certainly the failures in propaganda campaigns are not difficult to identify. 'Measurement' remains an insuperable problem, but the great successes must give us pause. There is no final word. Debates such as these can never be concluded, only taken further. But that propaganda has been in history, and remains in our society, an important social phenomenon that deserves to be called by its true name, and studied as part of a general education to equip the citizen for society, is not in doubt.

Part I

Defining what and reasoning why

1

A question of meaning

This chapter teases out the meanings of the term 'propaganda', a task complexified by its common usages and connotative content. We orient and nuance the definition through a number of primary categories: rational persuasion, manipulation, intent, breadth. The chapter seeks further clarity of definition by exploring the complex and ambivalent relation of propaganda to the mass media, appraising some of the limitations of the analytical methods that regularly convict media texts of the ideological determinism associated with propaganda. Subsequently we engage in a summary discussion of the conceptual elasticity of the term as embodied in such diverse cultural theatres as education, the arts, bureaucracy, war, journalism.

Defining propaganda

Propositions on propaganda. This is a dull chapter. No book purporting to explain propaganda can shirk the imperative of actually trying to define the term, a maddeningly elusive task which necessarily involves a recitative of competing definitions. We begin by reviewing the key propositions which summarise the principle debates about the definition of propaganda; a definition that must remain open ended since there can be no closure when a concept comes laden with so much historical baggage.

Problem of definition: no agreement

It is inevitable that there will be no collective agreement about the definition of propaganda in the sense that we might have accord on the meaning of many other words. Our task is to extract what seems most reasonable from the competing interpretations of the term. Since propaganda is a

social phenomenon, to define it is to prescribe its social signification and also to accept or reject the utility of the concept. There is also debate on meaning, since we have no rigorous scientific source or juridical authority for the term but only historical usage. To attempt to define propaganda is to tread lightly upon a conceptual minefield. How we define propaganda is in fact the expression of the theories we hold about propaganda. For Franklin (1998) there are no agreed, mutual uncontentious criteria which allow the separation of propaganda from information. Schumpeter (1966) said that the contemporary usage of the term 'propaganda' refers to any statement 'emanating from a source that we do not like', while Jones (Singh 1989) affected to see no difference between propaganda and the institution-bound transmission of information. What in marketing is 'selling', in school is 'teaching', in the church is 'proselytising', in politics is 'propagandising', in the military is 'indoctrinating'. Foulkes (1983) comments that propaganda is an elusive concept to define 'partly because its recognition or supposed recognition is often a function of the relative historical viewpoint of the person serving it'. Thus many investigators limit themselves to extreme situations such as war. Foulkes further argues that the recognition of propaganda can be seen as a function of the ideological distance which separates the observer from the act of communication observed.

According to Pratkanis (Pratkanis and Aronson 1991), the first documented use of the term occurred in 1622 when Pope Gregory XV established the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fidei in the wake of the Counter-Reformation. Militaristic methods were failing and propaganda was established as the means of co-ordinating efforts to bring men and women to the 'voluntary' acceptance of church doctrines:

> the word propaganda thus took on negative meaning in Protestant countries but a positive connotation (similar to education or preaching) in Catholic areas . . . the term propaganda did not see widespread use until the beginning of the twentieth century when it was used to describe persuasion tactics employed during World War One and those later used by totalitarian regimes.

Colloquial uses

Nevertheless the definition of propaganda is complicated by the fact of a colloquial usage wherein propaganda is always associated with the idea of excess, and only a term of abuse, signifying the hyperbolic, extreme, declamatory. The pre-war anti-marijuana film *Reefer Madness* represents in its hysteria the kind of excess popularly ascribed to propaganda texts, or the rumours, the outrageous fibs that yet fester in the gutter of human consciousness – that the Holocaust did not happen, that Nine-eleven was a CIA or an Israeli plot, that the lunar and Mars landings were enacted in a

Hollywood studio. Another illustration would be so-called 'black' propaganda, such as the Japanese campaign against Sunkist lemons in which Japanese agricultural groups 'spread the rumour via the media that American lemons were laced with Agent Orange' (*Chicago Tribune*, 12 June 1995). A major reason for this elusiveness of meaning is that no working definition of a concept can ever be separated out from its colloquial uses. Hyperbolic aspects are really particular uses of propaganda rather than descriptions of some essence of propaganda itself. Nevertheless such colloquial usages cannot simply be set aside.

Hence attempts to discuss the term objectively are distorted by the accumulated meanings of the concept through history, its associations with the Third Reich, for example making dispassionate analysis difficult. Drescher (1987) argues that 'propaganda' conjures up images of governmentally inspired lies, often either in the context of a 'hot' or a 'cold' war. Usually, Americans in particular think of propaganda as an activity that is engaged in by authoritarian or totalitarian governments. In fact, as Drescher points out, propaganda may involve the truth, even though it falls into the category of 'boo' rather than 'hurrah' words. That the idea of propaganda remains one in which elements of guile, cunning and duplicity are not foreign is apparent even from the objective definitions.

Can there then be no meritorious propaganda? The genre itself is viewed by many as inherently immoral and even its wartime uses consigned to the historical limbo of necessary evil, like the bombing of cities. Examples of a virtuous propaganda are more numerous than we would imagine, and propaganda is not merely a psychotic expression of our social dysfunctionality . There can be a virtuous propaganda, when for example propaganda represents an alternative strategy to legal coercion, as demonstrated by the comparison between the very different attempts to deal with the scourge of illegal drugs and that of cigarettes.

The scope and complexity of the idea of propaganda have often been neglected in such parochial definitions that invest it with its familiar and narrow vernacular meanings. The word is not value-neutral and its strong connotative associations need to be interrogated if it is to be used critically rather than rhetorically. If I choose to speak of something as 'propaganda' I do not mean necessarily that it is worthless; it may be worthy because the aspiration to establish the cause as a legitimate one is worthy. Words are tools. To use tools effectively demands not the search for the perfect tools we do not possess but rather that we recognise the limitations of those we do. The term 'propaganda' may be conceptually flawed, but it is not thereby redundant.

Clarity

Propaganda generally involves the unambiguous transmission of message: 'clarity' may not be an essential adjunct to the definition of propaganda but it is certainly a normative one. Propaganda carries this inherent contradiction, that it is a complex purveyor of simple solutions. Schick (1985) relates propaganda to 'media whose symbol systems are visible'. Foulkes (1983) could thus argue that a propaganda doctrine, socialist realism, could portray only those problems and conflicts for which the system ostensibly has a solution, and he also relates this phenomenon to western mass culture.

In *Rhetoric, Language and Reason* Michael Meyer (1994) argues that manipulation and propaganda proceed as if the question they were dealing with were solved. However, good propaganda may disguise the fact that it thinks the issue solved. Meyer is perhaps referring to the uncritical nature of propaganda: other forms of advocacy can betray elements of self-doubt, but propaganda cannot. For other critics, language becomes propaganda not so much by its inherent structures and devices as by the ideology it champions. Propaganda is shameless advocacy.

Distinguish from communication and rational persuasion

Propaganda is often defined, however, by its antithesis, by what it is not, and its essence is viewed as primarily emotional and not rational persuasion. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what rational propaganda would actually look like: propaganda may sometimes appear rational via mimicry of the forms of reason, but that is not the same thing. It represents the supremacy of the visceral emotional appeal in persuasion. Propaganda seeks out our emotional sensitivities at their deepest with associations both compelling and even irrational: 'a land without people for a people without a land' was a vision, a bewitching slogan, for the early Zionist pioneers, to summon a reality that did not exist before its rhetorical promulgation. But where mythical truth is turned by the alchemy of rhetoric into embedded fact, and when the dream ignores the context, the consequences can be destructive – here an entire people arbitrarily wished away.

And since a great writer can articulate our deepest emotions with an eloquence far beyond the talents of any stump politician, it follows that *littérateurs* are better propagandists than either journalists or politicians. Describing the political impact of Yeats's play *Cathleen ni Houlihan* on the Dublin working class in 1902, Marreco (1967) comments:

> thus Yeats persuaded Maud Gonne to play the part of the mysterious old woman who appears to the hero, Michael Gillane, on the eve of his wedding in the troubled days of 1798 and causes him to abandon all human happiness

> for the sake of Ireland. No one who saw Maude Gonne in the part ever forgot the climax of the play when Michael follows the old crone out, and, when his father asks him if he has seen an old woman going down the path, replies, 'I did not. But I saw a young girl and she had the walk of a queen.'

Many authorities claim to perceive a strong distinction between 'propaganda' and the more usual 'communication', 'information' or 'persuasion'. Ellul (1973) certainly distinguishes between propaganda and communication: Moran (Schick 1985) sees them as existing in opposition to one another. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis, an influential force in the United States in the late 1930s, deliberately chose the word 'propaganda' rather than the more emotionally neutral 'communication'. While the term 'propaganda' is sometimes used erroneously as a substitute for other categories of persuasion, it is not synonymous with persuasion as such and is in fact a highly distinctive form of advocacy. There are many examples of non-propagandist persuasion. Authorities – Jowett (Jowett and O'Donnell 1992), for example – do distinguish propaganda from persuasion: 'propaganda tends to be linked with a general societal process whereas persuasion is regarded as an individual psychological process'. Propaganda is 'mass suggestion', and its targets are the multitude, and this, as Jowett says, is what distinguishes it from persuasion.

Propaganda is also seen as the obverse of 'reason', or rational persuasion, often expressed by the word 'information'. Thus some have claimed to perceive an elemental bipolarity in the language of politics, that political language has two essential strategies, the one emotive, that uses rhetorical-emotional appeals (propaganda), the other passive (rational and informational). Propaganda is certainly not rational persuasion. The appeal to reason, where it occurs, is just another propaganda strategy.

When we define propaganda in the attempt to distinguish it from advocacy, we also say that it carries a 'sense meaning' rather than a bounded or lexical definition – the recognition that 'I know it when I see it'. To some extent one is really seeking to try and define propaganda by what it is not. As a sealed discourse, the concept excludes notions of intellectual exchange. Smith *et al.* (1946) distinguish between propaganda and education by arguing that the former is concerned with attitudes on controversial issues whereas the latter is concerned with attitudes on non-controversial issues. According to Salmon (1989), 'the problem with this distinction is that it assumes the status quo as non-controversial, which it is for the haves of society'. Teachers and others, Salmon believes, are also manipulative and benefit from socially sanctioned labels which conceal persuasive intent.

Yet other critics see 'propaganda' as having no conceptual content distinct from 'mere communication', but propaganda is more specific than 'communication', a word which refers to any transmission of information

without judgement as to whether this transmission is biased, hyperbolic or deceitful. The relation is therefore of set to subset. Schick (1985) cites the communication theorist George Gordon, who argued that propaganda was merely a value-free subset of communication, 'good if its ends are good, and bad if its ends are bad'. To make no distinction between propaganda and communication is to demand a language that is itself judgement-free. Yet language must be a tool to elucidate meaning, otherwise we accept a bland formulation whose utility as tool of expression is dulled. For Taylor (1990) 'Propaganda is simply a process by which an idea or an opinion is communicated to someone else for a specific purpose. Speeches, sermons, songs, art, radio waves, television pictures, one person or millions of people – none of these things matter here for purposes of definition.' In fact he appears to see self-interest as the core definition of the term: 'Propaganda uses communication to convey a message, an idea, or an ideology that is designed to serve the self-interest of the person or persons doing the communicating. . . . Propaganda is designed in the first place to serve the interests of its source.' Definitions such as this are merely particular types of propaganda rather than descriptive of some conceptual essence of propaganda itself.

Manipulation

Propaganda represents the antithesis of the objective search for truth. Truth itself is not a motive but another rhetorical formula. But propaganda seldom succeeds by a direct assault on cherished beliefs, and works best by subversion. All propaganda is manipulative, and it would be meaningless to speak of a non-manipulative propaganda, since that would render the term conceptually redundant. For example, Elizabeth I recognised her people would mourn the banished cult of the Virgin Mary which her Protestant Reformation had confiscated from them. What better policy, therefore, than to substitute an earthly virgin for the celestial one, and she promoted the soubriquet 'the Virgin Queen'.

Most scholars almost invariably draw an association between the word 'propaganda' and the idea of manipulation. They see manipulation as the core of propaganda. Dresher (1988) notes that 'the withholding of relevant information is planned to result in the persuasion of outsiders, hence it is propagandistic'. Pratkanis claims that the ancient roots of propaganda lie in Catholic counter-reaction, its modern forms in duplicity, especially the British duplicity of World War I. Its origins lie in deceit; now he sees it as influence via the manipulation of symbols and the psychology of the individual. Jowett and O'Donnell (1992) define propaganda as a 'careful and predetermined plan of prefabricated symbol manipulation to communicate to an

audience in order to fulfil an objective'. Propaganda is 'the deliberate and systematic attempt to share perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that serves the desired intent of the propagandist'. The word has attracted negative connotations 'and now refers to the form of communication in which a communicator manipulates others, often without their being aware of the manipulative effort, for the source's own benefit rather than the benefit of the receiver'.

Philip Boardman (1978) also attempts a number of definitions of propaganda that focus on deceit:

> from this earlier neutral (Roman Catholic) meaning, propaganda has now gone the way of the word rhetoric to mean language and verbal strategies which are deceptive and misleading, or which misrepresent the true motives . . . propaganda is that language – most easily a slogan, but perhaps a White Paper, a Manifesto, an editorial, a book – which influences the false doctrine or serves a false ideology.

The author defines propaganda further: 'while propaganda might once have referred to the political exhortation or patriotic speech (propaganda of the faith), it now generally implies some element of deception, either in the statement itself or in the motives of the speaker. Thus there is a very fine line between political oratory and propaganda.'

Although by their very selection of examples these and other authorities refine their definitions, sleaze would appear to be the common denominator. This would also be true of its vernacular meaning. Yet, while propaganda is certainly something more than advocacy alone, manipulation is a vague term indeed, a universe that incorporates everything from selectivity of facts to the extremities of fraud. All advocacy manipulates. Inherent in these discussions is the notion that propaganda does so in a more extreme form, which may be necessary to effective persuasion, but does a disservice to the cause of truth.

Intent

Is 'intent' essential to the definition of propaganda, and can one indeed produce unintentional propaganda? The point is not a frivolous one, since the range of phenomena embraced by the term propaganda would be vastly expanded were we to extinguish the requirement of intent. The attribution of intent as a motive would ascribe an introspection, a level of self-analysis which many proselytisers and evangelists do not possess; the possessors of a private monopoly of truth do not see themselves as propagandists but as truth tellers. Yet accepting this point also complicates the problem of definition, inflating the term's conceptual expanse to embrace the work of

hordes of journalists, television producers and the like, and, indeed, accusing them of something they were not aware of committing. The journalist Paul Johnson, for example, in his lurid propagation of the views of the author of *The Bell Curve* (*Spectator*, 18 February 1995) would never have seen himself as a propagandist.

Jacques Ellul (1973), the French theoretician of propaganda, regards all biased messages as propagandist even when the biases are unconscious. He would not impose the criterion of deliberate intent. Ellul thus makes an almost exact equation between propaganda and bias. This is rather extreme. All propaganda is necessarily biased, but not all bias is necessarily propagandist. This view is somewhat controversial. How can something be propaganda if the communicator is not even aware that the messages are functioning as such? The best propaganda is sometimes the most unconscious. The consumer, or the historian, of propaganda might judge a text to function thus even when the producer did not: all those school books and stories which once extolled the glories of the British empire were not necessarily seen by their authors as propaganda. They thought they were telling the truth or obeying the proudest voices of conscience and profession: the effects of their work may have been manipulative, but the intent may not have been. The question of the relationship of intent to propaganda, then, admits no easy resolution – particularly in relation to education, whose pedagogues see themselves as communicators, yes, persuaders sometimes, never propagandists.

Most authorities disagree. For such critics, propaganda is defined by intention, its authors seek a particular political effect on a particular audience. For Lee (1986), propaganda is communication, but it implies that the communication is purposeful. And Taylor (1990) argues that 'by propaganda I mean the *deliberate* attempt to persuade people to think and behave in a desired way. I recognise that much propaganda is accidental or unconscious. Here I am discussing the conscious, rational decision to employ techniques of persuasion designed to achieve specific warlike goals.' These sources, then, would see one distinguishing property of propaganda as being this deliberate intent to influence, but the same could be said of much human communication – rarely indeed is the communicator entirely indifferent to the consequences of the message. Indeed, if propaganda were only purposeful communication, much would be included, in fact most kinds of advocacy.

Unintentional propaganda is produced all the time, much of the best, in fact. A propaganda event may boomerang and be conscripted by antagonists against the cause that sponsored it. This is exactly what happened in the case of Sir Robert Vansittart's polemic *Black Record* (1941), which contrived to fulminate not merely against the German government but against the German race. Dr Goebbels promptly printed and distributed it. The remark of

a US officer in the Vietnam War, that it was 'necessary to destroy the village in order to save it', circumnavigated the globe, a self-inflicted wound.

Another illustration of how propaganda can transmute into counter-propaganda is afforded by George Bush's landing on the aircraft-carrier *Abraham Lincoln* to declare the Iraq war over. (In fact more Americans were to die in the guerrilla epilogue than in the war itself.) This was combustible advertising material for Senator Kerry (*New York Times*, 11 November 2003): the spot opens with a quick shot of the 'mission accomplished' banner featured on the carrier. It then shows Bush on the flight deck in an olive-green flight suit and with a helmet tucked beneath his left arm. Inspirational music kicks in as the spot continues. An announcer runs through Kerry's record while the advertisement goes on to flash images of him at various points in his life: making his presidential announcement before the carrier *Yorktown* in South Carolina, receiving a combat medal as a young navy officer, speaking with voters, speaking at hearings and writing at his desk. The *New York Times* comments, 'the commercial does not bang viewers over the head with the image. In fact, the script does not refer to it once. Campaign strategists said that is because the moment speaks for itself and provides a good curtain-raiser for a spot that highlights Mr Kerry's vast experience as a soldier and politician.'

Propaganda can be indirect, and a text can be usurped as propaganda even when the intent was neutral – the creation, for example, of an image in photo-journalism. Key images from the Vietnam War were scorched on to the consciousness of world opinion: the napalm-burnt girl, naked, running in terror; the South Vietnamese General Loan (Eddie Adams) firing a gun into the head of a helpless Vietcong suspect; the John Filo image of the college girl kneeling over a lifeless body at Kent State (Goldberg 1991). Whatever the intent of their original photographers and publishers, these images circulated internationally through many media as classic atrocity propaganda; their perceptual construction helped determine how we interpreted the war then and how we remember the war now.

One communication vehicle that particularly raises the question of intent in propaganda is the documentary. This announces in advance an intent of objectivity, addressing burning issues of the day. While nobody would suppose that a documentary film maker would properly lack a sense of mission, the ostensible purpose is truth telling and it is therefore a particularly appropriate vehicle for the confection of lies.

Television documentaries can mutate into propaganda by the very measure of their selectivity, and without, necessarily, any conscious intent on the part of the producers. Lesley Garner, the reviewer of a BBC-2 television documentary on euthanasia, *Death on Request*, pointed out that the merciful, self-chosen extinction exhibited in this film is still one end of a long

moral spectrum which could end in the deliberate deaths of the disabled, old, unwanted (*Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 1995). In this case, the film makers recorded the relief *in extremis* of a Dutch motor neurone disease sufferer, Cees van Wendel de Joode, in an ostensibly powerful documentary about the organised ending of a human life. We are profoundly moved by his suffering, and convinced by the humanity of his official executioners, but the film is about a single case, and it does not seek nuance or debate about the complexities of euthanasia. At what stage does this, a partisan argument, mature from advocacy into propaganda? An interesting point of comparison is an overtly pro-euthanasia propaganda film called *I Accuse*, directed by Wolfgang Liebener, which premiered on 29 August 1941. The Nazi functionaries implementing Hitler's 1939 (secret) euthanasia decree explained it to Liebener and requested a film (Herzstein 1978), since Goebbels had sensed disquiet among many over the regime's policy, especially among Catholics.

I Accuse is about the deterioration under multiple sclerosis of a young woman whose husband grants the release she craves by killing her, something doctors have refused. Her husband is put on trial. The concluding scene illuminates the arguments for euthanasia that the regime had sought to mobilise. The doctor changes his mind. Comments Herzstein:

> the dialogue in this scene is extremely effective, intellectual as well as emotional in its appeal, and apparently calculated to let the audience make up its own mind about the problem. No one is portrayed as a hero or as a villain, audiences left the theatre feeling sympathetic for the accused and his action. Eliciting this reaction was precisely the aim of the regime.

In *I Accuse* it is the law that is made to seem barbarous, not the administrators of euthanasia. The German film is intelligently made propaganda, designed to precipitate a change of the general climate of opinion by raising doubts.

Both films use the core idea of a helpless, suffering person who wishes to die at a time and under circumstances of their own choosing. Is the 1995 documentary thereby propaganda as well (even though unlike the Nazi one it is not perverted in the cause of licensed murder)? The intent is not sinister, whereas the Nazi film was made to legitimate a euthanasia programme where the victims had no choice: in fact its pretence that choice was everything is a masterly deceit. However, the rhetorical mechanisms are similar, since both films simplify the euthanasia debate and ignore the ambiguities which lie at its heart.

Whether or not something is to be regarded as propaganda should also be judged by context as well as technique and intent. Richard Attenborough's 1982 film *Gandhi* (Carnes 1996), for example, employs many devices which

associate with propaganda – the idealisation, the caricature of the British enemy, the dwelling on that enemy's atrocities while simplifying the causation – but it is not propaganda. The imperialism it denounces is long defunct, nor is there any cause in the contemporary world for which it could be seen as symbolic advocacy. In this it is different from another Attenborough film, *Cry Freedom*. Had *Gandhi* been made in the days of the Raj it would, indeed, have been propaganda.

Breadth

However, Pratkanis and Aronson (1991) note that as scholars began to study the topic in more detail many came to realise propaganda was not the exclusive property of totalitarian regimes, nor were its contents limited to clever deceptions. The word had evolved: it is communication of a point of view with the ultimate goal of the recipient coming to voluntarily accept this position as if it were his or her own. Many critics define propaganda very indulgently. Lee (1986), for example, includes the press, since it:

> emphasises the existing and superficial and neglects socially important economic and political developments. . . . International affairs are stereotyped or caricatured, reduced to positive and negative generalities . . . political campaigns for office or for reforms are dramatised in simplistic and personality terms with basic issues avoided, glossed over or presented in a biased manner.

Then there are such things as the 'development of obviously kept researchers, often under contract to prove specific policy contentions or to plot special interest social strategies'.

Ellul (1973), similarly, sees propaganda as an omnivorous force: arguing that his definition is too broad, Drescher (1987) criticises this tendency to see virtually any form of communication as propaganda: 'In Ellul's views everything is propaganda. Under these circumstances, it is equally useful if nothing is propaganda.' Ellul, Drescher argues, would consider the multinational corporation to be propaganda, but surely it is only indirectly political in its expression.

Any label is rhetoric. Inscribed within it is both a perspective and a domain, but labels also have inherent plasticity and they remain open to conceptual repackaging. The word 'propaganda' needs redefinition as well as definition. No longer can we dismiss it as merely something to do with *Der Stürmer*, Leni Riefenstahl, *Pravda*, *Izvestia* or even the occasional party political broadcast. Today it assumes myriad disguises and reinvents itself, now as an objective video news release on animal rights, now as the latest management fad or popular treatise on pseudo-science. The purpose of reclassification is to alert us to the new possibilities it has colonised.

Perception

No attempt to discuss/define propaganda can ignore the special relevance of the entertainment industry. Entertainment is historically the most successful propaganda genre, because narrative momentum compels interest and (sometimes) disguises intent. But only a minority of entertainment products are made to service a distinct political agenda. These may be either subtle or explicit, but they are still political – films such as Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) or the Chinese anti-colonialist epic *The Opium War* (1997).

But we reject the vogue notion that is everything is political. Most entertainment either eschews politics or exploits them either for narrative purposes or to establish the ethical content of the text. It can seldom be overtly political because politics is a signal which activates a defence mechanism. The broad social liberalism of many entertainment products – racial integration, harmony, social esteem for different segments of the community – represent an ethos. This ethos may be celebrated overtly: it is more likely to be simply a benevolent narrative assumption. But it is not propaganda. 'All entertainment is propaganda' would be a nonsense, the notion that since entertainment is manufactured by commercial interests it will invariably celebrate the *status quo*. The Frankfurt School in particular viewed all entertainment as propaganda for a dominant social order – as gratifying to the masses and therefore contributing to their further enslavement. This is a gross simplification. As a cultural product entertainment must seek out novelty and therefore subversion, since continuous celebration of the *status quo* would bore.

Drescher *et al.* (1987) argue that what we classify as propaganda is also a function of receiver perceptions: 'the same message may function as objective information or as a persuasive statement in a different context', and 'whether the message is interpreted as fact, propaganda, or noise depends on the perspective of the receiver. . . . A sender may also transmit a message with the intent that it serve more than one function. . . . Messages may also be transmitted with the knowledge that Nation A will regard them as statements of fact while Nation B will find them to be persuasive in nature.' Thus Drescher argues that 'the speech that to some sounds like simple patriotic praise may be perceived by others to have self-serving and propagandist motives' (Boardman 1978). Many apparent cases of propaganda 'will be interpreted differently by different readers'. There are ambivalent cases which provide both information and fog – for example, the newspaper which announced that 'inflation in March rose 3.2 per cent,

continuing the trend of declining rates of interest'! Films may be propaganda only in the sense that some of the audience would choose to react as if to propaganda, since that is the meaning they have chosen to appropriate from a repertoire of possible meanings. A literary or musical piece, such as Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* which satirised the aristocracy on the eve of the French Revolution, can be used as propaganda (Perris 1985), and as political propaganda it was the more beguiling, and the more dangerous, because clothed in a language that was not verbal but musical and therefore both meaningful and imprecise.

Derrida (1981) claimed that no single interpretation can claim to be the final one. He demonstrated this not by revealing how the text's meaning is reconstructed but instead by deconstructing a text in the sense of showing its failure to be interpreted unambiguously. Of course this is not true of much historical propaganda, one of whose characteristics is that meaning is indeed non-negotiable. Even in the war propaganda realm we do indeed meet examples where an openness to interpretation exists: the subtlety of a film like Powell and Pressburger's *Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) introduces us to layers of meaning. And Cook (1992) has described how – partly through the agency of para-language – the message and story line of much commercial advertising is ambivalent. For example, Calvin Klein advertisements would seem deeply vulgar if put into explicit words (see J. O'Shaughnessy 1995) . This coheres with the Hovland thesis that people are not passive receptors but active participants in the creation of meaning (Hovland and Janis 1959). The most extreme version of this view sees all meaning as a ultimately a co-production between text and viewer-receiver (see Kellner 1995).

An apparent propaganda event can turn out to be anything but. Responses – how people choose to interpret material – may diverge from what the producers intended or what logic would anticipate. This was, for example, true of the television film *The Day After* (Adams *et al.* 1986), about the aftermath of nuclear war. It had the distinction of the third highest viewing audience in US television history, and therefore (potentially) some social significance. The prediction was that it would foment opposition to the policy of nuclear deterrence. The reverse happened. The share of people seeing Reagan as the more dangerous President declined appreciably, from 36 per cent to 27 per cent. This can be explained on several levels. First, the film was not the explicit propagandist evocation of nuclear armageddon predicted by the political right. In fact it was rather anodyne. Second, nuclear holocaust was shown as survivable, which may have surprised people, since Americans already accepted the destructiveness of nuclear war. Third, the film had received considerable publicity, sensitising viewers to possible manipulation, and making the

film anticlimactic. Researchers were unable to detect even a trivial shift on the key questions.

Moreover, ideology itself is perhaps a more complex matter than heretofore. To say that a cultural text today is ideological-propagandist is to assume that ideology itself has remained clear-cut, but ideologies can and do meet and merge in a complex theatre of ideological pluralism: political opinion becomes less definite when people hold a portfolio of right-wing and left-wing positions rather than coherent ideological packages. This is a consequence of components of the 1960s counter-culture being absorbed into the political mainstream. For example, elements of the figure of Rambo himself – long hair, bandana, androgynous breasts – are derived from it (Tasker 1993), while for Webster (1988) 'the countryside is a symbol that unites the contemporary ecologist with the old blood-and-soil Right (hinted at in terms like hick-chic)'.

Propaganda and interpretation

Each producer of a message relies on its recipients for it to function as intended. This assumes they know how to interpret the message. Meaning is always negotiated in the semiotic process, never simply imposed implacably from above by an omnipresent author through some global code (Hodge and Kress 1988). This is where the didacticism of much classic propaganda fails in persuasive terms, for example Soviet propaganda, which assumed a hypodermic model of opinion modification; Goebbels in contrast sought to disguise propaganda as entertainment. Traditional semiotics errs in viewing the relevant meanings as 'frozen and fixed in the text itself', to be extracted and decoded by the analyst by reference to a coding system that is impersonal and neutral and universal for users of the code (Hodge and Kress 1988).

The media text does not have one meaning but has to be interpreted. Rambo for example, within the social and political context that gave birth to it, so that the complete meaning of a propaganda event therefore emerges only when we study the society that produced it. Like many cultural theorists, Kellner (1995) argues that the audience is not 'a passive receiver of pre-digested meanings'. The domain of communication and culture cannot be clinically separated, and in Kellner's view they are an interactive system.

There are dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings. For the propagandist this presents the problem of the unintended reading, and the audience may not find a propaganda text stimulating in the ways expected. For example, propaganda texts are a great source of counter-propaganda. The Nazi epic *Triumph of the Will* was an imagistic warehouse for anti-Nazi propaganda, storing easily retrieved vistas of menacing

aggression. Audiences can resist a dominant interpretation and appropriate images to create their own meanings; thus, for example, men in a New York homeless centre were antagonistic to a movie sympathetic towards the police (this accords with Gramsci's model of hegemony and counter-hegemony: Kellner 1995). And when Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* (Bateman *et al.* 1992), an undeniably propagandist film, was shown to a group of Japanese students, they actually reacted slightly favourably towards business in their own country.

Negotiation of meaning

Much in film eludes precise study: it can be described but its nuanced nature makes analysis difficult. How do we dissect 'atmosphere' or tone? What ideological function do we ascribe to stylistic devices that qualify or even subvert a dominant ideological reading, such as a certain playfulness? Tasker (1993) complains of 'standards of truth against which popular films have been judged, standards which rarely admit the complexity of terms like fantasy'. The new critics' focus on surface forms provides, it is argued, 'a valuable qualification to a political understanding of popular texts as an uncontested space for the play of dominant ideology', since specific formal devices do not carry an innate or essential meaning.

Attempts to stigmatise the mass media as propaganda are usually doomed to failure because of the ideological elusiveness of much of their content. Yet, if political fixity is a characteristic of propaganda, it is rarely to be found in the popular cinema (Tasker 1993). As a consumer product, media must please target markets which are usually ideologically heterodox: seldom therefore do they issue an ideological clarion call, more an enigmatic invitation to interpretation. Entertainment is both an important source of propaganda and encapsulates the conundrum of its definition. Much entertainment that is characterised as propaganda by right and left-wing critics is seldom consumed as such by its audience, since such critics are really searching for a rhetorical bullet in an ideological war. Critics are much too willing to discern in texts the hand of the propagandist and this involves them simplifying the entertainment product in the cause of an ideological argument, such as those who dismissed the film *Michael Collins* because it had pre-invented the car bomb and other pedantic details. The entertainment industry knows that it is entertaining a politically plural audience, redneck as well as New York bohemian. Interpretation is left open. Classification as propaganda may represent the coercive imposition of a rigid interpretation that the facts do not support if 'facts' are taken to include the complete ensemble – narrative structure, surface decoration of texts, stylistic devices, dialogue, meaning brought to the role by actors

from their previous roles. The result is a complexity which does not so conveniently sustain classification as propaganda.

Nor does the mere possession of a dominant ideology – such as Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* (1971) persona, for example – necessarily amount to propaganda. The fact that people appropriate it as propaganda does not amount to the same thing at all. For example, *Blackhawk Down* is primarily a generic action movie, celebrating bravery, military comradeship, self-sacrifice. It could be 'read' as patriotic celebration or conversely as an indictment of failed political policy for which the soldier is made to pay. The plasticity of the Reagan-era *Top Gun* (1986) is more easily categorised as propaganda.

Alison Griffin (1995) discusses this in relation to the Welsh-language soap opera *Pobol y Cwm*, which raises the question of intent and negotiated meaning in propaganda, since it is a programme that subtly portrays an array of different attitudes and offers a dominant ideology, yet presents materials that can be used by nationalists as a source of support: 'competing pressures and subtexts indicate the ideological complexity of the soap's engagement with topical issues'. Issues, including socio-political ones, which, like cottage burning, gained in importance in the serial from 1988 remain 'negatively unresolved' and 'as a site of discursive struggle' meaning in *Pobol y Cwm* is not transmitted in any fixed or static way. Viewers 'produce' determinacy from non-determinate materials. A good example is the in-migration to the village of the boorish Birmingham publican Ron Unsworth, who wishes to bring strip-tease to the pub: yet the locals are seen to tolerate him. According to Griffin 'students interpret elements in the series as anti-English invader propaganda', adding that respondents told anecdotes antagonistic to English in-migration: 'there was little ambiguity in the respondents' reading of the "invasion" story-line and its invited ideological argument'. It is also possible to dwell excessively on the openness of texts to interpretation. While all texts are interpretable, it is important to recognise the concept of a dominant reading.

David Thorburn (1988) issues a number of important cautions against tendencies to discern in the media text the hand of the propagandist – or, at least, 'the fashion for seeking out what are said to be the ideological structures controlling cinematic discourse'. He believes that this risks severing itself from the way in which such texts were conceived and experienced by those who created them and by the audience who consumed them, and he adds, 'a scholarship insensitive to aesthetic features of the medium would be radically enfeebled'. In particular, he criticises Barnouw's work on the connection between 1960s spy series and US imperialism, since Barnouw regarded series such as *Get Smart* as US propaganda. Thorburn claims that in fact four of these six serials have a subversive and parodic energy and

that Barnouw falls into errors of interpretation because of his indifference to their aesthetic character, to tone and atmosphere, failing to perceive alternative textual interpretations such as their satire of the conspiratorial world view embedded in 'straight' or serious spy fiction

Thorburn accuses Barnouw of seeing only that the series envisaged Americans as living among unscrupulous conspirators who required a response in kind: camp villains were part of no core interpretative essence but simple surface features in ideological fables. He claims such readings are in fact typical of social science analyses of television (for example, at the Annenberg school): a more sophisticated school, Raymond Williams and his imitators, also would surface television's ideological substructures as apologia for advanced capitalism. Thorburn suggests that ideological pressures are not dictates; television in the Third Reich, by contrast, was being planned as a propaganda instrument, to be kept out of private hands and confined to public spaces. Television and film are 'consensus narratives', so created by myriad interactions between the text, its ancestors, competitors, authors, audience and socio-economic order. This communality explains their unoriginality and also their power to articulate the wisdom of the community: 'that inherited understanding is no simple ideological construct, but a matrix for values and assumptions that undergo a continuous testing, rehearsal and revision in the culturally licensed experience of consensus narrative'. (But if the meaning of such cultural texts were clearer they might indeed function as propaganda.)

Categories and scope of propaganda

As we have seen, critics differ in the elasticity of definition that they would ascribe to the word 'propaganda'. While we cannot permit a definition so broad that it ceases to possess an independent or operational meaning, our perspective is that current understandings have erred in restricting its meaning. To illustrate this breadth, we discuss the propaganda endowment of such diverse subjects such as war, architecture, music, bureaucracy. For even the date of an intended event can have propaganda merit and be nominated for that reason: 911, the emergency telephone number in the United States, was picked by Al-Qaeda with truly diabolical cunning; another example is Admiral Wemyss, with all the savvy of a Madison Avenue executive, choosing 11–11–11 as the moment – month, day and hour – for the conclusion of World War I. Even a coin can function as propaganda, such as the minting of the Vichy French coins which substituted for the anachronistic 'Liberté, egalité, fraternité' a new formula, 'Eglise, famille, patrie', to condense and express the values of the regime. Since propaganda is the

denial as well as the evangelisation of message, censorship also functions as propaganda. For example, no legal case in history can have quite so bizarre a title as 'The Government of the United States versus the Spirit of the American Revolution', but in 1917 the crime of depicting the British as America's enemies even in the context of the War of Independence was sufficient to merit a substantial (three-year) jail term (Kammen 1978).

Propaganda and the arts

The problem of dissecting the concept of propaganda lies also in its breadth, since so many theatres of human activity exhibit propaganda content. Architecture, for example, cannot be excluded from any discussion of propaganda – to involve it is not to extend the boundaries of the term, but to attempt to give it a completeness of definition. The fact that the master propagandist himself, Adolf Hitler, was such an enthusiast for architecture should suggest the *prima facie* existence of a connection between his twin passions. The Great Dictators were sponsors both of a massive conventional propaganda industry and architectural monumentalism in the pseudo-Romanism of Albert Speer, Stalinist baroque, or the triumphalism of Italian Fascist construction. Architecture is not merely associated with the propaganda of totalitarian dictatorships. Lutyens's New Delhi, though actually built largely after the publication of the Montague–Chelmsford report which started the clock ticking for the Raj, is an extraordinary and studied essay in imperial superciliousness: it is propaganda in stone.

The arts can also function as propaganda and, again, to apply the term is by no means to imply condescension. Manifestly, the greatest art has sometimes had propaganda intent: El Greco and Titian were propagandist celebrants of the Counter-Reformation, glorifying the wealth, power and renewal of the Roman church. David, similarly, was propagandist for Napoleon, evoking the radiance of his imperium. Shakespeare was an apologist and occasional propagandist for the Tudors in general, and in particular for Elizabeth I and for that brilliant conception of monarchy and legitimacy which was so beguiling to her court. Thus to say that art is 'propagandist' does not consign it to being mere crude iconic representation. Propaganda does not inevitably preclude the kind of nuanced subtleties critics find endearing. (Art ceases to be propaganda when it becomes art?) For example, the fierce dejection and fatalism evoked by Byron's *The Prisoner of Chillon* is art, a melancholic analysis of one man's fate, but also an impassioned curse on the authoritarian regimes which do this to people, i.e. propaganda, its meaning is both individual and universal (political). And the arts can be deliberately suborned for political purposes: the Information Research Department of Britain's Foreign Office, for example, had Orwell's

Animal Farm, an anti-communist allegory, translated so widely that it could even be read in Telugu and Norwegian (Adams 1993).

Categories: academic and education

Propaganda has normally been juxtaposed with education. The difference between propaganda and education 'lies in the idea that propaganda teaches people what to think whereas education teaches people how to think' (Smith et al. 1944). In fact education is seen as the real antidote to propaganda, but as Taylor (1994) suggests subversively, 'they might sometimes however be one and the same thing'. For example, Nazi mathematics textbooks expressed problems in terms of calculating the angle of attack of a dive bomber (Zmarzer 1991). All education programmes have their biases – in Spain, for example, the Armada of 1588 is portrayed as a trivial sideshow – yet many of the debates on education are ultimately about ideology and therefore, essentially, the use of education as propaganda. Some critics claim to see the content of modern education as at best an ideology of secular humanism, at worst liberal propaganda. For example, for some social conservatives (Chris McGovern, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 January 1997) 'much of the so-called British history boils down to little more than a mass of anecdotes and social history common to the whole of Europe. It is permissible, for example, to mention Nelson, but do not assume this means the battle of Trafalgar. It is as likely to be conditions below deck.' What then is propaganda? One could indeed argue that secondary education is overdetermined by various value systems, neither offensive nor subversive in themselves but certainly in tension with values that stress competitive national achievement both in war and in other theatres. This (more nationalist) perspective was omitted from the syllabus. The preference for social as opposed to political history is the articulation of a value preference, one moreover which is the subject of great debate among professional historians. If such a debate is in progress, has not been 'won' among the community of historians, why does the mass juvenile curriculum assume that it has?

And we are in fact back in a world very familiar to historians of education (themselves, that is, the use of education to perpetuate a dominant orthodoxy, in this case liberal but in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries nationalist and imperialist? 'The purpose of textbooks was to inculcate patriotism, plain and simple' (Kammen 1978). The Victorian schoolboy knew all about the greatness of national military heroes and their victories: he had also absorbed the ideology underpinning it, that England's cause was always just, and the empire existed for the betterment of the human race. Similarly, the literature – which he often had to learn by heart as poems – reinforced this ideology: he would learn Newbolt's 'Drake's Drum' and 'Vita Lampada'

or 'The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna' or 'The Last Fight of the *Revenge*'. There might indeed be a tentative literature of environment ('Woodman, Spare that Tree') but social histories, if taught at all, would be limited to Arthur Bryant (1942) vistas of stout English yeomen, their apple-cheeked children and blazing cottage hearths. A different age, perhaps, and one where the propagandist thread in education is readily identified, but is our own school history any more objective? Can only one ideological hegemony flourish in the education system at any one time, is there no value or possibility of ideological pluralism? Nowhere does this question of differentiation between propaganda and education arise with more acuity than in academia itself: for when does an academic discipline become special pleading or group interest advocacy, and when does *that* become propaganda? Academics may be involved in the disinterested search for truth, but they also partake in a ferocious battle over the distribution of resources: their aims, mission, findings and subject discipline are sold and sometimes oversold – for instance, by the claim that something (sociobiology, for example) is in fact a 'science'.

Journalism

Dr Goebbels, no slouch when it came to the analysis of propaganda, very properly observed, 'even the *Times*, the most democratic paper in the world, makes propaganda in that it deliberately gives prominence to certain facts, emphasises the importance of others by writing leaders or comments about them, and only handles others marginally or not at all' (Herzstein 1978). Goebbels understood, for he was contemptuous of explicit propaganda, dismissing the *Mythos* of Alfred Rosenberg as 'ideological belch'. The distinction between conventional journalism and journalism-as-propaganda is well illustrated by David McKie's (1995) contrast of the style of the *Mirror* and *Sun* newspapers in the 1992 general election. The *Sun*:

> campaigned with a style and a brutal wit which the *Mirror* rarely matched. The difference between the panache of the *Sun* and the *Mirror*'s predictability was the difference between the *Mirror*'s election-morning 'Time for a change' and the *Sun*'s 'If Kinnock wins today will the last person out of Britain please turn off the lights,' illustrated by a picture of Neil Kinnock's head in a light bulb.

Categories: direct action

Propaganda, one would imagine, is popularly identified with the macro-organisations of the powerful corporation, the nation state, the press magnate, the totalitarian empire. Given the particular course set by twentieth-century history, it is hardly surprising that propaganda is seen as

an activity of the omnipotent monoliths, and that perhaps we should be grateful to them for not using its persuasion alternative, coercion. The identity of propaganda in the late twentieth century shifted fundamentally in so many ways. It is especially true that propaganda is now no longer the exclusive prerogative of the holders of power: communications technology, particularly the internet, makes self-authorship possible. Everybody now can be a propagandist. Not even money is entirely necessary. All that is needed is determination.

Seen in this light, the idea of propaganda becomes more demonic to some and more acceptable to others. Propaganda is not only a means by which states and organisations can sustain their power and continuity, but also offers their miniature enemies a means of opposing them, such as the propaganda of direct action, and also, for anyone who can afford a computer, cyber-propaganda. Modern propaganda as a genre is a resource both of the powerful and of the puny. Propagandist direct action which is provocative enough, such as lesbian activists abseiling into the House of Lords, will stimulate public attention. Many intelligent citizens, who would never see themselves as victims of propaganda, are nevertheless members of single-issue groups: not everything those groups do is propaganda, and nor are those of their activities which can be described as propaganda always contemptible. Often such acolytes simply do not accept that what their group is in fact doing is engaging in propaganda. (It is necessary to enlighten them?) At its furthest extreme, direct action becomes terrorism and is represented by groups such as the Real IRA or, on a more diminutive scale, the Animal Liberation Front. Such groups eschew constitutional process: they do engage in conventional propaganda but spike it with acts of violence. For Schmid and de Graaf (Crelinston 1989) 'Terrorism cannot be understood only in terms of violence. It has to be understood primarily in terms of propaganda. Violence and propaganda, however, have much in common. Violence aims at behaviour modification by coercion. Propaganda aims at the same by persuasion. Terrorism is a combination of the two.'

Bureaucratic propaganda

War propaganda and revolutionary propaganda should be seen not as the (almost) exclusive contexts for propaganda, but rather as particular variants of it. Other kinds of propaganda might include, for instance, bureaucratic propaganda – the official accounts promulgated by government departments but, also, the way they manipulate information. Thus during the 1980s the definition of 'unemployment' was changed about fifty times by the British government. Altheide and Johnson (1980) assert that bureaucratic organisations through official accounts of themselves (propaganda)

create a self-justificatory world. They describe how bureaucrats draw on and reaffirm a socially constructed reality by exploiting the logic of 'official' information – statistics, annual reports and so forth (Rakow 1989). There is no such thing as neutral information?

The political forms of propaganda – political in the sense of being directed by the state itself – have been less overt and crude with the demise of the great dictatorships, but present and insidious nonetheless in this form of bureaucratic propaganda. 'Research' is manipulated and information massaged: measures of air pollution, for example, may be taken in streets where there is no traffic. 'Information' can also be ideological in character, such as the so called 'Parents' Charter' mailed to every single British home under the auspices of the former Conservative Education Secretary, John Patten. Then again, information can be censored or withheld, even ancient information. The British government long concealed items from World War I such as details about the trial of Sir Roger Casement, or even the sinking of the *Lusitania*, or information about Ireland in those years. What, for example, was the identity of that master spy who from 1884 to 1922 gave Dublin Castle full details of the activities of Irish nationalist conspirators? We still do not know (Richard Bennett 1995).

Some of what bureaucracy does is actually a propaganda activity, with the aim of increasing its power and diminishing its inconvenience. Bureaux seek the exercise of power for its own sake and to vindicate the magnitude of that power; and bureaucratic success is measured by the size of budgets and numbers of officials employed. Bureaux are organisations that seek permanence by self-perpetuation, they are thus their own self-justification and they seek their ends via, essentially, the control of information (in such methods as the denial of journalistic access). Incompetence is hidden, energy is invested in preventing secrets, such as the bombing of Cambodia, from being released (for example, the official persecution of 'Spycatcher' Peter Wright).

Bureaucratic propaganda is a fact of life in all societies. The official lies, evasions and bureaucratic fog often thrive beyond the radar screen of propaganda textbooks precisely because they seem to be the antithesis of what is publicly imagined to be propaganda, not high-decibel polemic but silent, mannered and arcane. Conventional propaganda is equated with lurid language but here is manifest the reverse – bureaucratic language actively seeks to sedate and it is therefore ignored. Bureaucratic propaganda delights in the language of obfuscation and obscurity, evasion and denial. It does, especially, seek to present itself as 'rational'. Administrative jargon masks ideological rigidities, proposals are made to seem logical and self-evident – indeed, the entire Nazi enterprise was often veiled in such bureaucratic formularies. 'Neutral' vehicles, e.g. reports, statistics, carry ideological

messages. The 'normality' of bureaucratic propaganda is enhanced by its espousal of bogus rationalism, such as the claim in Britain's BSE crisis (Harris and O'Shaughnessy 1997) that there was 'no clear evidence' that BSE could move from animals to humans (as if the requirements of scientific and civic veracity were the same). Moreover bureaucratic language is depersonalised, the author not an individual but a system.

War as propaganda

War is communication. The aim is seldom the complete physical extermination of the enemy but to persuade them to surrender: the object of war is therefore the enemy's morale. The activity of warfare is structured by propaganda objectives, and, partly because of this, wars are conducted inefficiently.

Strategy itself is often dictated by symbolic aims – the symbolic meaning of the place, rather than whether it is the easiest route or the most easily defended. The strategies of World War II are in particular a theatre of symbolism. For example, General Mark Clark's determination to capture Rome in 1944 rather than advance up Italy allowed Kesselring to regroup. Clark could, potentially, have cut off their retreat, but was more interested in the propaganda value of capturing Rome. In the Spanish Civil War Franco's strategy was distorted by the propaganda imperative of capturing the Alcazar of Toledo. This point could be made by innumerable other examples from the most famous campaigns in history: that propaganda value is a significant military objective and often overrides a rational military calculus. Notably of course there is Hitler's inflexible refusal to make a strategic withdrawal at Stalingrad when the Wehrmacht was trapped; Stalin, conversely, would hold the right bank of the Volga at any conceivable cost. Stalingrad was the symbolic pivot of World War II – and upon its outcome hung the future of the war. In World War I the equivalent was, perhaps, Verdun.

Thus propaganda and war are inseparable. In the twentieth century war had meant the mobilisation of vast civilian populations. They had to be convinced. For example, by the end of 1944 Dr Goebbels even withdrew 100,000 men from the front lines of the dying Reich – the size in effect of the current British army – to make a colour epic about Prussia surrounded during the Napoleonic wars, *Kolberg* (Herzstein 1978). Propaganda also muffles the reverses of war, as with Churchill's conversion of Dunkirk from physical defeat into a great (moral/rhetorical) victory.

Symbolic sites can be murderously contested when they engage with national myth. Nuremberg, the great stage of Nazi rallies, was militarily valueless but still the target of a notorious air raid. Battle may be sought purely for the imagery it generates. The 1968 Tet offensive by the North Vietnamese was, military, a failure, and the United States was the

unambiguous victor. Yet the US public – with Vietcong appearing even near the US embassy itself – were persuaded otherwise (Gustainis 1989). This victory became a US defeat because it was perceived as such. Thus propaganda is not just a branch of military activity. Military activity itself is inherently propagandist, in part, or entirely.

There can be no final closure in the debate on the meaning and definition of propaganda and there will always be those who regard the idea as bogus. But if the word has no meaning, under what other terms can we discuss the phenomena it purports to describe? More neutral forms and formulations give neither coherence nor intellectual direction: a word is a classification system, and definitions are meaningless if they would include everything from Goebbels to the 'Lost and found' column of the local newspaper in the same conceptual breath. Words focus perceptions, we cannot be said to 'know' what we lack a language to describe, and without this particular word we become desensitised to the ubiquity of its operation. For example, when Governor Pataki asked that New York schools should teach the great Irish famine as a Holocaust, that is, of deliberate causation, he is both undermining the historical primacy of the Jewish Holocaust and teaching children an erroneous lesson. The real comparator, with the 20 million dead of Mao's Great Leap Forward (1958–1961), and the derivative lesson on the rigid imposition of fundamentalist economic ideologies, is completely lost. Where propaganda is the text students come out of education not the less but the more ignorant. Why not, then, use the term?

2

Explaining propaganda

'Why propaganda?' This chapter seeks, if not to answer, then at least to understand that question better – or, more particularly, the persistence of propaganda into our own time. The salience of propaganda texts and events in history is not in doubt, although the measure of its impact is impossible to gauge and therefore permanently subject to dispute; the visible continuity of propaganda as a mode of social mobilisation beyond the wars and dictatorships of an earlier generation and into our own age does, however, require us to seek some explanation. Where the entire communications context is controlled, as in the old totalitarian dictatorships, as in the 'hermit kingdom' of North Korea today, the reasons for propaganda as a ubiquitous form of social control need little elaboration. What is more mysterious is why propagandas should still flourish in modern democracy, among a better-educated generation, one incubated moreover amidst the cacophony of mass media. Our cultural conditioning in Western countries includes the acquisition of learned defences against the blandishments of advocates and advertisers of every kind; indeed, did we not learn to filter out many of their messages, our reason and even our sanity would be in doubt. Yet propagandists continue in business via emotional appeals that exploit our uncertainty, stimulate our fantasy and take advantage of our credulity: we ask for belief, and the request is answered.

Propaganda, as has been discussed, is no recent, or ephemeral, historical phenomenon. The crusades, for example, were propelled on a cascade of ecclesiastical propaganda after Pope Urban's sermon at Claremont in 1095 (Taylor 1990), since the church wished to externalise the destructive energies of the delinquent knights who were ravaging early medieval Europe. While propaganda in some recognisable sense of the term has actually been a characteristic of all societies since people first formed organised

communities, and developed the ability to create the symbol systems that could lend them cohesion, the twentieth century may be called in particular the propaganda century – with as much legitimacy certainly as it might be termed, say, the 'scientific century' or 'the American century'. The explanation for the significance of propaganda as a driving influence on earlier twentieth-century history is not difficult to find. The coalescence of literacy with urbanisation and manufacturing and new tools of communication meant that authority was now more often negotiated than merely imposed. Hierarchical social orders found themselves challenged, or displaced. The need to persuade was now a necessary concomitant of the ability to command. The great dictators found persuasion not the less but the more necessary, their police states monitored not only or even primarily by policemen but by citizen informants, galvanised by propaganda. Moreover the nation state now sought more from its citizens – total mobilisation for total war, conscription, social ownership and even collectivisation. The need for mass persuasion arose out of the recognition that the threat of violence alone could not attain the ends the dictators sought

This does not really explain the success of propaganda today, in less naive and more open political cultures. A primary explanation for the persistence of propaganda in stable, supposedly rationally based and technocentric societies is the power of the impassioned emotive appeal alone with no reference to empirical evidence at all, and the tenacity of irrational beliefs once they have been acquired. The Chicago School idea of the rational public is derived from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. But there are other views of the public as irrational, and these raise possibilities of manipulation via communications technologies (Robins *et al.* 1987). For this authority 'the modern state is, necessarily and inescapably, the propagandist state'. People are in general not skilled critics of logic and argument, and we do not train them to be so. They may detect the lie and still behave as if they believe its truth; propaganda research has consistently demonstrated that people can respond favourably to a message even when it is obvious that it is biased.

Propaganda is also utopian. While it is impossible to ascribe a set of characteristics which would be comprehensively descriptive of the genre, in the sense that every propaganda text would embody them – since no such set of universal characteristics exist – the utopian idiom approximates closest to such a universal. Propaganda is, usually, an articulation of idealism and idealism is unthinkable without some vision of that end, the world picture, which is the object of idealist striving.

Thus in this chapter we first advance a theory-based argument that (1) the continuity of propaganda today lies particularly in the emotion-driven nature of our response to stimuli; that is, the emotional not the rational

appeal that affects us at almost every level of our activities; (2) in spite of the cynicism that may be derived from the spectacle of failed utopias, the utopian vision, the perfectibility of things, still arouses the activists and sometimes the targets of their activism; (3) then there are aspects of our cognitive processes – the way we deal with information – which may account for the continued vulnerability of our societies to propaganda, such as 'default beliefs', self-deception and fantasy, and the permanent possibilities of interpretation and shifting perspectives. In the second section of this chapter we explore how the continuity of propaganda as a genre is explained by the contemporary context – the delegitimation of coercive control, weakening of parochial loyalties, explosion of information sources, the ascent of single-issue groups as a dominant mode of political expression. In such a context, all loyalties are tentative and therefore the possibility of defection is ever-present, for where allegiance is rented it has to be continually renegotiated and thus the activity of persuasion cannot cease, making propaganda activity not the less but the more likely.

Why propaganda? (1) Theoretical approaches

Emotion: the supremacy of emotion over reason

Most propaganda is primarily emotional rather than rational in content. For Hitler, persuasion was only about the generation of collective emotion. 'They are like a woman, whose psychic state has been determined less by abstract reason than by an emotional longing for a strong force which will complement her nature. Likewise, the masses love a commander, and despise a petitioner' (Blain 1998). Emotion is the core of propaganda.

The notion of human decision making, whether political or consumer choice, as rational and not emotional has been the governing paradigm not only of economists but also of political science and marketing. Yet economists long clung to models of man as a utility-maximising rational decision maker: 'but as Searle (1995) argued, it is implausible to claim, in deciding what to eat in a restaurant, that we have some set of antecedent well ordered preferences and perform a set of calculations to get on to a higher indifference curve' (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003). In fact – as Laurence Moore demonstrated in *Selling God* (1994) and Marc Galanter in *Cults* (1989) – people can be entirely won over by a message even though it is totally bereft of any rational content at all, and the appeal is simply to social and emotional satisfaction. Velleman (2000) contradicts such theories as those which present political, social and consumer decision making as a calculus of pluses and minuses for the various options. Instead he sees

deliberation in decision making as in the main descriptive – we think in terms of self-described or other-described images of the choices available, whether a product or whatever. If decision making does indeed rest on multiple alternative descriptions, propaganda's opportunity to persuade lies in composing them. Faith can be based exclusively on trust without any real understanding. This is particularly true of the less well educated, who tend to use the 'likability heuristic', choosing primarily on the basis of feeling – the implicit favourite model – and then finding other evidence to justify choice. The search for evidence becomes subsequent, and not antecedent to, conviction.

The rational model of decision making ignores the power of emotional prejudice to outweigh illuminated factual truth, our ability subjectively to decry a fact as false even when we know it objectively to be true. In a study by Rozin *et al.* (1986) people willingly ate fudge shaped as a disc, but much less so when it was configured as animal droppings, and similarly with sugar which they saw poured from a bowl and into a box which was then arbitrarily named 'sodium cyanide'. Known facts cannot bleach out negative associations and the powerful emotions they inspire. The power of the emotional appeal in persuasion also arises partly out of our difficulty in resolving uncertainty, where there is no logical path but only multiple risk. Take the case of genetically modified foods. The concerned citizen remains mystified. One set of partisans point to the potential of GM crops to liberate the Third World from hunger, they argue also that fewer pesticides are required, less land needs to be cultivated, allowing more of the natural environment to flourish. Their opponents also claim closure in the debate by simple reference to the rhetoric of 'Frankenstein foods'. Previously we have argued (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003) that people do not react in proportion to the probability of some particular outcome: epistemic emotions exist independently of assessments of logical probability – in fact simply to imagine an event causes emotion, even if the probability of it occurring is in fact zero. Even when there is a recognition that some outcome is highly unlikely there is always wishful thinking, while insecurity and uncertainty create a vigorous market for dogmatic reassurance.

Today there is no real reason to believe that rationality in public discourse has greater sway than in the past. Some would argue that today there is a cultural drift towards more extrovert emotion-driven forms of behaviour and therefore of persuasion, with our inquisitorial media, confessional talk shows, etc. Many public manifestations of a mood of anti-science make no attempt at reason; the rejection of genetically modified crops, while in itself not irrational, was hyperbolic in expression. If human beings were indeed rational decision makers there would be little need for propaganda. Since all decisions imply goals, they therefore invoke values, and the emotions that

express, power and undergird those values. Decisions involve choices and trade-offs and these are seldom value-free or devoid of emotion. It would be a very peculiar, unique perhaps, propaganda that relied on reason alone – a superficial, or social, assent might be secured by mere logical exposition, but often not conviction and the commitment that flows from conviction: indeed, rhetoric and feelings have by a tradition going back to Aristotle been viewed as the opposites of reason and logic, even gendered opposites, feminine and masculine. Persuasion and propaganda may involve tactical appeals to reason, but in general a process of logical exposition is peripheral to it. Rarely can a process of logical demonstration entirely convince, since it cannot remove all doubts – and where there are doubts, reassurance and therefore further persuasion are needed. We have claimed (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003) that in symbolic logic, by contrast, there is only one solution – answers are demonstrated, errors exposed, in a deductive process. In life, decisions both trivial and life-changing must often review different perspectives, different interpretations, so that persuasion becomes possible.

Thus the appeal of propaganda is in general to emotion and not to reason. It proceeds by dogmatic assertion, as if there could be no debate on the propositions advanced: in Le Bon's words 'an orator wishing to move a crowd must make an abusive use of violent affirmation' (Herzstein 1978). Dogmatic assertion does convince, it elevates mere value judgement to the status of truth or law and, contrary to Petty and Cacioppo (1981), people are persuaded by such when they are content to delegate their thinking to others, be it pundit, priest or politician. Constant assertion can stun consciousness, naturalising the perverse as normal and interrupting internal dialogue to prevent counter-arguing. For propaganda is not a nuanced production; in it assertion has little qualification and the arguments of opponents are parodied rather than rebutted. There is frequent recourse to *ad hominem:* opponents presented as either bigoted or self-interested; repetition, simplification and black–white polarisation. Reagan, for example, would use anecdote and metaphor rather than argument, introducing citizens who had performed some selfless act, promulgating a never-never land of trickle-down effects and Laffer curves. Evidence is not to be assessed or explained, but manipulated or invented. Propaganda texts contain scant recognition or capacity for intellectual abstraction, they are actively antagonistic to abstract thought, eschewing the tentative, the complex line of argument, the weighing and debating of evidence. The concern of the propagandist is not with how we think but how we feel.

There are numerous instances of propaganda and advertising exploiting this fear of emotional manipulation by claiming an appeal grounded purely in reason. This is, of course, an emotional appeal in itself. Governments are

particularly prone to making it in the face of some catastrophic error, contrasting their reason with their critics' emotion, and this is the rhetorical core of the propagandist argument whenever the state or big business has committed some wrong and will not own up to it: whether the victims of nuclear tests, victims of Gulf War syndrome, BSE, particular drugs or much else. Propaganda aimed at sophisticated targets has, however, long found it necessary to page homage to reason. As Taylor (1990) suggests, 'Allied propaganda in World War II did not give up the blond beast and yellow peril strategies, but took into greater account the need to explain what people were fighting for and what institutions they were defending.' Even Goebbels felt impelled to create an 'intellectual' weekly, *Das Reich*, to counterbalance the intellectually moribund Nazi media.

Utopia

Much propaganda would seem to register the existence of a utopia – it can be a hoped-for utopia, or a utopia irretrievably buried in the past. Many political extremists are disappointed utopians, and the vision of a perfect world or world order, its possibility, perfectibility or existence in the past, is the undisclosed presence behind propaganda. This would account for the harshness of some propagandas and their rejection of any offer to compromise, as the achievement of whatever utopia their creators have in mind continually eludes their grasp, as, in an imperfect world, it is bound to do. It is the impatience with the messiness, fluidity and compromise of the real world that marks the propaganda order. Thus activists rejected the claim of the first deaf Miss America, Heather Watson, to be ambassador for the deaf (*Sunday Telegraph*, 26 March 1995). Hard-line advocates of cultural deafness resented the fact that she had learned to lip-read such that it was difficult to guess a disability. The current orthodoxy dictated that sign language is the only acceptable form for communication for the deaf. Deaf advocates protested, saying that she had no right to represent people whose culture she was unfamiliar with. In the words of one deaf ideologue, she might be clinically deaf, but she didn't have the social identity of a deaf person

A vision of the perfectible does sustain belief. It assuaged the insecurities of the newly urbanised twentieth-century publics, and helped satisfy mankind's need for meaning and a coherent value system. This would perhaps help explain fundamentalisms with their contempt for the ambivalence of the secular world. From socialist realist art to the imbecile ecstasies of consumer advertising, the 'dull footage' is edited out, in Schudson's (1982) terms, a Panglossian best in the best of all possible worlds. Adams *et al.* (1986) have analysed Reagan's 1984 election campaign as a 'manipulation of romantic pastoralism'. One photograph that appeared in *Ti*

depicted Reagan beneath a huge mural of 'Reagan country' – hills, farms, rivers – symbolic of the virtues for which Reagan ostensibly stood – thrift, hard work, patriotism, etc. Such imagery occurred in his television advertising and campaign biopic: 'America had wandered, he told us, and the symbolism of traditional rural life becomes a way of telling us what we had left behind.' But this need for utopia is what unites, conceptually and stylistically, all propaganda. A yearning for the primordial, for the pure – for a perfect world, in fact – is prelapsarian fantasy.

For Mircea Eliade (1991), we long for something altogether different from the present instant, something either inaccessible or permanently lost, in fact he argues that it is really a yearning for paradise itself. On this argument, behind the hectoring, the meanness perhaps of much propaganda, lies the search for paradise, rage at its loss and some half-articulated idea that it once existed. Hence, for example, Rubin (Kevles 1994) summarises Rachel Carson's vastly influential *The Silent Spring* (1962) thus: 'such popularisations have an excessively evangelical tone, akin to that of the temperance movement, which urges environmentalism upon us not only to preserve the earth but also to achieve a kind of personal salvation'. Nostalgia is one form of this paradise – in Eliade's view, the most abject nostalgia discloses the nostalgia for paradise. This, I think, is true of many political cultures – for example, the yearning in later Rome for the pristine, ascetic-heroic virtues of the Republican era. This is no mere romantic speculation – Wiener (1981), for example, in his *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* demonstrates the way a yearning for a lost rurality, an arcadia of Merrie England, permeated the culture, with negative consequences in his view. In World War II this rural England was, time and again, the symbol in posters and films such as *Mrs Miniver*. But nostalgia is not perhaps exactly the right word to describe what is going on in propaganda. As Webster (1988) says of populist rhetoric, it is important to see it as a 'strategic mobilisation of the past rather than nostalgia'. Indeed, the pasts of the propagandist bear little relation to the historical past – the Nazi creation, for example, of aboriginal 'Germania', was largely an exercise in fiction, and Webster argues that the American 'new right' was a mass of contradictions. It managed to conscript a mythologised past social community in the service of free-market rhetoric. Reagan 'has been said to speak for old values in current accents' and 'like the nation, of which he is such a representative figure, he is a contradiction in terms – a hero of the consumer culture preaching the Protestant ethic'.

The anthropologist Mary Douglas (1996) argues that the most basic choice that a rational person has to make is the choice about the kind of society to live in or, if you like, his or her preferred life style. People are viewed as continuously trying to bring about their ideal form of community life. In other words, the superordinate value for any person is his or her ideal

form of community and it is the emotional attachment to this idea which dominates as a concern. Douglas would view human beings as innately utopians, so much so that she even infers the co-ordinating principle in all consumer purchases as being protest against other competing ways of life. If this is so, and it is certainly a minority view, the utopianism inscribed in much propaganda becomes not merely explicable but perhaps essential to its persuasive force.

Always open to persuade: why the activity of persuasion can never cease

We are always, at least potentially, open to persuasion, and therefore to that variant of persuasion known as propaganda. We may on occasion disobey the most dearly held principle or ideal, since principles are never specific commands but general rules, thus raising the possibility of deviance in any particular instance. We may be environmentally conscious shoppers but lapse on occasion: as Levitin and Miller (1979) show, the relationship between general ideology and specific choice is not strong. Our choices are not linear projections from our principles – if they were, our beliefs would be extraordinarily tenacious and saturate every action we undertook. Many decisions are complex and ultimately incoherent, drawing upon myriad beliefs and values, some contradictory, some changing in intensity according to context. If our principles do represent imprecise general rules rather than specific commands, the possibility of persuasion must exist in perpetuity, since there is always a potential openness in the application of the general rule to the specific case, a flexibility propaganda can always exploit.

The art of propaganda lies in changing perspectives, and to change perspectives we have to alter interpretation, to interpret the emotion-arousing situation in a different way so people reassess its significance. This is a debate not about the truth of facts in themselves but about their meaning, and there is no challenge offered to values *per se* but to value judgements, which are reinterpreted. This process is in its fundamentals emotional, not, as de Sousa (1990) says, some sequence of logical inference but of emotional argument with the aim of persuading the audience to share a perspective or conjure up a certain experience. Only then, when both parties are conscious of sharing the same perspective, can rational argument and logical inference proceed. The cunning propagandist will not proceed by assault. The targets and values will appear to have been left intact and the new argument will stress how the new interpretation coheres with the old values. For example the Irish Georgian Society sought to combat nationalist prejudice against the preservation of Irish country houses as relics of colonial rule by proclaiming them the handiwork of Irish craftsman and

artisans, and thus worthy of celebration. In this sense, good propaganda is subversive, since only by subversion can effective persuasion proceed. Commercial ads, for example, may seek to assuage guilt through reinterpretation, particularly violations of the rules acquired from past authority figures like parents, hence Kentucky Fried Chicken identified its core marketing problem as guilt, which it sought to assuage with the slogan 'It's nice to feel so good about a meal' (Aaker and Myers 1989). We see examples of this attempt to shift interpretation all the time. Opponents of the death penalty in the United States, for example, now castigate it as another case of government incompetence. Why should we trust government to be any more efficient at organising death fairly and effectively than it is at any of the other activities it undertakes? They are speaking the language of the political right in the service of a liberal cause.

Propaganda does not try to change values, it attempts to conscript them. Every advocate knows that values are almost impossible to alter overnight, they move slowly over time as a result of exposure to rival arguments and mature reflection. This is because values are difficult to change, since they are not open to factual correction. We do not refer to Mill's 'proof' of liberty but to his magnificent defence of liberty. Values can be neither proved nor disapproved. They are also part of a structure – to alter one is to alter the relationship of all the variables in the system, a potentially life-changing event. Propaganda seeks only to interpret those values to yield different value judgements.

Default beliefs

Propaganda can also be irrational but effective because it mobilises an individual's system of default beliefs; discarded thoughts and the fragments of defunct ideology may still survive, shadows that flit about in the recesses of our minds. They may come back, if for example conditions change, challenging more recent structures of belief and even demolishing them. This is why today, although antisemitism seems almost invisible, we shouldn't still fear it as a past fact and as a future possibility. The same is true of academia: rejected concepts and theories may linger on even after their intellectual rejection, to become what Thompson (1979) calls 'excluded monsters' – for example, Weber's thesis on Protestantism and the rise of capitalism.

Thus explanations for the effectiveness of propaganda may lie in the fact that many beliefs and attitudes exist unknown to us. Propaganda is often effective where it 'resonates', surfacing (Schwartz 1973) half-submerged, barely articulated fears and aspirations that lie beneath the level of everyday consciousness. Thompson's *Rubbish Theory* (1979) has relevance here.

In this theory, people who do not transport some relevant belief to the next stage of some plan of action are regarded as 'throwing away' the belief. The belief may stay 'hidden' in the mind, existing as a kind of default belief, and it is to this that propaganda can appeal, arousing ancient enmities that had been buried. The example of the Balkans is pertinent here, where a war which had occurred within the context of World War II was refought, with a recrudescence of the old labels and the old warpaint. It is also true of stereotypes, which do not die so much as hibernate; propaganda refreshes and reinvigorates them. Clinton, for example, had not been 'high tax, high spend' but that image of the Democrats can always be easily resurrected by their Republican antagonists.

The impact of propaganda can be very long-term indeed, encouraging adherence to a cause long after defeat has become inevitable or even already occurred. Hopeless causes still have life left in them, testament to the enduring power of propaganda. There are many reasons for this:

> we do indeed have aspirations to bring about something but, on occasions, recognise our goals will never be realised (e.g. to reintroduce laws prohibiting pornography) but pursue hopeless causes because it makes us feel we are doing something to bring about our vision; the cause may be lost, but it is not silent. Lost causes litter the landscape of history and pass on from one generation to another. Expectancy theory is impoverished when it ignores the expressive meaning of action, with expressive meaning involving the emotions. Expressive action contrasts with instrumental action. While instrumental action is a means, designed to get things done, expressive action permits us to ventilate our feelings or emotion. (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003)

Second, whereas beliefs may be changed by new information, emotions do not necessarily cohere with them, at least not straight away. They may continue to carry the charge created by past propaganda; beliefs have an after-life as well as a shelf life.

Self-deception

A further explanation for the persistence of propaganda is its role in self-persuasion; the propagandist, whether party activist or Mormon missionary, internalises adherence by the activity of propagandising. In other words, the function of the propaganda can degenerate into servicing the psychological needs of those who produced it in the first place. Thus Herzstein (1978) has argued that 'by 1944 Goebbels was making propaganda as much for himself and the leadership as for the masses'. He argues that the later products of Nazi cinema and the slogan 'Victory in death' represented 'visions of salvation'. For the Nazi elite films such as the colour film

Rite of Sacrifice, where at the end eternity beckons with a heavenly chorus, were allegories of the end. The aim was to transcend the doom-laden present via belief in an immortality conferred by the approving judgements of history and future generations of Germans.

Self-deception is thus another consequence of propaganda: it may also be an intentional objective. We can become co-conspirators in our own self deceit. 'Self-deception' is not necessarily always motivated by an aversion to some truth but, on occasions, simply motivated by affection for some particular falsehood. (This is particularly true when through self-deception we neutralise an ethical dilemma.) Some, for example, continue to believe that the practice of the Roman Catholic religion was once illegal in Ireland, although it never was. Self-deception involves refusal to face facts, or to lend them an utterly perverse but self-serving interpretation. Often the deft propagandist wants us to do this, the aim of the propaganda being to serve up plausible reasons for that frivolous interpretation, or for those 'facts' being untrue. And the potential is endless. The historian David Irving, for example, can describe Auschwitz as a labour camp with an unusually high mortality rate (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 April 1994). Presumably he seriously believes this. And any evidence can be twisted round: he can assert that Hitler gave no recorded, direct instruction for the Holocaust (true, but in the context meaningless). When challenged with the lack of evidence for a world Jewish conspiracy, for example, the paranoid antisemitic will claim that this merely illustrates the cunning of the Jews. While we see this as mere self-deception or irrationality, there are also other explanations. The truth can be impossibly painful – and self-deception may thus be a necessary strategy for survival: we are seduced by the propagandists because they offer us a way of coping. People thus persist in adherence to beliefs despite all the evidence to the contrary. So Germans continue to believe in the essential decency of the German army, the Wehrmacht, in World War II while fully accepting the evil of the overtly Nazi institutions: many found great difficulty in accepting the extent to which the army itself was complicit in Nazi atrocities, as the outraged reaction to an exhibition on this theme in Germany revealed (*Crimes of the Wehrmacht: Dimensions of the War of Annihilation, 1941–1944*, Berlin Institute of Contemporary Art, November 2001). Moreover self-deception may mean simply adherence to dominant values, avoiding the social awkwardness of questioning them, at least publicly, and the embarrassment of standing out: self-deception can be a group phenomenon and not just apply to the individual. If propaganda succeeds with part of a community, it can in fact impact all of a community since even majorities can be tempted simply to 'go along' with the strongest opinion rather than the most representative.

Fantasy

Hyperbole does not make the mistake of asking for belief – it is a fantasy which we are invited to share, explicit and even paranoid, but the fantasy does nevertheless affect perceptions of the reality. One form of hyperbole is classic atrocity propaganda, for example the British claim in World War I that the Germans melted bodies for fat. Such exaggerations work not because people necessarily believe them but because they are willing co-partners in a process of self-deceit of which they may be fully conscious. They want to see their own darkest fears and angry broodings made visible and luminous. Propaganda does that for them. In other words, there is a political truth that exists independent of the objective factors in a given situation. Propaganda is hyperbole – not all propaganda, certainly, for hyperbole is a manifestation rather than a condition of propaganda. The aim of hyperbole-fantasy is to trigger self-persuasion by getting people to imagine some event, encounter or person; they talk themselves into believing or desiring something via this process of self-imagining. Much consumer advertising is also an invitation to share a fantasy, with the hope that imagining using the product will create an inner dialogue. Hyperbole became the rhetorical reflex of Serb media in the fragmentation of ex-Yugoslavia. For some time before the Serb invasion of Kosovo, the Serb media carried anti-Izvet propaganda claiming that he would establish a Muslim state. Pointing out that non-partisan sources of information such as the BBC were available to Serbs, Zimmerman (1995) claims that people did not want to know the truth: they seem to know the difference between news and propaganda, yet when a choice is available most choose propaganda.

The argument is that propaganda is often a co-production and that people lend to it a suspension of their disbelief, and they have a need to see what they recognise as their own fantasies reflected in equally fabulistic media, their own lies to themselves reflected and sustained by the larger lies of the public space. When critics claim that propaganda is 'manipulative', they perhaps envisage a passive recipient. While some propaganda exchanges may resemble this hypodermic form, what is often going on in the propaganda process may be more subtle. The idea of people willingly misled strikes at the root of the concept of man as a rational decision maker, yet surely this is what occurred in Serbia, Rwanda and elsewhere.

While much propaganda can be said to involve exaggeration – that, almost, is part of its definition – and indeed active misrepresentation, undeniably it sometimes involves the manufacture of falsehood to the extent that its texts are even forgeries. Here we are in the realms of active fabrication and deceit. Yet propagandists can do this almost openly with the audience even conscious of the falsehood being perpetrated, becoming willing co-conspirators of an act wherein they themselves are in a sense the

victims. Once again the explanation is that they are really being invited to share in a mutual fantasy of anger, a point missed by critics who too easily reach for words like 'gullible' and 'naive', assuming the audiences have no recognition of the techniques being used. An example of this is 'morphing' (Johnson 1997). When Professor Harold See stood in the 1996 Alabama Supreme Court election, one advertisement showed a skunk fading or 'morphing' into the image of Harold See with the words 'Some things you can smell a mile away ... Harold See doesn't think average Alabamans are smart enough to serve on juries.' Stamped on his face were the words 'slick Chicago lawyer'. A self-styled 'Committee for Family Values' produced an advertisement claiming that See had a secret past and had abandoned his family, allegations he strongly disputed. In fact, he won. Another case, in California, related to the murder of twelve-year-old Polly Klaas. In 1996 one of the Democratic candidates for Congress, Professor Walter Capps, was attacked thus by commercials: 'when the murderer of Polly Klaas got the death penalty he deserved, two people were disappointed . . . Richard Allen Davies, the murderer. And Walter Capps.' Commercials showed images of Davies and Capps with the labels Davies 'the murderer' and Capps 'the liberal'. Davies and Capps were 'run' as a kind of double ticket. Congressman Vic Fazio found that the face of Davies was morphed through computer graphics into his own even though he had not voted against the death penalty for several decades (Johnson 1997).

Why propaganda? (2) Modern conditions

Social control

Propaganda, whatever else it may be, functions as a form of social control in the modern world, a substitute for social coercion and for more passive forms of social persuasion. Some social control is always necessary, but its potentials remain both liberal and illiberal, given the question of its form, extent and source (who wields it). Propaganda is 'soft' social control, prison is 'hard' and generally the most extreme alternative. Ellul (1973) sees propaganda as made necessary by technological society and that its end 'is the integration of man into the technological system'. He believes that we should teach people to live in and against Technology. Many have echoed him. Thus 'propaganda is subsumed into the form and structure of social control' (Robins *et al.* 1987). Propaganda is seen as a key element in the ability of advanced industrial and post-industrial societies to organise and integrate themselves and exert some sort of authority over their individualistic publics: otherwise 'how can we have a public body but not a public mind?'

and this is because 'coercion has been delegitimised' (Robins *et al.* 1987), yet modern society is very heterogeneous, so that 'the engineering of consent is one of the great arts to be cultivated'. Propaganda is the cheaper way of doing this (Lasswell 1971).

Social change

Change entails uncertainty, and it is to the insecurities created by major social upheavals that propaganda has often, in the past, appealed. Such uncertainty can be extreme enough to constitute a national mood – the classic study by Cantril (1963), which examined perverse social/national movements such as Nazism, illuminated the evolution of pan-national moods. In such moods of nervous pessimism we yearn for the security we have lost and the emotional anchors that have been taken from us; there is a huge market in nostalgia, exploited by politicians, and by advertising: 'social change in particular is emotional because there can be no non-users' (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2003). The propagandist will thus contrast the turbulent or inadequate present with some imagined Golden Age – this was true not least in the case of the Romans themselves, whose literature and political rhetoric often sought to contrast the degeneracy of the empire with the imaginary austere and stoical virtues of the ancestral republic embodied in figures like Cincinnatus; their habit, the strategic mobilisation of the past to critique the present, found many subsequent imitators. The mood is one of fear as social values erode, the familiar disintegrates, the old loyalties are betrayed, the old truths falsified and people grasp for simple certainties and reassurance, with persuasion by authoritarian figures and didactic assertion rather than logical argument.

The question 'Why propaganda?' may thus be partially answered by reference to the prevailing level of social insecurity: Nazi propaganda, for example, produced a negligible level of response until there were 7 million unemployed Germans. While a society may in general feel secure, particular subgroups may not. In the early 1990s, for example, the previous high level of job security enjoyed by middle managers disappeared along with the mutual loyalty they received from, and gave to, corporations. Suddenly they were being delayered and downsized, and a new kind of populist managerial literature, often anecdotal and anti-empiricist, appeared to minister to their insecurities.

Information overload

Another reason for the rise of propagandistic forms of persuasion in our society lies in the very complexity of life today – the pressure of multiple

information sources and the judgements they demand, and the consequent need to digest information quickly. The cognitive environment is certainly information-saturated, with the internet and e-mail, direct mail and so forth. The trend of the entire twentieth century was towards the multiplication of information sources; the Infobahn and 200 channel satellite television and their merging have taken all this to unimaginable new heights. The offer of propaganda is the cognitive short cut. We become, of necessity, cognitive misers. We need, across a whole range of issues, from our consumer decisions to our opinions on the politics of other countries, to depend on the advice of others. Otherwise life would be impossible. As Mayhew (1997) says, a 'realistic account of how influence works cannot ignore the fact that people regularly accept on faith, without independent verification the pronouncements of others'; if every opinion on every issue, if every minor decision, had to be interrogated and researched, we could not function for a single day: 'it is this very reliance on the views of others that offers the possibility of manipulating agreement'.

Ambivalent opinion

The opportunity for the propagandist lies essentially in the confusion, the tentativeness of public opinion. We are seldom without opinions, but, mostly, they are weakly held. That is why the minority church of strong believers in anything from the right to bear arms (NRA) in the United States to the pro- and anti-foxhunting lobbies in the United Kingdom fight the polemical war so vigorously. Perhaps we seek to avoid the intellectual labour of reason and the moral labour of keeping an open mind. Moreover communication has to penetrate noise and contextual density and this in itself is a reason for recourse to the methods of propaganda, since they guarantee us a more likely hearing. For we have become Toquevillean man to excess – only the lurid bestirs us from introversion and petty cares. We also exhibit a latent want for variety, away from that familiar which reassures but also bores us.

Today political action, political participation of every kind, becomes a part of the leisure market, and competes for money and consumers with other kinds of leisure activities. The demise of parties and in particular the class structures which gave them an automatic corpus of support has led, in electoral terms, to a new consumerism in which the loyalty of voters is rented. The coalescence of spending power and New Media creates choices, mass partisanship, of every kind, becomes enfeebled and the inherited wisdom and mythological structures of communities expire with their decline. Persuasion territory is up for grabs. The negotiation of multiple pressures makes people vulnerable, and while local wisdom represented one possible defence

against propaganda, departure from traditional ways of knowing makes its ascendancy more likely: mobile, urbanised society becomes a cultural and ethical vacuum and polemic fills the space vacated by tradition. So a trigger for propaganda is the poverty of social integrating mechanisms in techno-centric market-place democracy. The old identities of community are edited out and a decline of social hierarchy leads to the demise also of ritualised, inherited loyalties; persuasion, not the command of traditional authority sources – teacher, parson, parents, or the coercion of community and social pressures – becomes more important. All authority is tentative, and when authority is negotiated, persuasion becomes central.

Single-issue groups

Another manifestation arising out of the fragmentation of the old mono-lithic certainties and the social organisations that were their expression are single-issue groups, and their ubiquity is a driving force behind propaganda (see Chapter 5). They were the political phenomenon of the late twentieth century. It is through propaganda that they are created and sustained and impact the legislative agenda. Single-issue groups arise as an organised response to an emotional call to action: a consequence of propaganda therefore further becomes a manufactory of it, for it would be difficult to describe the literature and generated imagery of single-issue groups in any other terms. Some of them are now actually bigger than the political par-ties, as animal rights, abortion and so forth intrude on to mainstream agen-das and usurp them (Richardson 1995). The emotional satisfactions of adherence to a single-issue group are stronger than party activism for many because there are fewer ideological compromises. They exert an immediate emotional appeal. For an issue can be personalised in the way a political party cannot be, the issue becomes 'our' issue, and participation becomes a hedonistic consumer activity, and also an act of social display. There is thus a symbolic aspect to single issue membership, it becomes part of our identity, one of the ways in which we articulate our social self.

News manufacture

A further reason for the pervasive extent of modern propaganda lies in the press's need for a condensed story with a hero and villain and a moral so that the press is enlisted, though perhaps unintentionally, as participant in a propaganda battle. This demand for a story is inherent in the organisation and culture of the press itself, and derives from both the imperative neces-sity of news 'production' and humanity's deep-seated need for myths that give structure and meaning to the fluid, amorphous events of life. The love

of a good story, with plot, character, dramatic suspense, powerful conclusion and eloquent moral is so universal among cultures, of such antiquity as a human activity, that after Pulitzer (see below) first recognised the value of story as a framing device in the nineteenth century it became the dominant pattern of press discourse. This does not make the press story axiomatically propaganda, but it does explain why the press often appears to become self-conscripted as a propagandist agency. Its need for heroes, villains, scandal, lessons, its self-conceived role as moral agent and bringer of retributive justice, scourge of the hubris of power, make its product sometimes indistinguishable from propaganda.

Under this melodramatic quest narrative, the antecedent complexities of situations are ignored because they cannot be expressed in simple story or metaphor. News is quite literally produced – material must be fabricated round pre-existing narrative structures – and all nuance is avoided. Events – such as the savings and loan debacle in the United States, whose genesis was long maturing – appear nevertheless to happen suddenly. In line with this, there is often a need to identify some evil individual or community and likewise a hero combating them, with the finality of closure, and if villains cannot be identified they can be conjured up via the rhetoric of implication with phrases like 'no proof yet'. As Crelinston (1989) has remarked, 'it is increasingly recognised by people both within the industry and by people who study the news that the distinction between news and entertainment is not a sharp one'.

One term for this can be the 'news manufacture' approach, and while 'news manufacture' is not conceptually identical to propaganda the two have obvious affinities, and sometimes they become one and the same. The blame for this – if indeed blame there should be – lies with the introduction by Joseph Pulitzer of emotion into staid narrative: he brought drama to the news, with plots, story and colour. Newspapers hitherto had contained dry accounts of government activity, but Pulitzer authored blaring headlines, big pictures and eye-catching graphics: emotional immediacy is striven for rather than rational exposition (Vanderwicken 1995). As Crelinston argues, 'contextualising incidents bores people'. News is a commercial product sold in a competitive market place, and to succeed it must be vibrant, original, emotional and easily understood – classic attributes, in fact, of propaganda.

At times even a free press can conspire to present a powerful 'dominant view' against which all other opinion is perceived as deviant. When opinion becomes universal among major press protagonists like this, not only the techniques but also the effects resemble those of propaganda. Such an occasion was the British general election of 1992, when the Labour Party under Neil Kinnock was leading at the polls. The press decided to crucify

him, with for example the *Sun* newspaper's eight-page extravaganza 'Nightmare on Kinnock Street' (see Chapter 6)

Postmodernism

The explanation for the continuity, even renaissance, of propaganda can also be understood in terms relevant to the postmodernist – the universe of postmodernism is also the universe of propaganda. The extremer (i.e. French) postmodernists tend to reject notions of objective standards, for them there are no absolutes and there is no sovereignty of truth, everything becomes a matter of interpretation. Since reason is more suspect, emotional judgements at once acquire greater legitimacy, the Enlightenment reverence for reason, the rational vision of Max Weber, for example, are superseded by greater faith in the validity of our feelings. In asserting this, such postmodernists would claim to be describing the world they find, as well as justifying it at the intellectual level. In abandoning notions of objective truth, the more radical of the postmodernists credentialise propaganda. If there are no absolute standards, a balanced, rigorous analysis is of no greater account than emotive speculation. A propaganda text is accorded greater respectability, it is interrogated for meaning and significance, but it is not despised because it is propaganda. Moreover, since no truth is absolute, the search for truth becomes less pressing as an objective, or even ceases to be an objective at all. The relationship between propaganda and postmodernism lies in the confusion of the real and imaginary. For the postmodernist, the border between the real and the simulated is confused: we inhabit an era of simulacra, of hyper-reality, a time in which the image transcends the word and television is more significant than print, where traditions and communities have withered and where identity definers are found in exaggerated symbol systems. The postmodernist order both inspires propaganda and explains it, since propaganda is a creative process that focuses on the confectionery of image and symbol.

Explaining propaganda: insights from the social sciences

No work on propaganda could sensibly ignore the insights generated by the social sciences. While this remains a condensed and random summation, and is speculative, it does suggest further possibilities for the analysis of the study of propaganda. We outline some of the principal ways in which psychology and sociology can offer explanatory depth, since propaganda is

(1) a social phenomenon experienced in social contexts, (2) an irrational phenomenon, lending credibility to the incredible.

Explanation in psychology

Behaviourism (see O'Shaughnessy 1992)

Classical conditioning. All forms of behaviourism are based on a presumption that behaviour is caused by external environmental factors that condition behaviour to respond accordingly. Classical conditioning rests on the supposition of the occurrence of involuntary reflexes which are said to make the associations compelling, and the traditional view is that all conditioning assumes unconscious learning. The ceaseless drum beat of incessant repetition may contribute to propaganda's conditioning effects. Napoleon and Hitler used pseudo-classical symbols, but there are also commercial symbols such as the Marlboro cowboy, and such symbols may be said to evoke, on occasion, a conditioned response. For the notion of conditioning is surely plausible in certain circumstances where the weight of previous association is strong, symbols of ethnic and national stereotypes such as, for example, the symbol of John Bull and the range of associations attributed to him. Classical conditioning also has a place in rhetoric, where the loaded rhetorical term creates compelling associations, as when we refer to Dickensian conditions, Rachmanite landlords and so on.

Operant conditioning. Operant conditioning represents a more liberal idea of conditioning. The core notion is that all living organisms are spontaneously enacting behaviour and whenever this action is reinforced it increases the possibility of recurrence; unless the response is reinforced it faces extinction. Operant conditioning implicitly assumes that people behave not so much out of any conscious deliberation or anticipated outcomes but because of the consequences that have followed similar behaviour in the past. Operant conditioning is more useful than classical conditioning as an explanation of the working of propaganda. Advertising often seeks reinforcement by showing social approval of use of the product such as a particular make of car, and the social disapproval of non-use such as a brand of deodorant, and similarly with propaganda. Propaganda films chronicle how desired behaviours (loyalty, heroism, etc.) are rewarded and undesired ones punished, they feature idealised behaviour patterns engaged in by ideal individuals and denigrate others. The function of propaganda is often to remind – of past pleasures, and also of old resentments – and thereby to reinvigorate. The rites of Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland, their songs, myths and the marches, are a ritual of reinforcement as they seek to implant sectarian sentiment in each successor generation. Adolf Hitler seems to have subscribed to an entirely behaviouristic theory of propaganda.

Social psychology (see Webber 1992)

Social cognitions of the self: self-awareness. When self-awareness is reduced, we are less likely to act in accord with our values. The state of reduced self-awareness is known as deindividuation, which can be created by stimulus conditions, including immersion in a group, physical or social anonymity or by arousing and distracting conditions. These are the conditions where we are less likely to be influenced by personal integrity. This immersion in a group can be achieved when the propagandist has organisations at his disposal such as the Young Pioneers in Soviet Russia (or even the immensely successful Young Conservatives in 1950s Britain). All these conditions of group emotion, physical and social anonymity and distracting conditions were present at the Nuremberg rallies. Jacques Ellul stressed how critical for propaganda was enrolment in this type of proselytising organisation: propaganda needs a membership list. The success of some types of propaganda such as televangelism stems from precisely this sense of the presence of the crowd. People commit acts after joining organisations such as the Irish Republican Army which they would never contemplate as individuals. The German Nazis in particular focused on the group, and there were membership organisations for everybody (including university professors, on whom punishing demands for physical fitness were inflicted! Grunberger 1991).

Self-motivation. Self-motivation covers the desire for self-consistency. A particularly strong appeal in propaganda is to self-justification (to retain our social prerogatives and deny them to others, for example), and there is often much to justify. Advertising, for example, often seeks to give permission to our extravagance and hedonism, so that post-purchase justification is its critical object. Ronald Reagan provided rhetorical justification for inequality and free-market fundamentalists told the United States that high unemployment was good for it. Another major self-motivation is the protection of self-esteem, which is also serviced by propaganda, and this applies not only to individuals but also to nations. Propaganda is a distorting mirror. Reaganite propaganda flattered, and drew attention away from its civic profligacy. Even Churchillian rhetoric could on occasion ingratiate and assuage national complacency.

Social information. We seem particularly hungry for information about others and rely heavily on several forms of social information. Thus perceptions of traits, or generalisations about behaviour, are universal even though the attachment of a trait as a descriptive label involves the error of ignoring exceptions. Propagandists deploy the Great Leader traits as a medium through which all Leader actions are to be interpreted: such as asceticism (Adolf Hitler), virility (Mao), grandfather of the nation (de Valera), matriarchy (Golda Meir), and other enunciated traits include things like the family man (Blair), the tough Leader (Thatcher), the patriot (Bush

junior), the war hero (Bush senior), the holy man (Gandhi), the intellectual (Elena Ceausescu), the virile (Mussolini half naked in the fields). Ordinary individuals are also chosen to represent the traits desired by the regime. Traits are also seized on by antagonistic propagandas such as the sybaritic Churchill of Nazi propaganda or the physical disability of Goebbels.

Stereotypes are generalisations, particularly the attribution to an individual of characteristics ascribed as universal to a group from which that individual is drawn. Stereotypes are much deprecated, but they are also inevitable, since they are heuristics or cognitive short cuts that simplify complexity and ambiguity and absolve us from the intellectual labour of forming balanced judgements. Thus it was an invariable principle for Alexander Korda that his films showed the English not with subtlety but in accordance with the preconceptions foreigners had of them, so that they frequently appear in his films as self-parodic. The manufacture of stereotypes is the definitive act of the propagandist (socialist worker hero, Thatcherite entrepreneur, etc.). It is particularly important that political and national enemies are caricatured. Nazi propaganda relished the stereotype in its images of the English – the cruelty of British imperialism, the effeminacy of the ruling class (*Soldiers of To-Morrow*): they enjoyed crude satires of what they called the English plutocracy, which they inevitably presented as in league with the Jews. In the film *The Rothschilds* a Star of David is superimposed on a map of England. The English loved to depict the Germans as automata: one British propaganda film forwarded/reversed footage of goose-stepping storm troopers to the tune of 'The Lambeth Walk'.

Psychoanalytical psychology (see O'Shaughnessy 1992)

The focus here is on explaining the covert and non-conscious aspects of psychology, and particularly neurosis. The claim is that unconscious motivations are causal mechanisms. The id, ego and super-ego become unbalanced and repression takes place, and neurosis is an attempt to reconcile them. Stability is attained via better understanding. The attraction of psychoanalytical theory over behaviourism lies in the insights into the complexity of motivation that it claims to offer.

Psychoanalysts would have a field day when it came to propaganda. They would be especially fascinated by the propaganda creation of a synthetic family, and the father figure has in particular been the *Leitmotif* of totalitarianism – the ostensible avuncularity projected by Stalin with his pipe, and so forth. Such an all-powerful patriarch is projected as a reassuring figure to the people in times of trouble and anxiety. The patriarch enunciates a fatherhood role celebrated by his propaganda, and a necessary part of this role is that the people feel and act as children. The dictator cares for the minute details of their life in a stern but loving way, as a patriarch

would: thus, for example, Adolf Hitler gave workers killed in an accident during the building of the Berlin metro a state funeral (Grunberger 1991), stressing thereby both the enhanced status of the worker under Nazism but also his own role as a caring father figure. It is not merely the dictator who provides the paternity, for father surrogates can also be retrieved from history and perform the paternalistic role from beyond their graves. Nazi films did this very frequently with Führer surrogates such as Bismarck and Frederick the Great. Another way, of course, in which totalitarian propaganda expressed the patriarchal order was in the many instances where dictators were filmed or photographed with children.

The propaganda creation of the political 'family' extends beyond the building up of father figures. Sometimes there are also son figures, and this is particularly popular with revolutionaries – Castro and Guevara, for example, or perhaps the role given to Baldur von Schirach as leader of the Hitler Youth, or indeed in some senses the relation between Lænin and Stalin as propaganda projected it (although Stalin implicitly conceptualised the relationship as Messiah–Apostle). The focus of propaganda remains to enunciate elements of paternity: the idea is of an all-knowing authority under whose benevolent gaze people regress to childhood and the pain of decision making is taken from them. Of course, there are mother figures as well. Propaganda has often conceived of the nation state itself as mother, as fertile provider. Indeed, in war propaganda women often seem to assume the roles of mother to their menfolk rather than the role of lover and wife. Then again, war films made with propaganda intent often seem to create groups of individuals, typically an army unit, who are socially involved with each other but replicate again family roles in a kind of alternative military domesticity. Thus there is the mother role, the baby role, etc. The army is the larger family. Such films even mirror the family life cycle as the 'babies' grow up and rebel and eventually take over the leadership of the family. In US films in particular, such groups of soldiers have often represented different ethnicities and national subgroups, implicitly giving the idea of the nation as family.

Another variant of the family idea which suffuses propaganda is to depict subject or 'inferior' peoples as children, the colonial race then assumes the paternal role. As children, subject peoples are innocent and enthusiastic and babble in a strange way, but have a need for discipline and tutelage. These traits are all visible, for example, in a film like *Sanders of the River* (1935) with Paul Robeson, though Alexander Korda, as former film commissar in the short-lived communist government of Bela Kun in Hungary (Kulik 1990), would probably have denied he was making propaganda for British imperialism. Others would be less sure.

A psychoanalyst would be particularly intrigued by the salience of sexuality in propaganda, both as an inducement but more particularly as a

threat. Subject peoples and races are seen as a sexual menace, since they could contaminate the purity of the dominant group and thereby its sense of integrity. The Nazis were particularly worried by the threat posed by the sexually attractive women and men of subject peoples. It is a necessary part, for example, of the construction of a subject people that they are also perceived as promiscuous. Nazi propaganda strove to warn people about the terrible dangers of racial contamination: France, for example, with its African soldiers, was depicted as 'the racial poisoner of Europe' (Herzstein 1978).

It is not merely the sexual attractiveness of enemies we must be warned against. It has often been integral to the social construction of the enemy that he is seen as a sexual violator too, and the theme of sexual violation, especially in atrocity propaganda, is particularly strong. The enemy is implicitly and sometimes explicitly a rapist (for example, the 1918 Hollywood movie *The Kaiser Beast of Berlin*). War and sex seem closely allied, and in propaganda of World War I, German atrocities were often depicted as aggression against women, while the reaction of British soldiers to the execution of Nurse Edith Cavell surfaced the same kind of anger (see Chapter 4). The enemy as sexual violator does indeed seem the common currency of all for propaganda, for example the Italian fascist poster of a black, simian US soldier carrying a classical statue of a beautiful woman (Rhodes 1993); the subtext is obvious. Of course the threat of sexual violence can be used as propaganda by both sides, by the defender to create rage and by the aggressor to instil fear.

The enemy is constructed not merely as sexual violator, but a sexual violator of pure women. It is almost an axiom of war propaganda that the women you are defending are 'pure'; sex itself is present but merely implied. These women are loyal and deeply virtuous, and this trait seems, almost, universal, so that their possible violation enrages all the more. But it is also the case that such women put their men under intense sexual pressure – to fight, that is. The World War I song 'We've watched you playing cricket, . . . We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go' is an image echoed many times in propaganda posters and productions with slogans such as 'Women of Britain say Go' or 'Is your best boy in khaki?' Thus soldiering becomes the definition of maleness, not to be a soldier is to cease to be a male, to be emasculated. ('What did you do in the war, Daddy?') Remember too that for the British such modes of persuasion were of critical national importance because conscription was not introduced until the middle of the Great War. Appeals in recruitment propaganda were to traditional concepts of maleness. The genders are allocated unambiguous roles – the men to fight bravely, the women to look after the home: there is suggestion of their virginity, but also the virginity of the motherland itself –

the two are equated. Women are also incarnate as abstract concepts such as liberty ('Madeleine').

There is also an overt erotic stratum in the usage of propaganda. Revolutions, for example, connect with ideas of sexual 'liberation' – the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution or the events of Paris in 1968. Revolutions are often accompanied by proclamations of free love and a sense that the lid has been taken off all 'repressions'. Not only a ruling class but an internal moral order is overthrown and in the period before new authority is established or bourgeois revenge takes place there is a flowering of the avant garde and the bohemian. Sexual appeals are of course the thing in consumer advertising, but they are clearly present in every form of propaganda. The Nazis, for instance, used Germany's Marilyn Monroe, Christina Soderbaum, extensively in their films. Propaganda films often succeed by foregrounding the story of attractive women and their romantic relations with men – the propaganda message is secreted in the background and in the story line. Indeed, it is a tribute to the potential of propaganda and, at its best, its resonance as an art form, that *Casablanca*, probably the most famous film ever made, is also a supreme example of the propaganda genre (though it is seldom analysed as such).

Dictators themselves may be framed in an overtly sexual style, from the circulation of rumours as to their alleged potency to Mussolini parading bare-chested to his people, something which shocked the more bourgeois Adolf Hitler as vulgar. Eroticism can be a strong element in propaganda. The Breughel-like peasants and earth-mother women who clumsily adorn Nazi art are hardly likely to tickle the sensuous fancy, but Nazi iconography also abounds with images of naked women and athletic nudes. Indeed, the male body as a power symbol (physical and temporal) features prominently in Nazi art and propaganda, as in the denim and cosmetics advertising of later generations: Häagen-Dazs and Calvin Klein today would understand those associations. There is an obvious equation between the dominance of the master race and sexual virility. But there is also an overtly pornographic element in propaganda, from the ravings of Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer* to the lurid tales of Rasputin and the Czarina's court printed and circulated after the April 1917 revolution (Orlando Figes 1997).

Another characteristic of propaganda which could be of interest to psychoanalysts is its obsession with regaining the purity of some ideal, unsullied by the world. Totalitarianism itself could be represented as the wish for regression to some womb-like state of succour. Propaganda constantly assures us that a perfect world is just around the corner, from the myriad utopias of the totalitarian to the sanitised world of material satiety projected by the advertising industry.

Explanation in sociology (see O'Shaughnessy 1992)

Social anthropology

Astute propagandists are best advised to make a message fit another's conceptual universe rather than seek to undermine their well established, comforting set of private truths. Today the term 'phenomenology' is commonly used to cover any method that explains behaviour by interpreting the meaning of that behaviour for the person engaging in it. There is a need to explore the concepts people use to describe and structure their environment, and this would be key for a propagandist, otherwise our encodings are not decoded and there is passive misinterpretation of our meaning or active antagonism towards it.

Exchange theory

Exchange theories borrow from behaviourism the notion of reward and substitute cost for the notion of punishment. The real issue lies not in whether political consumers occasionally behave like utility-maximising economic man – they clearly do – but in how much political behaviour can be adequately explained by such a narrow view of human motivation. In neglecting such important things as feelings, values and sentiments and our sense of obligation, exchange behaviourism shrinks social conduct to the 'behaviouristic hedonism of a reward-maximising, cost-avoiding image of Man' (O'Shaughnessy 1992). Nevertheless there are situations where exchange theory would clearly apply. Consumer advertising often concentrates on economic appeals, the price-wise aspects of the offer, and similarly propaganda makes the focus personal gain or self-preservation in many situations. Revolutionary propaganda particularly stresses the material reward possible once the *ancien régime* is overthrown, and thus Lenin's slogan in the Russian revolution was 'Land, peace and bread'. The idea of expropriating some caste – bourgeois, nobility, Jews – clearly had inherent (material) attractions that propaganda could exploit. Rather more generally, party political propaganda and marketing have always placed a big emphasis on economic self-interest, hence Reagan's appeal 'Are you better off now than you were four years ago?' This is the main thrust of many party programmes rather than appealing to values or idealism, but they err in merely seeking to rent allegiance rather than create converts: they are in the same dilemma as the company which seeks to compete only on price.

War is a particular context where the calculus of self-interest is a major dimension of propaganda. The aim of war propaganda is to get the enemy to surrender, and such items as cards guaranteeing safe conduct are critical, but so also is the ubiquitous fear appeal when people are intensely concerned about their personal survival. German propaganda emphasised

the immense destructive possibilities of the German war machine, the marching columns, fleets of bombers, partly as a way of terrorising other potential belligerents. If such fear appeals intimidate, they also represent an invitation to join by connecting to our quisling wish to identify with the most powerful.

It should be stressed that private goals are not the only focus of war propaganda. Altruistic motives and notions of social duty are also critical. Exchange structuralism is the exchange theory of P.M. Blau (1964). This version inflates the concept of 'reward' to embrace intangibles like social approval, esteem – respect and power over others. Thus exchange structuralism is probably a superior descriptor of much war propaganda, with its emphasis on the need for esteem and its broadening of the concept of reward to include such things as social regard, as with the Italian recruiting poster featuring the classic bombazine-clad mother urging her son on (Rhodes 1993). But even here the focus is still egocentric, and it ignores the utility of altruism in political persuasion. Goebbels was at his most eloquent when appealing to community spirit in the middle of World War II, for help for the injured and bombed out, 'Winter Relief' and so forth. It is a paradox of history that Nazi propaganda was at its most convincing and successful when addressing the virtuous instincts of mankind, despite Hitler's earlier claim that virtuous propaganda would always fail.

Conclusion

Propaganda is a way of mediating our response to social phenomena and our relationship with society. It is not viewed in isolation from society; it is interpreted by individuals but their response is influenced by others. The grievances it exploits are social, those of the larger community, as much as personal. Thus it is useful to review some of the insights from sociology and social psychology. But there is no universal 'key' to propaganda via either sociology or psychology. Those who look for a universal theory, a code to unlock, search in vain. The many manifestations of propaganda, styles, appeals, tricks, must be accessed in a similarly heterodox way.

Part II

A conceptual arrangement

3

An essential trinity: rhetoric, myth, symbolism

Rhetoric, symbolism and myth are the interwoven trinity that has underpinned most propaganda through history. But it is difficult to imagine a propaganda programme which is deficient in any of these even though the individual propaganda text may be.

Great rhetoric never retires. To work effectively rhetoric must 'resonate' with attitudes and feelings within the target (Tony Schwartz 1973): great rhetoric is substantially a co-production between sender and receiver. Rhetoric is a cheap way of reaching the target, since it is relayed by the press. In this chapter we argue that the power of rhetoric resides principally in the power of metaphor. But we will also discuss the arrival of new rhetorical forms such as spin, and we discuss in particular the rhetorical US presidency of Ronald Reagan.

Symbols are another component in this trinity. Ultimately we argue that a symbol can be defined as condensed meaning and as such is an economical form of propaganda, for symbols are universally understood in ways that language can never be; a symbol eludes precise scrutiny and can be 'read' in many ways, endowed with multiple meanings. Old symbols can also be re-used, for symbols have inherent plasticity .

The power of myth is the power of narrative. Propaganda rejects intellectual challenge, and it seeks refuge in the structures of myths. Old myths can be re-created, but new myths can also be invented – that is to say, myth entrepreneurship. Myths are a culture's self explanation, and they are a key part of propaganda (stereotype, for example, is a kind of myth).

Rhetoric and propaganda

Seldom does mere logic alone frame our perceptions; it is emotion that is the pathway to conviction. Rhetoric is emotional persuasion and its core

is therefore emotion. Rhetoric is a subset of propaganda, but it is often confused with it, and the two words carry many of the same conceptual problems, for rhetoric is also sometimes a term of abuse, and is made to refer to any argument we disagree with. Along with symbolism and myths, rhetoric performs a key role in propaganda and the three are intertwined, rhetoric may be strewn with symbolic appeals that make reference to myths. The trinity of rhetoric–symbolism–myths is the conceptual anatomy of all propaganda.

Thus the relationship of rhetoric to propaganda is tricky to nuance, since an intelligent case could also be made for the notion that all rhetoric is also propaganda. Much depends on how precisely we define rhetoric and the conceptual domain that they both share, especially if we expand the idea of rhetoric to embrace the visual and physical as well as the verbal.

Rhetoric was once the basis of European education. At Eton College, for example, one of the great events of the school year is still 'Speeches', where students dress up to declaim the great perorations of the past (King George III being apparently moved to tears by a recitative of the Earl of Strafford's speech on the scaffold, 'Fickle is the love of princes'). Rhetoric today is as important as ever, and its prime function, to pinpoint, illuminate and showcase the nub of the issue, is unchanged. But the forms are different. For example, the key focus of rhetoric today is the soundbite, its form has become condensed and the art of rhetoric now is one of compression.

Rhetoric, verbal and indeed visual, has been a critical part of the propagandist's armoury since the beginning of recorded history. In Athens the participation of all adult male citizens in the assembly and judicial process made eloquence highly desirable, and rhetorical teachers – sophists – could teach you, write speeches, and so forth. The art of verbal persuasion was the core of sophists' training, it was central to the legal system and in the drama of Greek tragic theatre. Persuasion and its superiority to force were the symbol of high culture (as in the *Orestela*) and Pericles' funeral oration 'celebrated Athenian willingness to submit political decisions to discussion' (Emlyn-Jones 1991). The wicked charm of rhetoric has long been feared. The theme of rhetoric itself possesses an ancient and distinguished literature, its study and practice dominated Greece and Rome. The Greeks were fascinated by and feared the power of eloquence – a speech which 'delights and persuades a large crowd because it is written with skill but not spoken with truth' (Emlyn Jones 1991), and in his *Encomium* Gorgias depicts Helen as helpless under verbal persuasion as under a powerful drug: this was 'the earliest attempt at theoretical discussion of the psychology of verbal persuasion'.

Early critics

Rhetoric had its critics from the earliest times; for the ancients there was an independent truth, and rhetoric was seen as powerful and dangerous. Many of these selfsame arguments are repeated today, with their proponents perhaps seldom aware of their ancient pedigree, that the rhetorical privileging of belief and feeling over fact finds earlier echoes. The art of persuasion became controversial, it was recognised that eloquence was not invariably an illuminant of the truth: Aristophanes in *The Clouds* depicts the sophists as concerned 'to teach pupils the manipulation of situations by means of illegitimate verbal persuasion' (Emlyn-Jones 1991). Thucydides employed pairs of speeches to enable audiences to choose either interpretation, and his Cleon accuses the assembly of being the victim of eloquence. Thus, according to Emlyn Jones, Athenian speech represented a persuasive force independent of the truth, and a quasi-medical force which acts irresistibly on the psyche. *Mythos*, which means word, also means argument; *peithmei* means 'I am persuaded' but also 'I obey', *denies* means marvellous and persuasive speaker. Thus Pericles: 'a kind of persuasion lived on his lips. He cast a spell on us. He was the only orator who left his sting behind in his audience.'

Rhetoric was pseudo-reason, it invented reasons for the sentimental fancy to achieve self-justification. Rhetoric was seen as the employment of the symbols of rationality to bypass the scrutiny of reason. Plato attacked orators for possessing beliefs rather than knowledge, a criticism that rings true of Members of Parliament today: he thought that truth had a persuasive power irrespective of exposition. As regards late fifth-century Athens, 'never again were the psychological and epistemological premises upon which persuasion techniques are based so thoroughly questioned' (Emlyn-Jones 1991). Another reason for the attack on rhetoric was that it had become partially detached from the search for objectivity and had degenerated into 'mere' advocacy. Hence Plato differentiated strongly between philosophical thought and its specious counterpart, rhetoric. Plato disdained the inflated claims made by Gorgias and the sophists for rhetoric, seeing it as the art form of the fawning manipulator. Certainly it could not be a branch of knowledge, making no distinction between truth and falsehood, analysing no received wisdom nor testing some assertion. Persuasion was simply a means and an end with no higher goal.

When seen as based on the use of questioning, rhetoric ceases to be a form of reasoning. All reasoning implies questions to be addressed, not solved; at least they are answered. Logic works only with answers and their links while rhetoric focuses on the relation between questions and answers. For Aristotle, persuasion is in large measure rhetorical, and he saw rhetoric as synthesising emotion and reason, since both were relevant. For him,

rhetoric was about opinion (*doxa*), not the knowledge of which we can be sure (*episteme*). For Aristotle, persuasion comprised the multiple qualities of the persuader:

1 *Ethos:* credibility (reputation, technical expertise, trustworthiness), including the signs of credibility such as intelligence of argument, choice of language, force, eye contact, etc.
2 *Logos* means the rational content of the message and its appeal.
3 *Pathos* is the emotions and appeals based on them.

The claims of the postmodernists would appear to be the lineal descendant of such approaches, as in Foucault's (1975) claim that any distinction between rhetoric and logic is false, since all communication is rhetorical.

Those educated up to and even beyond the nineteenth century were often rigorously schooled in classical precepts of rhetoric. The content of their ideas could never be entirely separated from their rhetorical methods. For example, the impact of the theories of Marx and Freud is partly a consequence of their education in persuasion. Freud was an able orator, though occasions of Freudian oratory were rare. Freud's background and education provided a thorough grounding in classical literature – including schooling in Quintilian and Cicero: 'unlike Marx, Freud left no youthful translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a testament to his interest in rhetoric. Nevertheless there is good reason to believe that Freud was familiar with the classical notion of rhetoric that Aristotle defined as the study of the means of persuasion in any subject' (Patterson 1996). Freud was educated in rhetoric in his German and Latin classes: the emphasis was on rhetorical declamation. The best students – including Freud – were selected to perform before parents and the school. Freud reciting the speech of Brutus (Patterson 1996)

Why rhetoric?

It has been claimed that today rhetoric is undergoing a revival. As the range of choices and opportunities, in products, politics, leisure and entertainment, expands for the individual, communication becomes much more critical in society with the emergence of a 'persuasion' culture. Another factor is the decline in the authority of Authority, of churches and governing institutions, and the movement from inherited cultural practices – partially tied to rigid class systems – to individualistic choice from a supermarket of stylistic and behavioural alternatives. For Meyer (1994) the revival of rhetoric can be seen as one of the numerous demonstrations of our nihilistic present. The loss of indisputable principles has rendered nearly everything questionable (and I might add thereby vulnerable to

propaganda). When values are controversial, and experienced as such, it cannot be otherwise: it is in this historic context that rhetoric has re-emerged. It is thus the uncertainties of our time, the lack of an inherited definiteness, that make us vulnerable to rhetoric. Perhaps it really is the case that, outside the realm of Euclid's geometry, we are permanently in the realm of persuasion. Thus the new uses of rhetoric have evolved because the older assurances have been diminished; when all is open to question, direct methods of persuasion are less relevant and the need becomes to persuade via metaphor rather than logic.

One scholar who has engaged in substantial empirical research on our vulnerability to false beliefs and fallacious reasoning, the source of many rhetorical appeals, is Deanna Kuhn (1991). One of her major findings is the extent of pseudo-evidence; the people who depend upon it believe it to be as powerful as genuine evidence in their quest for truth. Propaganda is of course concerned with such manufacture of pseudo-evidence. Pseudo-evidence scripts serve to establish or enhance the intuitive plausibility of a causal theory by portraying how the causal sequence occurs: they elaborate or spell out the causal sequence instead of providing evidence for the theories' correctness, that is, subjects are often unable to think of what evidence might be relevant and so dwell on elaborating the reasonableness of their position. Much propaganda does indeed do this. Subjects who could advocate good counter-arguments were around half her sample. The author argues that subjects who cannot generate counter-arguments cannot properly evaluate the truth of the theories they do actually hold. In our terms, many people cannot think critically, and they accept and internalise packaged opinions; moreover, according to Kuhn, the successful counter-arguments were often quite weak, and gave the theory permission to remain in force to some extent. For the propagandist, the message is that people are generally vulnerable to propaganda: perpetuate an error and it can remain in perpetuity, and Kuhn's research illuminates yet again the importance of teaching analytical thought processes as a defence against the propagandising of society.

Kuhn argues that if people use theories without thinking about them, they have little real understanding of the theory. In evaluating as well as seeking evidence, subjects are biased by their own initial beliefs or hypotheses. If evidence is simply assimilated to existing theories, any ability to evaluate the bearing the evidence has on the theory is lost. People's beliefs persist long after the evidence that provided the initial basis for the belief has been discredited. This would explain the resonance of stereotypes – Colonel Blimp, and the kind of bank manager who disappeared years ago. All this would tend to favour a propaganda that does not change, but simply feeds popular prejudice. For the propagandists, the lesson is to position and

express ideas in accord with prejudices, since there are parameters outside which people will not think. According to Kuhn, other studies such as Perkins and Alan (1983) have shown that people tend to generate reasons that support only their point of view, without considering any other side of the issue. As a consequence, today we sometimes seem to have replaced dialogue and debate with polemical declamation.

Metaphor

Great rhetoric is primarily metaphorical: 'in particular, the English language is full of metaphors so concealed it is forgotten that they are metaphors. Metaphors defamiliarise the familiar to reorient thinking' (Gibbs 1994).

The customary differentiation made between rhetoric and philosophy, that rhetoric aspires to delight while philosophy drives at truth, is meant to illuminate the difference between decoration and content. Yet Plato's Socrates is also a doyen of rhetoric, since powerful imagery and metaphor are necessary to fragment entrenched ideas. A metaphor compares diverse, apparently irreconcilable entities, so posing a conundrum to excite our curiosity; the metaphor provides the possibility of resolving such a conundrum; it typically employs vivid language, and its ambivalence invites us to search out what is dimly apprehended; 'in bringing together different terms, a metaphor creates broader conceptual wholes'; we even think principally in imagistic terms, our thoughts being in the main figurative – 'metaphoric, metonymic and ironic' (Gibbs 1994). Without metaphors, persuasion would be toothless. Metaphors involve: the listener will embroider. They influence how we see and how we interpret, they affect therefore not only our intellectual but also our emotional response. As Klein (1998) says, while metaphors structure our thinking and condition our sympathies and emotional reactions, they may also seriously deceive by embedding a false analogy of an actual process, as for example the image of mind as a computer, with its consequent notion of a rational calculus in our decision making.

In rhetoric today the image is as likely to be an electronic one as a pictographic or literary one: in history, words alone and the images they evoked often sufficed. The events and technical advances of the twentieth century renewed and expanded our sources of metaphor, from phrases or words like 'hard-wired' or 'default programme', or history-derived words such as 'blitz' – but Mason (1989) warns that once connections have been made 'and everyone is familiar with the relations involved, the metaphor dies and loses interest'. Daily communication lives through metaphors, but behind the metaphor lies the ideology; 'harnessing the environment' may be welcomed by technocrats but resented by Greens.

Several studies examine the effect of metaphors on responses to political communications. They conclude that using an appropriate metaphor in a speech can lead to better memory for the arguments and can significantly influence the inferences people draw from that speech. Choice of appropriate metaphors therefore really does become the key to effective rhetoric: metaphors 'can resolve ethical ambiguity or confusion by pointing up a "moral" through semantic incongruities' (Mason 1989). The merit of vivid images is that they break with previous modes of thought; an outstanding (i.e. novel, appropriate) image can cause us to see a situation in a revolutionary new light, in a way that mere argument never can. Rhetorical devices, according to Mason, invite new interpretative schemata, but the rhetoric of persuasion is good only if it is appreciated from a particular perspective. Nevertheless after an effective rhetorical treatment the world may look different from before and move people in a direction they would not choose themselves.

Metaphor was one of the principal rhetorical devices used by Adolf Hitler. Metaphor is critical in Hitlerite rhetoric. Thus *Mein Kampf* is 'organised round a metaphor of a medical diagnosis and cure, the religious rite of guilt and redemption, and the drama of murder–revenge' (Blain 1988). We note that one of the central properties of metaphors is their capacity for extensive elaboration. Hitler's presentations were allegorical, his discourse structured round the metaphor of murder and revenge. Other images in Hitlerite rhetoric include 'the notion of blood contamination as a central motif. Since the Aryan–non-Aryan differentiation is a racial one, "blood" is a loaded term. It condenses racial, biological, medical, religious, moral and murderous chains of association' (Blain 1988).

Courtroom advocacy is perhaps the most eminent theatre of rhetoric. The mobilising power of words and images to direct perception is part of the art of the advocate, but it can be done so effectively that their memory saturates and stains our judgement. We simply cannot forget a memorable image and the perspective it embodies: it lives and breathes in our consciousness no matter how far we would deny it oxygen. Having read the phrase 'A sleazy woman with big hair from a trailer park' we can never think in quite the same way about Bill Clinton. But consider this criminal justice case, an ugly one about the abuse of boys (*Daily Telegraph*, 15 January 1997). The prosecutor, Alec Carlisle, QC, chose the brilliant metaphor of Captain Hook to describe the defendant: 'Mr Laverack presented himself to his young charges as a man of distinction and elegance who impressed his victims even, as it were, when prodding them along the plank.' This image and its appropriateness to the case was further elaborated by Mr Carlisle. In the end we begin to see the defendant as Captain Hook, no matter how far we try not to, such is the resonance of the image – and,

unable to see him as other than Captain Hook, it is difficult to see how an objective decision could be made. Laverack, apparently, wore a silky dressing gown and cravat, and had an MGB, an elkhound and smart clothes: he was a 'persistent and menacing paedophile'. Carlisle continued, '*Peter Pan* is really a story about children whose parents have rejected them. They are called the lost boys'. And he then quoted J. M. Barrie's description of Hook: 'He is never more sinister than when he is at his most polite, and the elegance of his diction, the distinction of his demeanour show him one of a different class from his crew. The courtliness impresses even his victims on the high seas, who note that he always says sorry when prodding them along the plank.'

Thus the key to rhetorical persuasion is the manufacture of visual images. For Schopenhauer (Mason 1989) the visual image remains long after the argument is forgotten. Through reflection, images accumulate meaning. For Mason (1989) a live metaphor is a switchboard 'hopping with signals': important issues are up for grabs via such rhetorical devices because they are the ones with inherent indeterminacy, an absence of analytical proof. Potentially metaphors can fracture existing paradigms of thought and introduce new ones because their very vividness assaults our attention and lives on in our memory, and in this they are special, since subverting existing and often culturally determined ideologies is the hardest thing for a propagandist to do.

Labels

Another method is to pay the most careful attention to language but, in particular, labels. Under Reagan the Republicans even had a rhetoric committee, but judicious choice of label is the most important rhetorical choice of all. The pay-off for getting it right is considerable: the label adheres and over time it is naturalised so that people do not perceive it as a label at all. Labels are viewed as objective descriptions when very often they represent merely social judgements. They can be damning or they can be laudatory: but an ideology or perspective is inscribed within them. Thus euthanasia becomes 'mercy killing' and abortion becomes 'pro-choice'. The supreme art is to make the label enter common parlance so that every time it is used it becomes an unconscious act of propaganda, as with the 'Right to Life' movement: 'words are always important since learning new words or concepts may result in seeing new classes of objects or ideas that change perspective' (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2004).

A fine example of this is the term 'political correctness', which implicitly associates liberalism with the coercion of the Soviet state. This is not to deny the possibility of liberal/left excess, merely that the left's opponents' success

in choosing a label and getting liberals to use it was a triumph of some magnitude. Words describe, but they also judge. Different words will encircle the same reality but embody divergent judgements about that reality: 'whore', 'prostitute', 'harlot' and 'courtesan' reference the same activity but give it a different meaning; opium, heroin and morphine are refinements of the same drug but their cultural signification is entirely different.

Words get us to see something in a new light. Or they may be combined into a metaphor which catches on, even if there is little logic behind the transference. The idea of a 'trickle-down effect' became so popular because it was such an excellent riposte to socialist confiscation, not because it was a particularly true description of economic reality. Another (shopworn) example of the power of labels lies in the rhetorical terms 'terrorist' and 'freedom fighter' and 'guerrilla', since they illustrate the extent to which words describing the same reality can contain contrary judgements. Words thus do duty as sensitising concepts, such that if we have no word for something we are often actually blind to the existence of the phenomenon.

An important function of rhetoric today is the seeking to replace the old culture of rhetorical denigration with a new one of rhetorical uplift; the spastics and cripples of yesteryear, along with the mendicant plastic figurines that dramatised their claimed enfeeblement, are banished to rhetorical Siberia. New terms emerge in their place, so that 'backward' children become 'special needs', with the hope that we will see them as such in a new way. And terms may be deliberately chosen to limit our vision, language systems are a way of seeing but also of not seeing, and in modern warfare the importance of persuasion has given rise to a miasma of pseudo-technicalia ('collateral damage', 'target-rich environment') to veil the reality of what is being done: so different from the reply allegedly given in World War II by Air Marshal Harris to a policeman enquiring about the nature of his profession ('killing people'). We have become 'masters of duplicitous rhetoric' – or hypocrisy.

Rhetorical tactics[1]

One rhetorical device traditionally employed has been the *vox populi* method, to find a particularly striking phrase or dramatic moment to express what all are thinking. Thus Leo Amery's cry in the House of Commons to Arthur Greenwood, in 1939 'Speak for England, Arthur', achieved this criterion of

1 These well known sayings and aphorisms of the eminent can be gleaned from their numerous biographies and other historical works as well as from such reference sources as *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Quotations* (ed. Peter Kemp), *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (ed. Angela Partington), *The Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth Century Quotations* (ed. Elizabeth Knowles), *The* (Bloomsbury) *Biographical Dictionary of Quotations* (ed. John Daintith).

memorability. England personified: a silent, angry witness. Effective literary devices can be best summed up by Alexander Pope: 'What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.'

Great phrase making is made possible by the great historical moment, it rises to that historicity with exalted language. At such moments Roosevelt used the device of personification: 'We have nothing to fear but fear', 'Rendezvous with destiny', 'A day that shall live in infamy'. Others chose satire, as with Churchill's response to Goering's statement that Britain was like a chicken that Germany would strangle by the neck, 'Some chicken, some neck.' Analogy is another important device in rhetorical propaganda, as when for example Lloyd George told his audience that an English duke cost as much as a new Dreadnought – a satisfying piece of class invective.

Sometimes rhetoric involves repositioning some literary or classical quote, as with Chamberlain before Munich quoting *Henry IV* Part I ('Out of this nettle danger we pluck this flower safety') or Mao letting 'a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend'. Sometimes rhetorical effect is gained by slightly perverting a quotation, as with Margaret Thatcher's 'The lady's not for turning'. Brutality is of course frequently a characteristic of rhetoric – the brilliant insult, as James Maxton MP to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald ('Sit down, man. You're a bloody tragedy') or Churchill to the same victim ('When I was a child . . . have waited fifty years to see the Boneless Wonder sitting on the Treasury bench'). Good rhetoric has a great merit, of course, of being recyclable: 'Peace with honour' was first used by Disraeli at the Congress of Berlin, thence graduated via Neville Chamberlain to Richard Nixon. 'One nation' is another phrase of Disraeli's which ended on many lips, included Nixon's.

Imagery – the choosing of the most vivid and appropriate image – is critical to all rhetorical persuasion. Thus Maynard Keynes's description of David Lloyd George ('This extraordinary figure of our time, this siren, this goat-footed bard, this half-human visitor to our age from the hag-ridden magic and enchanted woods of Celtic antiquity') is memorable for the associations it gives to the dominant feature of his protagonist's personality, his Welsh eloquence; Keynes connects it with an ancient and darkly brooding world. Images can be passionate, 'The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to gain. Workers of the world, unite', or banal, as Mao's Great Leap Forward (with its 20 million dead), derisive (Lenin's 'garbage bin of history') or violent (Bismarck's 'iron and blood'). Even an essentially banal image, like Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's 'wind of change', can somehow catch on, as for example with Labourite Aneurin Bevan's 'naked into the conference chamber'. Frequently in political communication the images chosen are perhaps necessarily those of embattlement. Thatcherite rhetoric was saturated with aggressive imagery, and

Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell's famous 'Fight and fight and fight again' (against unilateral disarmament) shows liberals are hardly immunised against such images. Sacrificial imagery is another alternative – 'All I have to offer you is blood, toil, sweat and tears' etc.

Much great rhetoric is in fact a simple idea simply expressed but elevated by the grandeur of its context. Thus martyrdom is a particularly frequent setting for such utterances. But war is perhaps the primary context and here the examples are legion – whether General Pétain's 'Ils ne passeront pas' at Verdun or Earl Haig's 1918 'With our backs to a wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, we will fight on to the end', the rhetoric of stubbornness. Or Sir Edward Grey's plangent 1914 'The lamps are going out all over Europe'. Great moments in the life of a democracy can propel even the more mediocre to rise to the occasion, thus an otherwise dull Speaker of the House of Commons to the captain of King Charles's guard: 'I have neither eyes to see nor lips to speak, except as this House gives me leave.' And Jawaharlal Nehru at Indian independence: 'At the stroke of the midnight hour, while the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.' Great events are remembered by language unremarkable as language but exalted by the occasion it articulated. Thus Nurse Edith Cavell on the eve of her execution in 1915: 'I realise that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.' The power of rhetoric is hence often contextual, it might sound banal or ridiculous in another setting: 'I am just going outside and may be away for some time' is simple, yet the words of Captain Oates (as he left the tent for certain death in the hope that his colleagues on Scott's polar expedition could live) inspired a generation of Englishmen.

Rhetoric creates meaning

Rhetorical devices induce the reader to apply particular interpretative schemata to the text, the grain of the rhetoric will invite the reader to adopt a certain stance and attitude from which the world looks different from how it did before.

Language is not merely the vehicle for articulating our thoughts, it does in itself create meaning, an active agent for the creation of perception. If language was merely a vehicle for communication, there would be less interest in it, but, in the words of Umberson and Henderson (1992), 'language does more than merely express reality; it actively structures experience . . . language and linguistic devices structure how we think about things'. If language is power, then the control of language is the key to that power. Thus the hypothesis holds that language does not reflect reality but rather creates it according to the structures and limits permitted by the language of a given culture: Foulkes (1983) claimed that 'the rejection of

the Indian-killer as cultural hero can produce a rejection of the US marine in Vietnam as national hero'. Names and words are not neutral, objective tools: they may contain, to a greater or lesser extent, some implicit ideology and their use helps bias perception, and (within limits) the more vivid and resonant the word the greater potentially the bias introduced.

The current stock of words in common circulation influences our thinking significantly, and when words cease to circulate, people may tend to think less in certain ways (though what is cause here and what is effect is unclear). For example, when Dickens was writing, the English language possessed a word 'enterpriser' (see *Little Dorrit*) which was the equivalent of the French *entrepreneur* (an earlier generation had used the word 'projector', but that was more with connotations of speculation). In the 1970s and after, when a newly minted image of the risk-taking businessman re-entered popular currency, the language had to turn to the French for a single word to express that concept, since the English equivalent had atrophied: the social reality it signified had again come to be esteemed. For Foulkes (1983) even the dictionary may function as propaganda – 'it may be part of a dominant group's attempt to control recorded knowledge and prescribe linguistic behaviour'; he is concerned that 'language in its social context reflects and transmits ideology without seeming to do so'. He adds that:

> an obvious example is the way in which modern English is pervaded by the buried metaphors of capitalism: we exploit opportunities, profit from experiences, cash in on situations once we have assessed the debit and credit side; we sell good ideas and refuse to buy the opinions of those with whom we disagree; pop singers and politicians may become hot properties once they have been taught to capitalise on their talents.

Power

Language is of course a weapon of thought control, the great theme of George Orwell's *Nineteen eighty-four*. Nor were his fears without foundation. One of the disturbing curiosities of the Third Reich, which Grunberger (1991) described and Klemperer (1998) reports in his *Diaries*, is how ways of looking at reality as embodied in particular words and phrases became general currency. The Reich propagated a linguistic style which condensed elements of its world, thus making formal persuasion less necessary; a new rhetoric of the everyday permeated the Nazi vocabulary and even that of the Nazis' opponents.

Hitler himself was a convinced believer in the raw power of the spoken word over literary exposition, criticising academic emphasis on the written word: 'the power which has always started the greatest religious and political avalanches in history rolling has from time immemorial been the magic of

the spoken word, and that alone'. Bolshevik literature contained nothing in comparison with 'the glittering heaven which thousands of agitators, themselves, to be sure, all in the service of an idea, talked into people' (Blain 1988).

Perspective

To persuade a target group to identify with us, it is essential that we speak to them in their own language. Rhetoric, as has been already suggested, is necessarily rooted in particular cultural paradigms that are shared with the target audience. Another technique was to appropriate the vocabulary of socialism and – like any propagandist – draw from the cultural stock bank of languages, myths, forms and images: thus Hitler 'concocted an insider discourse from cultural resources familiar to his German audience' (Blain 1988) and from religion in particular. Burke (Blain 1988) argued that Hitler's use of dramatic form represented a political perversion of the religious notion of the struggle of good against evil.

The revival in the study of rhetoric owes much to the recognition that people, rather than being mere information processors, embody fixed and different social and ideological perspectives, so that the skills of persuasion are necessary if enlightenment is to be achieved. Certainly it cannot be gained by mere logic alone. Successful persuasive advocacy thus occurs within a perspective and not outside it, and the 'correct' perceptions follow on from this. A perspective exerts its own tyranny, it is a set of values to which we have an emotional adherence, so that our decisions must adequately cohere with that perspective. The consequence is that advocates are best advised to interpret their cause in line with the audience's existing ideological predispositions.

Perspectives are changed by rhetoric; sometimes by little else, and the recognition of this point has brought with it a new respectability for the study of rhetoric, as in the work of Chaim Perelman (1982) and Brian Vickers (1988). One element in changing perspectives is getting our partisan language accepted in the cultural mainstream, i.e. the ideological is concealed in the 'normal'.

Rhetorical ambivalence

Many have persuasively if not conclusively claimed that the most effective arguments are essentially co-productions. In this view an argument is all the more convincing if the audience is led to draw the conclusion for itself, since meaning is most persuasive when it is a co-production and the force of an argument varies directly with the freedom left to the addressed indi-

vidual. Those that seem to be imposed seldom convince: an argument is all the stronger when the addressee is free to reject it. This could certainly be a definitive characteristic of sophisticated forms of propaganda – it negotiates effectively between autonomy and didacticism, and meaning is invited, not imposed. All this is true, of course, if the audience is capable of drawing the right conclusions: the problem is that the propaganda value may sometimes be lost in layers of subtlety, such as the Tory 'bleeding lion' poster in the 1997 British general election campaign. (Its meaning was not widely understood.)

The co-production of the argument is helped by the very ambivalence of language itself. 'The problematological view assumes language is referential and unequivocally so, whereas in practice language is ambiguous to the extent that most terms can receive multiple meanings according to the context' (Meyer 1994). Ambiguity is often deliberate and you extract your own understandings: was Tony Blair's 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime' actually a phrase without a meaning, and similarly with his 'education, education, education'? Simply asking what they mean exposes their vacuity.

The mechanism of rhetoric

Rhetorical tropes (figures of style, analogies, metaphors) are necessary for any significant act of persuasion. The importance of rhetoric is that it persuades because it gives vivid definition – to fluid situations, to what would otherwise be vague or abstract, since on so many matters individual opinion is tentative or confused. Rhetoric provides something for thought to get hold of, something concrete, an image, a scrap of language or feeling (Mason 1989). The power of rhetoric in a democracy lies, essentially, in the hands of others: for rhetoric is an unguided missile whose creators have no necessary control of how it is conscripted and duplicated. The press and media are of course supreme among these powerful others, and the primary target for modern oratory, hopefully circulating and amplifying the rhetorical imagery we have persuaded them to project for our selfish ends.

To achieve this degree of circulation and memorability, the rhetoric might be a simple and easily remembered phrase such as Cicero's 'Delenda est Carthagine.' Great rhetoric – or at least, that which seeks duplication – resides primarily in the choice of an especially appropriate image. The idea of 'resonance' (Schwartz 1973) is particularly apposite here, for good rhetoric fizzes, it 'smoulders in the mind', since often such imagery is open-ended and its plasticity invites curiosity and review: we turn it over in our minds, perhaps many times. Words are never neutral. They are association-rich. There is, for example, no such thing as choosing a brand name that has no association.

Any oral or written discourse carries a tone as well as a content, and meaning and persuasive power can be as much a function of tone as of message: as O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2003) remark, 'the choice of words conjures up a fresh perspective but the choice of words may also be designed to give a certain tone, say, of professionalism by the use of Latin or scientific jargon as occurs in advertising medicines to establish credibility'. They add:

> There are some words that are essentially feeling words, like 'annoyed', 'burdened', 'crushed', 'distraught', 'exasperated', 'fearful', 'hurt', 'pressured', 'sympathetic', 'tired', 'worried' and so on. There are some words that have highly positive connotations like 'progress', 'new', 'safe', 'security', 'low-calorie', 'fat-free', and some words with negative connotation like 'old-fashioned', 'artificial ingredients', 'non-user friendly', 'gas guzzler' and so on. Even ostensibly meaningless words have some kind of meaning: they may lack a concrete reference but still embody a sense-meaning. Invented literary words and names, such as Dean Swift's Yahoos in *Gulliver's Travels*, do precisely this.

We tend, perhaps, to see rhetoric as something valued – the pleasing metaphor, the exploding image, the cascade of words – and in its colloquial sense that is so. Rhetoric is the strategic and tactical use of language to persuade: as such, far from language being full of personality, effective persuasion may lie in deracinated language. According to Boardman (1978), the speaker can muddy issues under the pretence of providing information, the 'language of obscurity and deviation'. This language is unremarkable and with little apparent content, associated with bureaucracy and jargon. Another example is of words 'so carefully chosen as to imply more by what they didn't say than by what they do say', the illustration chosen is a denial by President Nixon: 'none of these [illegal activities] took place with my specific approval or knowledge' – note the rhetorical activity of that word 'specific'. Boardman also gives the example of Nixon on Cambodia – he used the device of dividing and defining: 'What American would choose to do nothing when he could go to the heart of the trouble?' Rhetoric can be low-key or even 'bureaucratic', with ideas and ideologies 'naturalised' as everyday speech. Everyday speech is not value-neutral, in it are buried the core ideas of the culture.

There is no one formula for effective rhetoric – different practitioners have mastered different aspects of the art, and different parts of it suit different occasions and different audiences. Is, for example, the audience some general public, or is it segmented in some important way – a professional audience, perhaps? With general audiences, such as for example a jury, the confectionery of image counts. A good image has an adhesive quality and we cannot forget it, a dweller in our half-consciousness flitting in and out of a mind's twilight zone. Framing and anchoring also matter – the way a

choice or decision is framed can influence the way it is interpreted and judged, for example: 'voters are worried about . . .' versus 'voters have not been worried about . . .'.

We might properly suggest that there exist elemental appeals in rhetoric that have been made by rhetoricians since the very beginnings of public argument. For example, loss (of status, cultural totems, material wealth, etc.) is one of the most effective themes in the history of rhetoric, one entombed in the very word 'conservative', and it is this that Hirschman explores in *The Rhetoric of Reaction* (1991), focusing on three fallacies which such a rhetoric is seen to embody:

1 The perversity thesis: 'improvement' will make things worse, not better.
2 The futility thesis: it will change nothing, but will waste money.
3 The jeopardy thesis: the cost is too high in relation to the benefits, or we risk the loss of what we already have.

Effective rhetoric has also frequently been grounded in appeals to authority sources. American rhetoricians, for example, have often been at their most effective when referring to the words of the Founding Fathers, Hamilton, Jefferson and so on. Other cultures have sought rhetorical homage to other, more peculiar figures. Thus Mazrui (1976) has shown the influences both of the classics and of Marx on African political discourse. Post-independence African politics saw the transition from a rhetoric with shades of Kipling and other literary figures to that of Lenin and other leftist thinkers. The confrontation between the Kiplingesque and Leninist traditions continues, with a marked cultural schizophrenia in the political conduct of postcolonial Africans. A good example was Nkrumah, who began by quoting Tennyson in his early works and ended saturating his last books with Marxist expressions and symbols. Another case of ambiguity was Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, whose rhetoric alternated between Shakespeare and Marx.

The end of language is not simply to communicate, as Austin points out (Mason 1989): there are statements that can be true or false ('constative') but there are also what he calls performatives or performance utterances to which the question of truth or falsehood is irrelevant because they are dramaturgic. When Disraeli called Gladstone 'a sophisticated rhetorician, inebriated with the sheer exuberance of his own verbosity' he was enacting a performance utterance, not asserting something that was true or false.

It is of course important to remember that a function of rhetoric has been to facilitate the killing of man by man – people one has never met and with whom one has no personal quarrel. Umberson and Henderson (1992) conducted a very timely content analysis of war-related stories in the *New York Times* for the duration of the first Gulf War, giving special attention to direct and indirect references to death and killing. This analysis revealed

four major themes: (1) the existence of rhetorical devices that distanced the reader from death and encouraged denial of death in the war; (2) official denial of responsibility for war-related deaths and reassurance to the public that they would be minimal; (3) rhetorics that prepared the public for death in war and to view the deaths to come as just; (4) ambiguity and uncertainty about the actual death toll. Certain memorable phrases came about as a result of this war – 'collateral damage' famously being one: war was described in the new pseudo-science argot of the military. And speaking of Operation Iraqi Freedom and its secondary label, Shock and Awe, Rampton and Stauber (2003) argue that this sub-brand 'enables its users to symbolically reconcile two contradictory ideas. On the one hand, its theorists use the term to plan massive uses of deadly force. On the other hand, its focus on the psychological effect of that force makes it possible to use the term while distancing audiences from direct contemplation of the human suffering which that force creates'.

A new rhetoric

Visual rhetoric is the telegraphy of meaning via a significant background or foreground. Has visual rhetoric replaced verbal rhetoric? This is an age where 'visual literacy' is often described as replacing the articulative skills. Reagan's use of visual assertion accorded well with this new lingua franca of popular culture. For visuality is a universal language. In *Eloquence in the Electronic Age* (1988) Kathleen Hall Jamieson discusses how the nature of rhetoric has changed under the impact of television. In television eloquence, visual moments have replaced words: such visualities bypass the critical faculty and we should not in fact look to television for much by way of explanation.

Reagan, of course, gave a good example of this in his (1980) inaugural address, which he turned into a travelogue of Washington and its great monuments, the cameras following as his words directed. Symbolic forms of discourse have particular value for a general audience, they resonate and they avoid the kind of categoric articulation of values which in a heterogeneous society can alienate. In Reaganite rhetoric, these symbolic devices took the form of visual parables, or moral stories, and more generally a visual rhetoric which would use the actual imagery around him – say, the Normandy beaches, or images common to him and his audience. Jamieson describes Reagan as being the pastmaster of electronic forms of rhetoric, and she provides a close and sustained analysis of his rhetorical style. Thus frequently he employed physical props to signify and symbolise. His communication strategies engaged the use of ordinary citizens who would purvey some form of parabolic function – a youth, for example, who had shown conspicuous initiative in the fight against homelessness.

Reagan would commandeer shared visual memory, he would build from visual scenes that he and the nation had recently experienced, but, to succeed, such devices must represent some larger universe of meaning. His persuasion style therefore used a great deal of non-verbal communication: the verbal components were essentially colloquial and conversational. They were often framed by a dramatic narrative, a favourite Reaganite device, with Ronald Reagan cast in the role of storyteller. In this, of course, he is close to rhetoricians throughout history, for narrative is the primordial mode of communication, which Reagan simply adapted and effeminised for political persuasion in a Television Age.

There is, however, a fraudulence implicit in the visual bias of the medium, for a visual symbol enables the avoidance of rebuttal. Jamieson (1988) describes a Hubert Humphrey advertisement which, if it had been expressed verbally and not visually, would have invited derision. This imprecision is a gift to the rhetorician, as the new propaganda of the visual drives out the verbal. Electoral advertising spot ads in particular are non-nuanced, they telegraph meaning, they do not explain or imply (Jamieson 1988). This contrasts with earlier forms for rhetoric – Aristotle's *enthymemes*, for example, achieved their power from reliance on unexpressed beliefs and information. But, with a decline in shared cultural information, the ability to do this decreases.

Jamieson also argues for the 'feminisation' of rhetoric. According to Jamieson, television has rendered the old manly style of rhetoric redundant – it is a medium that mandates the articulation of feeling, and manly style is a noose. In the ancient world, the metaphors employed by rhetoricians were drawn from battle, but now a rhetoric of courtship is employed and public discourse has been personalised, as for example with Ronald Reagan's self-disclosive moments. Traditional rhetoric, in contrast, depended for its force on the physical aspects of performance – the drama, more than content; on the use of voice, the mesmeric interplay of facial expression, words and gesture. It was a physical rhetoric, demanding the rigorous, choreographed gesture. Rhetoric was physical articulation and seldom linguistic content alone, though powerful rhetoric could transcend this: Lincoln's Gettysburg address was in fact inaudible to his immediate audience, and may even have had more impact in World War II. Leathers (1986) gives a list of non-verbal channels for conveying messages. Facial expressions, for example, include smiles, frowns, eyebrows raised or lowered, eyes closed or widened, nose curled, lip pursed, teeth bared, jaw dropped, forehead knitted or relaxed.

Not all media with specific rhetorical applications are new, and nor are the old 'manly' rhetorical forms extinguished. Far from it. One of the phenomena of US politics over the 1990s was the invention of radio as a polit-

ical medium – reinvention, in fact, since Charles Coughlin was the first and most spectacular exponent seventy years ago. Talk-radio hosts, along with single-issue groups, have become among the most important politicians in the United States today. What they offer is pure propaganda. This is a medium of reinforcement, not gaining new recruits but speaking to the provincial white male (he has the highest voter registration of all) in his own language, articulating his anger and ministering to his self-pity: there are 1,000 talk radio programmes, and Rush Limbaugh himself had an audience of 20 million. In Kurtz's words, 'Imus, Howard Stern and other loudmouths reflect a high-decibel society in which journalists insult each other on talk shows, pathetic souls denounce their relatives on daytime TV and politicians slam each other in attack ads' (Thomas Install, *New York Review*, 6 October 1994). Every day Limbaugh took events in the day's news

> and misinterpreted them as part of his larger indignation over the state of American culture, individual and group rights, sexual mores, and the ground rules of capitalism and democracy. He presented the discussions over each of these issues as part of a continuing partisan struggle between a demonised democratic liberalism and an idealised Republican conservatism . . . he took it as an obligation and higher duty to examine every action or pronouncement to show its deceptive purpose. . . . . :
>
> "I'm sick and tired of turning on my TV and being told that the Aids crisis is my fault too, because I don't care enough. . . . In this 500 anniversary year of Columbus's voyage, I'm tired of hearing him trashed. I don't give a hoot that he gave some Indians a disease that they didn't have immunity against. We can't change that, we're here. I'm sick and tired of hearing Western culture constantly disparaged. Hey, ho, Hey ho, Western culture's got to go, is the chant at Stanford University. What would Stanford be if the pioneers that are so reviled today as imperialists, racists, sexists, bigots and homophobes hadn't fought their way across a continent to California?"

While segmenting radio audiences by ideology is a gift to the propagandist, such channels represent a rejection of pluralism and the idea of political exchange. The United States may be a democracy but its airwaves became a one-party state?

Impact of rhetoric

Rhetoric is power. Commercial rhetoric can make the difference between success and failure for a company. Branding, for example: the right name can easily justify a 20 per cent, or even 50 per cent, price premium. Thus in business the power of rhetoric can be measured in monetary terms. The power of rhetoric is illustrated by the extent to which a well chosen image, possessing traits of vividness and appropriateness, not merely 'sticks', but

hangs around for generations – such as Turkey as the 'sick man of Europe'. We also remember the past through its rhetoric. Thus the wartime British, despite the qualifications inscribed in such works as Angus Calder's *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991), are to most people as Churchill presented them, fighting on the beaches, in the hills and never surrendering: the rhetoric continues to do its duty in a later age.

Historically the power and influence of any author, preacher, politician (even scholar) has been – partly, mainly or even exclusively – rhetorical, they have lain in the command of rhetoric, as for example in the case of perhaps the greatest environmentalist messiah, Rachel Carson, whose mastery of metaphor gave her work a level of impact that mere rational exposition never could have found, calling, for example, the chemicals used for wood preservation and insect control 'elixirs of death' (Kevles 1994). Churchill's success lay principally as a rhetorician (certainly not for example as a military strategist). What we mean by his 'greatness' refers certainly to his moral character, but also to his powers of articulation, metaphor and personification: thus on Bolshevik Russia 'self-outcast, sharpens her bayonets in her Arctic night, and mechanically proclaims through self-starved lips her philosophy of hatred and death' (Keynes 1985).

Rhetoric and ideas

For one writer, Geoff Mason (1989), rhetoric can only ever flourish in the realms of opinion, for the activity of persuasion never ceases permanently. Only if certainty is demanded does rhetoric fail, but where a final conclusion cannot be reached, rhetorical argument is all we have. Argumentation is often defined as the endeavour to convince. One argues only because reasons do not follow on from each other with the absolute necessity of mathematics, leaving room for possible disagreement. Even here there is nothing preventing people disputing the rigour of some mathematical proof, so every discourse in practice is concerned with persuasion. Choice of rhetoric has been absolutely critical in the propagation of ideas, and in the twentieth century the intellectual ideologies that have flourished most have (arguably) done so because their sponsors were the most eloquent. Their proponents understood the need for rhetorical devices to command and sustain attention, they had an intuitive feel for the power of language to pierce the introversion of mankind and burn its meaning on to their conscious thoughts.

Rachel Carson was one such (Kevles 1994). Her great polemic, *The Silent Spring*, did more than any other work to bring about the modern environmental movement. She achieved this by literary power. Carson's description of her writing might stand as a definition of the more sophisticated forms of propaganda: she liked in writing 'this magic combination of

factual knowledge and deeply felt emotional response'. In such propaganda the facts themselves are both correct and used generously. In this sense, it is not dishonest writing, but it remains manipulative, since facts are selected according to the guidance of an interpretative framework, and decorated with imagery and metaphor that lead the reader to the right emotional response. This is not 'mere' polemic, but neither is it rational analysis.

One such device was personification. She writes of her 'realization that, despite our own utter dependence on the earth, this same earth and sea have no need of us'. In this way she personifies nature, and nature becomes a real person whom we need but who doesn't need us. Thus both our dependence and our littleness are emphasised, an important part of the Carson project: 'she left government service increasingly despairing over the future of nature'. Carson often anthropomorphised nature, attributing human feelings to fish and animals in order to explain their behaviour to readers who know little about them: 'we must not depart too far from analogy with human conduct if a fish, shrimp, comb jelly, or bird is to seem real to us' or 'I have spoken of a fish "fearing" his enemies, for example, not because I suppose a fish experiences fear in the same way that we do, but because I think he behaves as though he were frightened'.

Any form of communication involves some rhetoric – there is a rhetoric of science (Prelli 1989), though it is much less overt than political rhetoric, since science has a deep- embedded ideology of truth seeking and objectivity in which persuasion should be irrelevant. This, of course, assumes that there is only one single interpretation of the facts: where multiple views are possible, persuasion and therefore rhetoric creep in. Even more is this the case on the fringes of science or in those areas which claim to be science while embracing a much more subjective methodology. This is true, for example, of socio-biology and true, in particular, of psychoanalytical psychology. The neo-scientist can avoid the rigours of the scientific demand for evidence and analysis by the employment of rhetorical devices, just as the politician does. Context and audience make it a more discreet and circumlocutory form, as with Sigmund Freud, for example in his 1909 Clark lectures (Patterson 1990). Behind his discourse lies the concept of the unconscious, but he does not explain it, merely offers analogy. Freud 'treated as proven the premises on which the analogy is based'.

Thus the main rhetorical form Freud used in these lectures was the device of analogy. 'His aim was to present an all-inclusive theory of the mind.' He began with the case of Emma O., claiming it 'typified hysterical patients': 'the woman's symptoms vanished when she traced their origin to the distant past. . . . Symptoms originate in experiences that occur in the past and are forgotten.' Freud describes the analogy of Charing Cross. This is an ingenious story that is told and elaborated at length, with descriptions

of London scenery. Charing Cross is a monument to the Plantagenet Queen Eleanor. The lachrymose Londoner, claims Freud, is the correct analogy for neurosis 'but what should we think of a Londoner who passed today in deep melancholy before the memorial of Queen Eleanor's funeral instead of going about his business in the hurry that modern working conditions demand or instead of feeling joy over the youthful queen of his own heart?'

Patterson comments: 'does the hysteric and unpractical Londoner suffer from symbolic disorders?' Each has failed to establish a balanced relationship with the past. . . . Health lies in establishing a direct relationship between past and present.' But Patterson argues that 'by using analogy Freud spared himself the responsibility for presenting a logical demonstration'. There is also Freud's analogy to describe repression – that of a person trying to interrupt the lecture. (The anarchist Emma Goldman was present in the audiences, lending the analogy intense dramatic relevance.) In the analogy the person is taken out and people have to hold the door shut, but then there is banging on the door. The chairman talks to him reasonably, and he is persuaded to resume his attendance at the lecture quietly. This analogy describes the mechanism and the treatment, and 'it was not an accident that he chose an analogy that allowed him to portray himself and his audience as being one'.

Freud was very concerned to project an image of credibility by stressing his own non-credulity. Moreover, he portrays himself as a slow and reluctant convert to psychoanalysis, for example to the notion of infantile sexuality. He 'began by disbelieving'. Then he flatters his audience. He compliments their attentiveness. He uses the metaphor of a journey to integrate the lectures and to present himself as an equal – merely an intellectual fellow traveller: others doubting could also follow the same journey as he did, a scientific guide who merely describes his private journey to psychoanalysis – 'it is with novel and bewildering feelings that I find myself in the New World before an audience of expectant enquirers'. This flattery and ostensible equality remove any fear of didacticism, condescension or intellectual bullying. They also establish Freud as a disinterested seeker of truth, not status. Self-denigration is another device by which he projects this ('I had no share in its earliest beginnings') and the denial that he was actually trying to persuade his listeners. Time and again he articulates an objection to his ideas, then answers it: 'it is not always easy to tell the truth, especially when one has to be concise: and I am thus today obliged to correct the wrong statement that I made in the last lectures'. Patterson remarks, 'in fact he strengthened his case. First, his willingness to entertain objections reinforced his audience's faith in his openness. Second, in raising the objection, it gave himself the opportunity to present more evidence in support of his position.'

Freud's public relations success in the Clark lectures is a tribute to the power of rhetoric. His lectures were extensively described in newspaper reports, often with enthusiasm: thus the *Boston Transcript* described him 'wearing the kindly face that age would never suffer'. The *Transcript* claimed that the lectures had won the adherence of many of the scientists there. The lectures 'marked an important element in the history of psychoanalysis and appeared in English within a year: by 1915, psychoanalysis had moved from being a topic whose merit was debated by only a handful of American intellectuals to a subject that was discussed in *Good Housekeeping* and other popular magazines. After the Clarke lectures Freud was awarded an honorary degree, which, he noted, was 'the first official recognition of our endeavours' (Patterson 1990).

Thus rhetoric also plays a crucial role in academic discourse. For one thing, it is rich in metaphors, and even scientists are forced to use imagistic rhetoric as their public language, since their private language of mathematics is accessible only to the few. Scientific metaphor is not merely a way of interacting with external constituencies, it affects the way that scientists themselves perceive their realities: in fact a metaphor created for the purpose of public communication can, perversely, spring back and affect the thinking of its creators as well. Metaphors help structure and limit disciplines, and give them a unity – the astrophysicist, for example, speaking of 'black holes' – but they can also illuminate the values of their creators and influence their further evaluations. In the social sciences this is particularly true – is man tribal, a herd animal, a robot, etc.? Different metaphors underpin different social science paradigms. Economists in particular have traditionally conceived of man as a self-seeking, rational decision maker with a clear, hierarchical conception of his needs and priorities, and much of their language is a rhetoric that embodies this, and as McCloskey (1990) has shown, economists actually use rhetoric to persuade even their professional peers.

Myth and propaganda

Myth making may not be part of any core or theoretic definition of propaganda, but most propaganda is concerned among other things with the confection of myths: mythology is thus, almost, a part of its working definition. A myth is a paradigm and shorthand. It surfaces the human interest and narrative quality that make it memorable in the sense that the abstract lecture or mere eloquence could never be. Propaganda makes continual use of myths: they are always a point of reference, implicit or explicit, in the propaganda texts. Myths provide a common cultural vocabulary, they unite, they flatter, they elevate the argument or group that

claims association with them. They avoid the need for complex verbal exposition; they can be incorporated by minimal pictorial reference, or they can be rendered by a symbol: 'in simple terms, myth is the narrative, the set of ideas, whereas ritual is the acting out, the articulation of myth; symbols are the building blocks of myth and the acceptance or veneration of symbols is a significant aspect of ritual. A ritual generally observes the procedures with which a symbol is invested, which a symbol compels. Thus myths are encoded in rituals, liturgies and symbols, and reference to a symbol can be quite sufficient to recall the myth for the members of the community without need to return to ritual' (Schöpflin 1997).

Myths are universal, in democratic regimes as well as autocracies seeking to gain legitimacy. They are also a constant fact in history and have from deep antiquity been part of the political panoply of all regimes, at all times.

The definition of a myth

A myth may be described as a story or event that illuminates the key values of some society or association: the events can be real or imaginary, but, almost certainly, imagination will have embroidered them. The propagandist thus draws from the existing stock of social mythologies as well as adding to them. These core myths of a society are its foundation ideals – such as Governor Winthrop's 'City on a Hill' – and their undermining creates social upheaval.

Myth is a conceptual lynchpin of propaganda and it is impossible to imagine the propagandised without their myths. Myths are a feature of all human societies everywhere. A myth is a story, the story a culture tells about itself to perpetuate itself, the sound of a culture's internal dialogue. The gods of the Greeks and Romans, for example, were just like us humans, in all our weakness and triviality, they are a commentary on our foibles, our play of emotions and petty jealousies. 'Myth' in popular language means invention or untruth, but that is not the academic meaning of the term. Thus Calder's *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991) is not claiming that the historical memory of the blitz is untrue, merely that there are important qualifications to be made. The fact, for example, that looting took place after the bombing of the Café de Paris in the West End does not alter the core truth of nobility, community and sacrifice (and neither does Calder claim that it does).

Myths are exhortatory, exemplars of approved patterns of behaviour: the key problem for the myth maker 'is to find the set of values, paradigm scenarios or experiences that have wide appeal among the target audience. One way to do this is to look at the changing values of a culture or subculture in contrast to traditional values, and beliefs . . .' (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2004). For Schöpflin (1997) culture itself may be defined as 'a system

of collectively held notions, beliefs, premises, ideas, dispositions, and understandings, to which myth gives a structure'. We have argued that 'what they share is the attempt to identify a basic level of cultural experience, manifested in words and deeds throughout history, and concerned principally with the articulation of the core concerns and preoccupations of their host culture' (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003). For Overing (1997) the myth is an exemplar of the work of unconscious logical processes:

> it serves as a symbolic statement about the social order, and as such it reinforces social cohesion and functional unity by presenting and justifying the traditional order. Mythic Discourse reminds a community of its own identity through the public process of specifying and defining for that community its distinctive social norms. Whether or not people believe in the irrational content of myth is irrelevant, for the symbols of myth have metaphoric value and serve a crucial social function in maintaining the given social order.

Eliade (1991) defines myth as 'an account of the events which took place *in principio*, that is, in the beginning, in a primordial and non-temporal instant, a moment of sacred time'. He says an important property of myths has been that they can change people, that is, they have a redemptive function: 'we may even wonder whether the accessibility of Christianity may not be attributable in great measure to its symbolism, whether the universal images that it takes up in its turn have not considerably facilitated the diffusion of its message'. Culture may be defined as a system of collectively held notions, beliefs, premises, ideas, dispositions and understandings to which myth gives a structure.

Social myths are perpetuated by propaganda, celebrated in film, ritual and print, and this has been a ceaseless activity. A myth can be manifested as a non-specific image perpetuated through time – that, for example, big business is amoral, or government is incompetent. (Nor, of course, do such myths have – as the vernacular sense would imply – to be untrue!) Or it can be a highly specific idea (as Keynes said, 'Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back'). Or it can be a generic myth, recurrent throughout many societies and periods of history, such as myths of a Golden Age or of an ascetic and uncorrupted past. Romans imagined an earlier and virtuous polity that was well embodied in the figure of Cincinnatus, the farmer called from his plough to serve as consul to save the republic from its enemies who, having done so, returned to his plough.

Why we have myths

In *The Marketing Power of Emotion* (2003) O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy argue that 'every culture is a storehouse of myths which, though questionably accurate, suggest the origins of the culture's preference for certain beliefs and values and in the process reaffirm a set of preferences'. For Schöpflin (1997) 'myths are about the ways in which communities regard certain propositions as normal and natural and others as perverse and alien'. In *Athenian Myths and Institutions* W. Blake Tyrrell (Tyrrell and Brown 1991) examines how myth makers reflect, define and defend the *status quo*. For Tyrrell, myths refer to relations inherent in the culture's value system, they depict in imaginary form a model to be emulated, as well as the destructive forces active in society, which, left unattended, could rupture the social bond. By telling what happens when core values are lost, myths teach what is culturally valued, they act to assert the *status quo* – in the case of Greece, a warlike, imperialistic society of aristocrats. They become a kind of universal perceptual lens; in Schöpflin's words (1997) 'myth creates an intellectual and cognitive monopoly in that it seeks to establish the sole way of ordering the world and defining world views'. According to Tyrrell, heroes are particularly important in myths and establish model behaviours.

Those who would expose mythologies should do so with care. Any society needs its myths, and if we aggressively and systematically demolish them we may be doing real damage, for myths are intimately bound up with a society's identity, its ability to transmit a coherent culture and moral code to cadet generations and to inspire pride and a sense of community. Moreover a society whose government cavalierly neglects its core myths faces trouble. One reason for the terrible alienation of youth during the Vietnam War was that US actions contradicted the myths of stainless American decency that had been projected by film and popular culture in the ideological cocoon of the 1950s. It is necessary for a regime to keep myths in being to guarantee its survival – the Roman emperors, for example, having to sustain the pretence that Rome was still ruled by people and Senate, perpetuated in the slogan 'Senatus Populusque Romanus', the SPQR of the legionnaires' banner. Much of the intellectual and artistic energy of the '1960s generation' has lain subsequently in the gleeful demolition of myths – for example, a British television series, *Real Lives*, concerned itself with taking famous national figures and posthumously outing them as gay (Baden-Powell, on no real evidence, *Daily Telegraph*, 7 December 1996), bastards (Group Captain Douglas Bader) and so forth. The pantheon of national heroica was serially assaulted on its plinths.

News, especially, deals in myth. As Bird and Dardenne (1988) explain, news narratives are constructed not through neutral techniques but

via symbolic devices and the confection of myths and manifest in simple explanations, reassurance and so forth; in fact the myths endemic in a culture constitute a form of selective perception of the world. Selective perception, common to members of a given culture, has the effect of importing a characteristic interpretation to phenomena.

Myth and story

Myths work because they are structured as stories, as elided stories that integrate meaningful facts into a persuasive framework. Thus Pennington and Hastie (1993) showed how jurors dealt with their inability to remember numerous details by imposing a story framework through which they could make sense of the facts, and they used this master narrative as a template to evaluate the narrative of prosecution and defence: acceptance or rejection of advocacy was determined by its cohesion with the master narrative. We identify people's perspectives by the stories they tell. Christianity succeeded not through the exposition of abstract ethical rules alone: its ethos and belief system gained inspiration from stories which carried the reader through from a beginning to a middle and an end and a message. The Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, Dives and Lazarus, the Labourers in the Vineyard and so forth were simple tales which could be instantly recognised in any culture. The narrative superstructure of the Gospels, which accords primacy to sacrifice and rebirth, constitutes a primordial myth system that can thereby usurp other sacrifice-based systems such as the Aztec. The figures of Christian scripture and tradition could absorb the pantheon of pagan deities via a manufactured resemblance, as when in Mexico the (pregnant) Virgin of Guadalupe replaced a (pregnant) Aztec female deity, or where the cross lies within a circle representing the sun god, as with the Celtic cross.

The impact of myths

Myths have had a real impact on the course of history, and since the creation of myths is a permanent activity, myths continue to be important even though some die out. They are merely replaced. The progress of our lives is festooned with myths. There are myths round every corner. Myths, their tissues of truth, falsehood and fantasy, are the context we inhabit and the atmosphere we breathe. Shopping behaviour is inspired by mythological structures – diamonds, for example, are a rather common little rock, but they are also a girl's best friend, and the success of the de Beers cartel in pouring meaning and exclusivity into this stone ranks as one of the greatest myth-making enterprises of all time.

Myth is thus impactful. The exculpatory myth fabricated by the German general staff in 1918 – the myth of the stab in the back – had horrendous consequences as a result of its acceptance by German public opinion. In the United States so powerful has been the 'log cabin to White House' myth that one candidate, Benjamin Harrison, ordered little wooden model cabins for his supporters to carry around (Melder 1992), even though he was the cousin of an English lord. Politically created myths have performed sterling service for their manufacturers, for example the myth of the 'winter of discontent' was endlessly promulgated by the Conservative Party throughout the 1980s, and it served them well.

Myths can be destructive. They can affirm our current sense of inferiority by reference to a more glorious past. They can perpetuate untruths, and the social iniquities which flow from this, such as the mythology of the Indian 'martial races' which grew up under the Moghul dynasties and was inherited by the British. It took World War II to make people realise that all Indians, not merely the splendid tribes, Jats, Dogras, Hazaras and so on, could fight well (Cohen 1990). Military myths are extremely important, establishing a powerful masculine identity for a nation or fortifying its wish to hold and conquer. France, for example, had the myth of *la gloire*, the belief that military success was a function solely of *élan* or spirit. ('Le pantalon rouge, c'est La France.')

And myths endure. Their long shelf life illustrates both their convenience as a shorthand for talking about one's culture and our failure to interrogate them. That Britain is 'strangled by the old school tie' is still a widely believed myth even though the social reality that underpinned it has faded. Such myths are convenient, they save us from new learning and thinking. The press deals constantly in one particular type of myth, stereotype, and one should never underestimate the after-life of a long-defunct stereotype: professors remain 'mad', colonels 'blimpish', long after the age of such characters has passed. Sometimes in persuasion we attempt to confront myth stereotypes head-on, as in an army recruitment advertisement entitled 'Spot the colonel' where pictures of 'real' – i.e. modern-looking – colonels were placed alongside a pukka silver-moustached actor representing the presumed anachronism. Myths can endure and have powerful impact even though they are factually wrong. The belief long persisted in Ireland that the practice of Roman Catholicism had once been illegal:

> O, Paddy, dear, did you hear
> The news that's going round?
> The Shamrock is by law forbid
> To grow on Irish ground.

In Kevin Myers's words, 'To enter a modern conspiracy against British rule merely repeats the earlier – albeit mythical – conspiracy required simply to practise one's religion' (*Spectator*, 18 March 1995). To Schöpflin (1997)

'myth is a way of offering explanations for the fate of a community and failure of particular strategies. Myth creates solidarity in adversity by offering answers that can be probed no further.'

Truth and falsehood

To be successful a propaganda myth must have intuitive plausibility: the myth spread by the Chinese communists, that a public park sign in Hong Kong said 'No dogs or Chinese allowed' was a distortion, but people could, just about, believe it of the British. This is significant because it underpins the proposition that myth 'cannot be constructed purely out of false material; it has to have some relationship with the memory of the collectivity that has fashioned it' (Schöpflin 1997). Truth is often irrelevant, it is a matter of what is believed. The charge of the Light Brigade, for example, has been since the mid-nineteenth century a key British myth of heroic but glorious failure, immortalised by the diverse epic talents of Tennyson and Hollywood. But the myth is sustainable only if we actually believe that many of the soldiers were killed, a prerequisite of the charge attaining its epic notes of glory and blunder. Modern researchers claim that over 80 per cent of the men survived, which makes the myth and its significance meaningless (www.factindex.com/c/ch/charge_of_the_light_brigade). Myths are in fact often disputed by historians because of their significance: but did they actually happen? For example, did soldiers really fire on striking miners at Tonypandy, or is it a Labour Party myth? According to Lord Jenkins (2001) it is. Much of modern historical endeavour is in fact, quite literally, demythologising. One example would be the notorious events at the commencement of the siege of the Alcazar of Toledo. According to Professor Hugh Thomas (1986), the leading British authority on the Spanish Civil War:

> Finally, on 23 July, Candido Cabello, a republican barrister in Toledo, telephoned Moscardo to say that if Moscardo did not surrender the Alcazar within ten minutes, he would shoot Luis Moscardo, the Colonel's 24-year-old son, whom he had captured that morning. 'So that you can see that's true, he will speak to you,' added Cabello. 'What is happening, my boy?' asked the Colonel. 'Nothing,' answered the son. 'They say they will shoot me if the Alcazar does not surrender.' 'If it be true,' replied Moscardo, 'commend your soul to God, shout Viva España and die like a hero. Goodbye, my son. A last kiss?' 'Goodbye, Father,' answered Luis. 'A very big kiss.'

The equally distinguished Professor Paul Preston (1995) is, however, curtly dismissive:

> However, the resistance of the Alcazar was being turned into the great symbol of Nationalist heroism. Subsequently the reality of the siege would be embroidered beyond recognition, in particular through the famous, and almost

certainly apocryphal, story that Moscardo was telephoned and told that, unless he surrendered, his son would be shot.

Myth manufacture

Myth entrepreneurship is the insightful seizure of material from a mass of cultural properties. The serious propagandists will think through their myths very carefully: 'for a myth to be effective in organising and mobilising opinion, it must however resonate. The myth that fails to elicit response is alien or inappropriate' (Schöpflin 1997). Propaganda thus becomes the judicious refurbishment of old myths but it is also the manufacture of new ones (for example, the Australian film *Breaker Morant* re-engineered the folk memory of the past to create a new Australian hero to add to its traditional ones). The insight, effectiveness and creativity with which this is done are a test of the skill of the propagandist. Myth has an inherent plasticity that can be recast for modern purposes. Film and television do this frequently as novel and history are reinterpreted in the light of contemporary obsessions and prejudices – as, for example, Walt Disney's politically correct version of Kipling's *Jungle Book* or the latest (it is the fourth) version of *The Four Feathers*. So a seemingly traditional myth can be invoked and recast for an entirely different purpose. Thus the 1936 (Warner Brothers) version of the film *The Charge of the Light Brigade* was essentially about the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race, with two events in historical time (the Cawnpore massacre of 1857 and the charge in 1854) reversed; the 1968 version focused on the iniquities of the British class system, each film ministering to the ideological needs of its era (Carnes 1996). For Webster (1988) 'it is important to see the populists' rhetoric as a strategic mobilisation of the past rather than nostalgia'. The past is not therefore an escape from the present but legitimates it by showing the ostensibly unchanging nature of people and by illuminating antecedent causes.

From our perspective the point about myths in propaganda is that they are not merely refurbished and recreated but actively manufactured. The great masters of propaganda have deliberately sought to construct them. Goebbels invented myths. Horst Wessel, a Nazi student probably killed by communists (Snyder 1976), was turned into a kind of Nazi saint. He also created the myths of an 'Era of Struggle', the Old Comrades and so on – magnifying the political obstacles and Communist violence the Nazis had to overcome in their rise to power, and all laced with maudlin sentimentality. Goebbels may have been the most influential myth inventor of the twentieth century but he was far from being the only one, and the impact of invented or amplified myths is everywhere. The extent and vigour of their manufacture or elaboration are highly visible in the history of totalitarian

regimes such as the March on Rome and communism's similar litany with its *Battleship Potemkin*, *Long March* and so on.

Myth making can become a high art in itself, especially when entrusted to such as Edmund Burke, whose mythologising of the ludicrous Queen Marie Antoinette of France must rank as one of the most luminous examples of the genre: 'I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the Age of Chivalry is gone; that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever' (Goodrich 1884).

Thus myths can be instantly fabricated to change perceptions, an aspect perhaps of what we nowadays call 'spin'. Propaganda is the imposition of an interpretation and myths are an important part of that; since there are few situations that permit only one fixed and unchallengeable interpretation, the possibility of persuasion succeeding, even if the perception is an unorthodox one, always exists. Defeat can be turned into victory, and the genius is to succeed here where logic would ordain otherwise. Dunkirk is such a case. The salvation of a routed and surrounded army, saved only by the inertia (or sufferance) of its conquerors, was turned by the masterful myth-confectionery skills of Winston Churchill into just possibly the greatest of all the British myths, an eminence it has occupied ever since. It was the best 'spin' of all time.

Myth, nation and race

The myth maker may be juxtaposed with the 'rational' persuader who favours a more rigorous discourse drawn more from scientific empiricism. That great political bout of British history, between Gladstone and Disraeli, was not about mere ideology alone or even ideology at all, but the application of analytical reason to politics energised by the idea of an essential fraternity of the human race, versus a deep faith in unreasoning instinct and the sacrosanctity of custom, inherited folkways and the ancestral calls of race and blood. Disraeli ironically was quoted on his view that 'race is all' by Adolf Hitler during a speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin. There are degrees in how literally a nation may take its myths. Myths may be popularly viewed as containing rhetorical truths, such as the US myth of national benevolence, or they may, more dangerously, be seen as portraying the objective truth, as with the Nazi belief in the existence from ancient times of an Aryan race. Perhaps nationalism, like race, is a utopian myth of purification, and nationalist expressions of propaganda share commonalities of mythic structure: in Smetana's *Blanik* the hero sleeps in the halls, one day to reawake with the nation. Sleeping, also, is Wagner's Kaiser Frederick Barbarossa, an anticipation of the Führer concept (Perris 1985).

Many propaganda myths focus on the superiority of tribe, or race (that mass society, mass media-amplified sense of tribe). Race myths are valuable since they make everyone within the master race, the chosen people, or whatever, feel superior, however plebeian their pre-existing status. For the First World War British, for example, *Punch* magazine invented a 'Professor of German Frightfulness' to remind them of the Germans' moral inferiority. Race myths – using race in the sense of a socially constructed category, which is not, of course, how believers regard it – were almost universally accepted in the nineteenth century. The impact and propaganda value of race myths endured long after they had become discredited among the intelligentsia who had once embraced them. Thus the notion of 'black Aryans', i.e. Tutsis, took hold in Rwanda during the colonial period and, since it was also a basis of preferment, further polarised the people, its legacy grimly apparent in the massacres of the early 1990s (Robert Block 1994).

Some race myths are almost too well known to merit discussion. The notion of a pure northern 'Aryan' race, uniquely superior, had been propagated by the Count de Gobineau in the nineteenth century and popularised in Wilhelmine Germany by Huston Stewart Chamberlain and sundry pamphleteers (Snyder 1976). From such sources the party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg constructed his gimcrack *Mythos*. These formative influences on the young Hitler and subsequently on Hess, Himmler and others were strong. They sanctified instinctual bigotry with the liturgies of scientism. The race myth was not only handed to the Nazis through the nineteenth-century pseudo-intelligentsia, there were also artistic sources, pre-eminently Wagner, whose Nibelungs, the dark and scavenger race, were deliberately likened by him to the Jewish people. In the twentieth century the ancient libels against the Jews – that they had, for example, engaged in the ritual murder of children – were supplemented by freshly manufactured libels such as the French forgery the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' elaborated and propagated by the Tsarist secret police. The Tsar had sought to combat Bolshevism by fomenting Russian nationalism, and this demanded the fabrication of an alien threat – as ever, the Jews. The 'protocols' were found among Nicholas's last few possessions (Figes 1997), but their influence upon European fascism, on characters like Archibald Maule Ramsay MP and his 'Right Club', were considerable (R. Griffiths 1983).

US myths

Now most propaganda is deeply embedded in myth. Propaganda creates new myths, of course (Horst Wessel), but more often it draws from or reinterprets old ones. Both sides in a dispute can, and do, pick from the same stock of myths and give them a different interpretation, thus 'Log cabin to

White House' is a common integrating myth of US culture which all parties exploited. Elements of US myths – the frontier, cowboys versus Indians, etc. – recur time and again in its cultural products. The family farm is another: thus when Midwestern viewers saw images of a deserted farm and the phrase 'It wasn't just a farm. It was a family. Vote Democrat' (Webster 1988) their manipulators were tapping into a key myth of the American heartland. It is difficult to imagine how a culture could exist without the myths that organise, reinforce and give it meaning. So myths celebrate the key values of a culture. The very language of a culture carries its core mythologies. These mythic appeals are used extensively in advertising. Thus Andy Rooney in *Sixty Minutes* (Tyrrell 1991) cited the ten most common words used in advertising. Such words evoke the dreams and aspirations promised by the US founding myth. 'Discover', 'fresh', 'new' and 'light' (that is, unburdened) evoke promise and opportunity; 'natural' and 'real' what the seeker may find here; 'extra', 'rich' and 'save' what accrues from initiative. The anthropologist Leymore (1975) argues that a role of advertising is to create modern myths, something that it is constantly doing.

Reich (1987) mentions various cultural myths that affect what Americans believe through the power of emotional resonance, such as the Horatio Alger story, which was even (according to Barbara Stern 1988) turned into a Budweiser commercial. Myths are the stuff of the United States, its cultural DNA. How many Hollywood movies, for example, tell and retell the story of the little guy battling the system or the big corporation or the bullies (such as Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront*, 1954)? These are part of the traditional fabrics and fibres of Hollywood, yet they are also embedded US culture myths. Other redeployed myths include the damaged male (Bogart in *Casablanca*, Rambo and many others), authority figures such as soldiers, doctors, lawyers, policemen rebelling against authority, as with the *Dirty Harry* persona (reflecting Americans' ambivalence towards the official and the officious).

Some US myths – such as the notion of Americans as 'benevolent', which pre-date even the foundation of the republic itself – endure (the British by contrast being merely satisfied that they were Just!). Myths retail the story of the victors in historical conflicts. Our image, for example, of the foundation of the United States is that of the *Mayflower* and its austere cargo of black-clad Pilgrim Fathers; yet this is essentially a post-Civil War image, for the founding colony was of course Virginia, the heart of the Confederacy, and not New England.

Similarly the American War of Independence, as set forth in such films as *Revolution* (1985) with Al Pacino or *The Patriot* with Mel Gibson, is a narrative of the victors. Most Americans would be bemused to learn that the revolutionaries closed theatres and caused actors such as the American

Company of Comedians to emigrate (A.J. O'Shaughnessy 2000); that numbered among the causes of the revolution were resentment at the extension of civil rights to French Catholics of Quebec (the Quebec Act: Gardiner and Wenborn 1995) and the attempts by King George III's government to prevent colonists expanding westward into the territory of Native Americans, with whose leaders it had signed treaties. Myths are in essence victor myths: those of the vanquished either die out or lead a subterranean existence. Yet myths have remained critical to Americans, to how they interpret the present, throughout their history. Thus 'one of populism's key strategies has been the mobilization of history and tradition' (Webster 1988), yet in *Lies my Teacher told Me* James Loewen (1995) illuminates just how false the history we are taught so often is. Most probably believe – they have been told so often enough by the National Rifle Association – that they possess a constitutionally enshrined 'right to bear arms'. They have no such thing, otherwise of course cities like New York could not enforce their legal ban on gun ownership. The constitution lends them a right to bear arms only as members of a legally constituted militia, yet this myth continues to exert a baleful influence on the political beliefs of Americans, to the extent that the battle against the gun in public life has emigrated from the political arena, where the NRA has effectively sterilised most potential opposition (Anderson 1996), to the courts of law.

Myth and martyrdom

Deaths and martyrdom have always been fecund sources of myth making. Christ was the ultimate martyr, and all martyrdom has therefore the tincture of divinity. Irish Republican martyrology, for example, is an intricate subject in itself. Bobby Sands was the last of a great assemblage of Irish martyrs stretching way back in history well beyond Cardinal Plunkett, and prints, books, murals and, especially, song and ballad have celebrated martyrs such as Kevin Barry, the university student who participated in a terrorist act on his way to a lecture in 1920 and was subsequently executed by the British (Bennett 1995).

Martyrdom is a particularly persuasive way of inflating a sense of moral grandeur, and has been critical in the establishment of religious faiths and nation states. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (Ridley 2001), published in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, gave the Anglican church the ethical pedigree it needed. Elizabeth herself ordained that a copy should be chained to each pulpit, and the book was carried on the ships fighting the Spanish Armada. The death by hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney, Mayor of Cork, was a critical propaganda blow against British rule in southern Ireland. The suicide bomber, of course, kills many others in the process of killing

himself. But the act may still impress those who need most to be impressed, the tentative and the weakly partisan.

All nations, and all causes, seek and attain their martyrs. The martyr does not have to die, but death of course is desirable. The more gory the death, the better. The death of the heroine of French independence, Joan of Arc, by flame, created a permanent nation-building myth to be used by French patriots for all time, including de Gaulle. Events such as the death of Nelson and the assassination of Lincoln and Kennedy gave those men a martyr's crown: the manner of their death added retrospectively a sacerdotal glow to their high triumphs, and they became, as it were, Saints of the Nation. In some cases nations and groups have consciously sought to create a cult of death, and this was particularly powerful in all European fascist movements, Spanish nationalism, for example (Preston 2000). Nazi culture was permeated by a kind of death fixation; a movement which was responsible for the deaths of countless millions was itself animated by a bizarre death cult. *Triumph of the Will* is dominated by memorialist enactments, the rising to hail the memory of Field Marshal Hindenberg, the salutation to the dead of the First World War and the recitation of its battlefields, the solemn march of the Führer to the flaming plinths. This funereal quality of Nazi propaganda is one of its many curious aspects, but is made intelligible both in terms of the need for reconciliation with the enormous losses of the First World War and the need for preparation and acceptance of the great blood sacrifices that Hitler would now demand.

One successful fabricator of myths was Ronald Reagan. His achievement was to 'make the problems of the present disappear by flanking them with a reassuring vision of the past and a dream of a benign future' (Lule 1990). He did this by creating new myths that had resonance with the past, such as his 'production' of the *Challenger* disaster, where old myths (the conquest of the west) were used to manufacture new ones (the conquest of space). So the creation of myths has continued throughout history. They are simply too useful, to the advocate and to the propagandist.

Kenneth Burke (Lule 1990) asks 'whether human societies could possible cohere without symbolic victims which the individual members of the group share in common'. The question is not how the sacrificial motives revealed in the institutions of magic and religion might be eliminated 'but what new forms they take'. In the *Challenger* disaster Ronald Reagan deployed effective rhetorical strategies, using these reference points, to turn disaster into a heroic endeavour. Even a seemingly decisive event with an ostensibly unambiguous message – such as the poor leadership and mismanagement which disasters reveal – has plasticity, the territory of its meaning open to contest, and the function of rhetoric is to affix an

interpretation which freezes it into the definitive paradigm of the event for all future discussion. Lule comments perceptively that:

> quite possibly, the *Challenger* Seven could have served as powerful symbols of failed policy and flawed leadership. Yet Reagan reconciled the failure of the shuttle and renewed US commitment to the space programme through enactment of the drama of victimage. He sanctified the crew and offered Americans consolation and purgation through sacrifice and redemption.

However, he 'referred to the deaths of the astronauts only twice and obliquely. . . . Reagan saw the deaths as giving meaning because the programme was going forward'.

And these questions of meaning are critical to explaining propaganda. Lule quotes Deetz:

> In tracing the metaphors that are used by the society, we trace the way people in that society experience things. . . . Reagan used the metaphors to structure the eulogy – astronauts and pioneers, space and the American west, death and life everlasting: Reagan implied that the shuttle crew was extending America's boundaries into space. . . . Near his conclusion Reagan spoke directly to the dead and he implied the seven earned eternal life through their sacrifice for the nation.

Lule also notes that 'the drama of the victimage effectively sidesteps questions of blame or responsibility', and adds:

> the astronauts had given their lives for the nation. Partisan bickering over their loss, as if their deaths had not been a sacrifice but a horrible mistake, would rob the deaths of dignity and meaning. In this way, Reagan's eulogy used the victims to effectively silence and dispel questions of responsibility. . . . By placing the space programme within hallowed, American pioneer tradition, debate on the programme's merits was cut off or limited to discussion of when and how the programme would proceed and the promise be fulfilled.

Propaganda and symbolism

If myths are the heart of propaganda, symbolism is its outer garment – indeed, to speak of a propaganda devoid of symbolism is really to be speaking about some other phenomenon, for a propaganda bereft of symbol structures would be unintelligible as propaganda. Symbols telegraph meaning, and life is a cacophony of symbols, since they are the mental heuristics or short cuts through which daily life is interpreted and organised. A key function of propaganda is to manufacture such recognition devices.

Propaganda texts are symbol-rich. Thus in *Battleship Potemkin* the firing of the ship's guns in response to the massacre are juxtaposed with shots of

ponderously regal stone lions fronting a palatial edifice. They symbolise the *ancien régime*. Nor do we see the Tsarist guards killed: instead it is the stone lions that are smashed. Roman symbolism in particular became an idiom and symbolic grammar of various dictatorships, Napoleon, Mussolini and especially the Nazis. The propaganda of the Reich was encrusted with Roman imagery: it became, in the Roman salute, an adjunct to every day communication. The Nuremberg rallies themselves were gimcrack Roman triumphs, with flames atop columns, gigantic eagles, temple-like structures: the very word 'fascist' is of course derived from the Roman *fasces*, symbol of magisterial authority.

Commercial advertising also acknowledges symbolism. Much commercial signification celebrates the idea that material things are not an end in themselves but a means of expression, signifying affection, status. Gift giving is symbolic drama: symbols represent social meaning rather than point to something concrete. Products are means to social ends such as admiration, and the thrust of much advertising is that these things are attainable through the agency of some purchased symbol, that is, a commercial product. When this is understood we come finally to the view that the briefest, most comprehensive definition of a product is simply as 'meaning'.

The symbol has been described as a sign that incorporates something in addition to its direct references. A symbol, unlike an idea, is something visible, something into which communication has poured meaning, it is a dynamic referent that refers not only to itself but to the myriad associations that have been packed into it. For Douglas (1982) 'symbols are the only means of communication. They are the only means of expressing value: the main instruments of thought, the only regulators of experience.' For any communication to take place, the symbols must be structured. Symbols, often considered the most powerful and complex forms of comparison, are thus a class of representatives which stand for other things (Firth, in Stern 1988), without the explicit expression of comparison. They are commonly regarded as metaphors from which the first term has been omitted (Beeks and Warren, in Stern 1988). Symbols act as heuristics or cognitive short cuts: when relative choices are confusing and ambiguous we fall back on symbolism.

The value of symbolism

Symbols are effective because they save cognitive energy, but also because much appraisal is first emotional and only latterly a cognitive evaluation. Persuasion can resort to mere symbolism alone, rejecting any kind of rationale or rational construction of a case, and this has been described by

Mayhew (1997) as the rhetoric of presentation. A statue, for example, or a photograph without explanatory text can be doing simply this.

Symbols are an important aspect of propaganda and one which the extant literature on propaganda has tended to devalue. First, they are an immensely cheap form of propaganda: they attract public notice, they are remembered for decades or even centuries afterwards. A symbol speaks directly to the heart and does not tax the critical intellect. Commercial organisations have long grasped the importance of symbols. (Some service examples are Prudential Bach's rock, the Travellers' Insurance Company umbrella and Merrill Lynch's bull: Stern 1988). A brand is also a symbol, and branding is now a commercial science: corporate investment in brand designs, brand building and brand identity is really testimony to the enduring power of symbols. Brands resonate in ways that ultimately defy analysis. Advertising itself has been described as 'pouring meaning into the brand'.

A symbol is shorthand. Its essence is compression. For a symbol expresses, often in visible form, what might take ages to write down or debate. The French revolutionaries were 'great believers in the use of symbols as a means of transmitting complicated ideas in a simple form' (Taylor 1990), such as the Phrygian cap denoting equality, the fasces for fraternity and Marianne as the symbol of liberty. It is also economic. A memorable symbol such as the wartime 'V for Victory' campaign in occupied Europe is an extraordinary weapon, since it can be brief, ubiquitous and costless. In this case the V signature was daubed all over the lands the Nazis occupied and incessantly broadcast by the BBC as the opening bars of Beethoven's Ninth.

Symbols are attractive also to those with less capacity for abstract thought. To Pope Gregory the Great, for example, statues were 'books for the illiterate' (Taylor 1990). It is a paradox that, the more educated people seem to become, the less symbol-conscious they appear to be. Often what we mean by saying, for example, that academics are 'out of touch' is that they are unaware of symbolic values and the charge they carry, for reason is myopic when it confronts symbols, and the process of education is one of editing out symbolic awareness. This, perhaps, is why intellectuals become so perplexed when they look at situations where the issues are, or are in the main, symbolic. Northern Ireland in particular baffled them because everything was organised around symbolic issues where the core of political debate comprised such arcane matters as the kind of cap badge that police officers should wear. The symbol speaks, essentially, to simpler folk: academics are often so trained that they are immunised to the power symbols hold for ordinary people, and thus too often their analyses ignore them. The fact that the highly academically educated tend to be insensitive to non-verbal symbols and dull their meaning is central to the difficulties of Christianity today. For example, the Catholic church hierarchy failed to see the

significance of Friday's abstinence to the Irish labourer in London. For him it symbolised allegiance to a humble home in Ireland and to a glorious tradition in Rome (Douglas 1982).

A ritual is an enacted symbol, and any ritual is propaganda of an authoritarian and inherited kind. Rituals act as a social adhesive, prescribing and proscribing the key concerns and values of a community. Recognising this, propagandists in times past, from the French revolutionaries to the Nazis and Stalin, have sought to create new rituals, ones plagiarised from the ritualistic performance of religious and monarchist institutions but celebrating new state ideologies. During the French revolution, ceremonies, Festivals of Freedom and Statues of Liberty helped 'to consolidate the Republican idea in a society familiar only with monarchical government' (Taylor 1990).

Today there is an attack on ritual and we speak often of 'empty' symbols and 'meaningless' ritual. Yet rituals are seldom meaningless and the astute propagandist will recognise their value. Douglas (1982) argues that one of the greatest problems of our day is our lack of commitment to common rituals, while more mysterious is a widespread, explicit rejection of rituals as such. Ritual has become a bad word signifying empty conformity. She also suggests that many sociologists, following Merton, use the term 'ritual' of one who performs gestures without inner commitment to the ideas and values expressed. This is a distractingly partisan use of the term, since anthropologists use 'ritual' to mean action and beliefs in the symbolic order without reference to the commitment or non-commitment of the actors.

Symbols in history

Symbolic acts have been the core of politics, almost since recorded history began. What is often regarded as great political leadership is in fact, and very often, the highest sensitivity to symbols and a mastery of their manipulation. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, was the supreme magician of symbolism: that of his dress and spinning wheel, with their message of ascetic simplicity and self-reliance, spoke both to his followers and to the British imperial rulers he wished to influence. His use of the fast was well contrived, and his great Salt March a masterpiece of symbolic propaganda – as great and significant in its way as the Boston Tea Party, with its message that India's natural bounty, sea salt, was being absurdly taxed by her colonial rulers.

Such is the strength of symbols that much of history, much, indeed, of war, has been spent quarrelling over them, seeking them out or exorcising them. In the Spanish Civil War the Alcazar, or fortress, of Toledo held no military or strategic value, but its heroic resistance, deep in republican

territory, made it a symbol both of nationalist determination and of the struggle to control Spain. Franco's strategy was dominated by the need to capture this potent but militarily irrelevant symbol and the war itself was spun out needlessly. Again, the Irish Civil War (1922–24) was fought not, as is commonly imagined, over the integration of the north – General Michael Collins was in fact more radical on this issue than de Valera – but about a symbol, a mere oath of loyalty to the British king, to be taken by ambassadors, members of the Dail, and so on. Yet this symbol was sufficient to drive its antagonists to the sordid brutalities of civil war, even though the British government no longer exercised any political jurisdiction in the south (apart from the four treaty ports).

All political events have some symbolic aspect, ways in which their meaning is related to broader interpretations of the political *status quo*: they are construed not only as events in themselves, but as a statement about the larger trend or situation. Thus during the American War of Independence, the death of Jane McCrea, the fiancée of a Tory loyalist, was alleged by republican propagandists (see 'The death of Jane McCrea', painted by John Vanderlyn in 1804) to have been scalped by tribesmen in the employ of the British (Taylor 1990). This aroused more than mere rage, yet why should the death of one ordinary individual contribute to the outcome of a revolution? The answer is that the horrific event also carried an obvious symbolic construction, namely the opportunism and amorality of the British and their cynical belief that any means would justify the imperial end. The power of this event is comprehensible only if we realise the fear and contempt Americans then felt for the 'savage' original possessors of their soil. (In fact Miss McRea was probably shot by the revolutionaries themselves in error.)

Events thus become symbolic because they have a political meaning that describes a larger problem, and because the appropriateness of their symbolisation is accepted, interpreted and amplified through the media. They do not have to be 'great' or important events themselves. The refusal of striking undertakers to bury the dead in Britain's 1979 'winter of discontent' became symbolic of the surrender of control from government to unions, and it was endowed with a significance far beyond the inconvenience of a few mourners, while over the next decade or so this symbol was used time and again in Tory party propaganda to remind people of life under Labour. A symbol is not, of course, necessarily contrived – it can be spontaneous, but none the less strong: Alexander the Great, when confronted with the Gordian knot, was supposed to have simply slashed it with his sword, and William the Conqueror, stumbling on English land, reputedly arose and with handfuls of soil claimed to have taken the earth of England. Napoleon famously seized his new imperial crown for himself from the Pope's hands at his coronation.

Commerce and history are so encrusted with symbols that they are a way, and often *the* way, in which we remember, from the Marlboro cowboy to Mayor Giuliani at Ground Zero to Marian Anderson singing (9 April 1939) – and, later, Martin Luther King speaking – in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The random images which flood into our minds as we contemplate our collective past were, once, artfully contrived: in fact they are not random at all.

One particular form of symbol-rich propaganda, of high significance in the nineteenth century as well as in the twentieth, is terrorism in all its forms. In terrorism the symbol is the victim, and terrorists particularly seek out victims who are rich in symbolic meaning: 'the selection of victims is symbolic and instrumental . . . the victim is chosen because of whom she or he represents and because their victimisation will resonate with specific audiences' (Crelinston 1989). Crelinston argues that terrorism is 'a specific form of political violence, one that is characterised by its communication function . . . [T]he victims of terrorism function as signs in a propaganda war'. Much political violence, including war itself, focuses the attack on identifiable and specific targets that are deeply symbolic and whose defilement pleasures the partisans of a cause. Indeed, Blain (1988) concludes that 'human violence is not the fall into latent animality but rather an extreme expression of our symbol-mindedness. It is in the hyperbolic possibilities of linguistic symbolism that they should seek an answer to the question of why human beings fight wars.'

Symbols and meaning

Symbols are not universally decoded in the same kind of way and their meaning varies among groups. They also elude the kind of precise focus and content that might antagonise some of those whose loyalty we seek: a symbol has a flexibility of meaning to which the viewer can bring his or her own imagination, it carries an openness to interpretation. Symbols resonate. They convey multiple meanings, since images by their very structure are multivalent. Eliade (1991) argues that if the mind makes use of images to grasp the ultimate reality of things, it is just because reality manifests itself in contradictory ways and therefore cannot be expressed in concepts. To translate an image into concrete terminology by restricting it to any one of its frames of reference is to do worse than mutilate it, it is to annihilate, to annul it as an instrument of cognition.

An example of this multivalence is the symbol of the gun in Irish politics, particularly relevant now given that decommissioning has become such a significant issue. Kevin Myers (*Spectator*, 18 March 1995) has argued that it 'is not just some weapon of offence or defence in the history of Irish

"republicanism". It is the grail which transmits the apostolic succession of Irish republicanism from one generation to the next.' The failure of John Major's peace process in Northern Ireland was due in part to his insistence on a Republican hand-over of weapons – something even David Lloyd George was willing to back down on in 1922. The British had simply failed to appreciate that the gun was more than a political bargaining tool to the IRA, it was an ancient and totemic symbol.

Symbols do not mean the same thing for everybody, and the astute propagandist will be aware of this. Symbols can divide or unite us: the baseball cap, for example, is now the headgear of global youth and symbolises Americanism and the associated ideas of hedonism, lack of deference and freedom. When the leader of the British Conservative Party assumed one for a photo opportunity he was attempting to embody a younger and more vibrant party, but the general derision with which this essay in self-conscious sartorial gaucherie was greeted indicates that his interpretation of the symbol was not universal: wearing it was felt to be jejune in the leader of a Great Party. For many, the baseball cap is a signifier of the crass and self-centred (especially when reversed!). Similarly, pictures of Bill Clinton, on a yacht, at Martha's Vineyard, with a rock star, expressed everything his advisers wished to leave unsaid: the collective elements of that tableau were repugnant to many Americans when associated with their head of state. According to Hodge and Kress (1988), the meta-signs of the elite who control high culture incorporate meanings of hostility towards the majority just as much as do meta-signs of punks or Mafiosi. Even such a significant cultural symbol as the American cowboy is not universally greeted warmly as a positive token of national identity. For one critic (Webster 1988) the cowboy image 'glorifies the male', it 'costumes him in unfeeling masculinity, [his horse] a kind of pedestal to display virility and hint at imminent violence'.

Meaning is also mediated by our cultural milieu and its patterns of signification. What something symbolises may be conventional within that culture, such as the images on a nation's currency, or universal throughout many cultures, as the colour red symbolising danger. But the meaning of a certain symbol to a certain individual may be unique, mediated by social context and individual experience: symbols have a plasticity and so are subject to multiple and even oppositional readings. Symbolic meaning can reside in a privatised code. Hitler's moustache was found merely comical by the British and US publics, but was a studied reminder that he is 'one of us' to the veterans of the Imperial German Army of World War I. (Moustaches were trimmed to reduce the problem of trench lice.) We can speak, with justice, of a 'powerful symbol', and those who reject our perception of its power may do so at their peril. Hence the Leeds United football fans who burned Turkish flags in Istanbul (*The Times*, 20 January 2004) may not

have understood the enormity of the insult, but it certainly contributed to the murder of two of their members by inflaming Turkish supporters. That is the price of cultural deafness to symbolisation.

Nor is symbolism static. There can be creativity and initiative in seeking and developing effective symbol strategies, new symbols can be invented, and so the early Christians jettisoned their symbol, the fish, for that of the cross. Or old ones can be retrieved from the past and given new meaning, the swastika, for example, as in the almost surreal vistas of massed swastikas in *Triumph of the Will*. By what process of semiological transmography, for example, did the cross of Christ crucified become the cross of iron on Adolf Hitler's chest? A symbol thus embarks upon an historical journey, but symbols are also powerful in the cause of peace, as we speak of a dove of peace, an olive branch, an angel of mercy, a peace pipe. And symbols can continue as symbols long after the reality of the content they represented has changed. Hardly any prisoners were left in the Bastille in 1789 but, for the French revolutionaries, it was the most powerful of the symbols of the *ancien régime*, massive and darkly brooding.

Since political control of symbols is a crucial feature of political power, failures in political control of symbols are therefore political failures. Symbols can appear to take over and even usurp political authority, and one of the physical props in a situation can become its embodiment. Under appeasement, Neville Chamberlain's umbrella seemed to assume a life of its own as a symbol of supine British policy. The political intent underlying the creation of a symbol may not be 'read' by the audience: they may wilfully misconstrue, and a propaganda symbol can be conscripted into becoming a counter-symbol. Thus, Prince Trubetskoy's statue of Tsar Alexander was 'read' by the enemies of the regime as a satire on it (and that might actually have been Trubetskoy's intent in making it so huge and menacing: Figes 1997). Indeed, it was subsequently conserved by the Bolsheviks, thus servicing the propaganda apparatus of both the Tsarist and the Soviet states.

Symbolism and the social sciences

What has characterised human advance has been the reliance on ever more sophisticated symbols – language, art, myths, rituals – for understanding the world, communication and social organisation. For Mircea Eliade (1991), all that essential and indescribable part of man that is called imagination dwells in realms of symbolism and still lives on in archaic myths and theologies. To have imagination is to enjoy a richness of interior life, an uninterrupted and spontaneous flow of images. He believes that the most commonplace existence swarms with images, the most realistic man lives by them. Margaret Mead (Taylor 1990) spoke of the significance of

visual symbols in inter-tribe relations: the more politically immature the culture, the more reliance on symbols in political discourse. Thus a review of post-World War II political events in the Cameroon shows how problems of unemployment or agriculture are discussed in symbolic terms rather than by reference to a specific policy of substance (Stark 1990).

For Baudrillard (W. Lance Bennett 1996), 'hyper-reality' is a phenomenon of modern consumer societies wherein the difference between symbols and what they represent disintegrates. There remain only simulacra which have no reference meaning or nuance beyond their mere identity as signs. They are disconnected from the things signified: dynamic change has bleached out the original meanings of signs.

Symbols are condensed meaning, and many of the more interpretative social scientists claim that it is the meaning of things that defines, directs and governs our behaviour: symbols organise, focus and structure that meaning. A brand, for example, is a symbol, and the phenomenon of branding in the commercial world is a testament to the power of symbolism. Such areas as cultural anthropology and cultural sociology make interpretation their focus ('hermeneutics') and see people as motivated by meanings rather than rational calculation. Geertz (1984) sees the mind as entertaining symbolic models through which it interprets the external realm, and culture is above all a system of symbols; the task of the propagandist is to identify the symbol systems of a culture that underpin its rules.

Talcott Parsons was an advocate of the importance of symbolic rewards and not tangible objects in meeting people's deepest needs; he thought infants began by identifying objects and extending the analogy as they matured. This stress on symbolic, status-directed rewards chimes with the activities of many propagandists, from the inventors of the Mother Heroes of the Soviet Union to the Nazi presentation of the ceremonial dagger to the German 'pimpf' at the age of ten (Grunberger 1991), to the inflationary use of the title vice-president in American corporations. Titles in particular convey status and every social order produces them, and the entire Nazi enterprise could be seen as a status exercise: one was no longer part of the proletariat, the international brotherhood of workers, but something far more alluring. Another approach to the role of symbols in propaganda is via behaviourism (based on the concept of the conditioned response, see Chapter 2), that continuous exposure to repeated stimuli produces reflexes and these become both inevitable and predictable once the initial associations have been made. Certainly propaganda uses symbols to create reflexes (the British bulldog, deftly leased from the iconography of political reaction by Tony Blair in his 1997 campaign?). Indeed, there can be popular anger when a familiar symbol is dropped, as the Democrats attempted to do with their donkey.

Conclusion

Schöpflin (1997) goes further than other authorities in perceiving myth, symbol and ritual as constituting a language that lies deeper than language itself, an imagistic grammar which undergirds and transcends mere verbal exposition:

> it follows that what is not symbolised is either very difficult to communicate or cannot be communicated at all, because it is not a part of the fund of knowledge of the community. The language of symbols, rituals, myths and so on is, consequently, a part of the web of communication shared by any community and is, incidentally, more significant than language itself. Members of the community of shared symbols can continue to recognise one another and maintain communication even after they have abandoned their language in the philosophical sense.

Were these propositions true, then myth and symbol would not represent one among a number of creative possibilities for the propagandist. In fact there is no choice: strategies based on their use are not just useful, they are essential, and no propaganda can truly aspire to work that ignores them.

4

Integuments of propaganda

Key foundations of propaganda

This chapter explores key ideas which are generally associated with the concept of propaganda though they may not be integral to its definition. Propaganda, it argues, represents hyperbolic possibility and multiple exaggeration: it is emotional, deceitful and irrational; it does not ask for belief, rather it represents an invitation to share a fantasy. Above all, we identify the creation of enemies as a fundamental activity of propaganda (the Mary Douglas notion of how we structure our universe by knowing what we are against rather than what we are for). Since propaganda as the rhetoric of enmity aims to persuade people to kill other people, others must be demonised in a denial that we share a common humanity (atrocity propaganda).

Emotion

Propaganda has a highly emotional foundation to its appeal. For Aristotle, emotion is central to persuasion: Pathos, distinguished from Ethos and Logos, relied on putting the audience in a state of mind that stirred the emotions, for 'our judgements where we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile' (O'Shaughnessy 1995). The aim and content of Hitlerite rhetoric were pure emotion, logic could safely be ignored, reason simply jettisoned, thus contradictions were no problem, the Jew could be both capitalist and communist, and this was just further proof of Jewish cunning. For Hitler was a theorist on rhetoric and propaganda, and all his persuasion was constructed round the idea of the supremacy of the emotional appeal: 'the people in the overwhelming majority are so feminine by nature and attitude that sober reasoning determines their thoughts and actions far less than emotion or feeling'. Changing behaviour that has a basis in emotion involves changing an interpretation, and for this to be done the communication must relate to

the values of the audience, and evoke the sort of emotional experiences that led to the values in the first place.

What then is the long-term impact of the emotionally driven messages characteristic of propaganda? They would tend, according to the Petty–Cacioppo Elaboration Likelihood Model, to lead only to superficial acceptance of the message via the peripheral route to persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo 1979). The central route, which supposedly involves the recipient of the message in intellectual engagement, is claimed to lead to long-lasting and rational attitude change. To accept this model would mean that we believe the consequences of propaganda to be short-term, but the model has been much criticised on the grounds that it devalues the power and significance of emotion: the deepest influences on behaviour – personal attitudes, religion, morality – are integrally linked to emotion. In contrast, other theoretical models have downgraded the significance of rational persuasion. Zajonc and Markus (1991), by way of contrast to Petty and Cacioppo, have argued that attitudes may have a strong emotional base, developed before any cognitive elaboration. Such attitudes, they claim, can be changed only by exercising emotional influence that bypasses the cognitive.

There are certainly many differences in the kinds of emotion propaganda exploits – for example, social propaganda under the auspices of non-profit organisations and government often seeks to exploit feelings of guilt. Many 'safe driving' appeals would fit into this category as well as some of the most famous social advertisements of all time, such as the Saatchi pregnant man – 'Wouldn't you be more careful if it was you that got pregnant?' – and the Salvation Army's grainy black-and-white images with the refrain 'For God's sake, care. Give us a pound.' Behind the guilt is cognitive dissonance. (In Festinger's 1957 theory this arises when a person holds at the same time inconsistent beliefs: people try to reduce the discomfort by reducing the conflict.)

Ideology

It is difficult to imagine propaganda without ideology. For ideology lends to propaganda both its structure and its clarity. A propaganda for a vague and timidly defended belief may still be classified as propaganda but it would be scarcely recognisable as such.

Propaganda feeds off ideology. At one level, of course, everything, all discourse and every text, can be viewed as 'ideological' but that perspective may not be particularly helpful in the analysis of propaganda. There are degrees. For example, some might even argue that all journalism is ideological and therefore propagandist, though journalists themselves frequently claim to represent free opinion or information rather than ideology

and its economic base. According to Bird and Dardenne (1988), journalists have to assign meanings to new realities – this is how the ideological effect is perceived, since prevailing maps of meaning have come to be accepted as common sense, blinding us to the fact that even 'common sense' is culturally derived. (One example would be the frequent description of something as a 'problem' which can be 'solved' via some technical type of solution, usually the kind of quick fix that is the source of foreign-policy blunders.)

The point about propaganda is that it is not merely ideological but, in its historical manifestations, emphatically so, and it is this that for the general public would distinguish a propaganda text from other forms of persuasive advocacy such as, indeed, consumer marketing, where the attitudes of the consumer, not the producer, determine ideology. In other words it is not the mere fact of ideology alone, but that the ideology is both producer-driven and intensely felt, that distinguishes the propaganda text. The public image of propaganda is thus of an explicitly ideological media communication, in which the ideology lies on the surface: it does not court the viewer or listener but confronts and even berates and assaults them. An example of this kind of propaganda would be the anti-colonialist film *The Battle of Algiers* or – a more modern example – the Michael Moore documentaries *Roger and Me* and *Bowling for Columbine*.

Many would, however, see such a propaganda style as anachronistic. Living in an age of sophisticated media consumers, of visual literacy in which constant viewing of media images is in itself an education in the consumption of media imagery, such a blatant style may not be as effective as more indirect propaganda forms: but it is not made thereby less ideological communication, merely more subtle. For example, there is the printed polemic such as the sixteenth-century 'Little Treatise against the Muttering of some Papists in Corners' (Foulkes 1983), or the laudatory manifesto like that issued by Gustavus Adolphus in 1630 (Taylor 1990). Such items pretend to be nothing else; they seek to persuade by rhetorical power alone and court the rejection which their well advertised partisanship may arouse. They also risk falling into self-parody. *Roger and Me* is a diatribe against the chairman of General Motors, Roger Smith, whom it accuses of unfeelingly destroying the town of Flint, Michigan, and (by extension) the selfish irresponsibility of big business is laid bare: 'Michael Moore argues that the American dream is dead, corporations are disloyal and we are living a modern-day *Grapes of Wrath*' (Bateman *et al.* 1992). At Flint, General Motors lay-offs made some 30,000 workers redundant.

Clearly, then, there are media products whose identification as propaganda few would dispute. There is the documentary that declares its purpose openly, seeking no disguise – for example, the anti-nuclear propaganda genre that emerged with particular force during the 1980s (Diana Papade-

mus 1989). Susumi Hani's *Prophecy* was a half-hour documentary concerning the victims of the US atomic attack on Japan based largely on footage of Nagasaki, Hiroshima and their inhabitants, photographed in the wake of the bombing. It thus exploited familiar imagery, that of atrocity propaganda. Even propaganda as entertainment can also eschew disguise, the 'committed' film, uncompromising in its beliefs, clear about its enemies and utopian in its aspirations. Such a film might, for example, be *Some Mother's Son*. But what is popularly imagined to be propaganda is actually one particular kind, namely the ideological, explicit propaganda that announces itself as such, and self-articulated in formats well known for their propaganda uses.

Values

Propaganda deals, obsessively, with values, and no discussion of propaganda would be intelligible without reference to their centrality.

Values embody the highest strivings of a civilisation, its wish to be just and to be free, as well as the non-material and self-centred concerns, to be in control, to enjoy high self-esteem, to be comfortably off. The gap between what we have and what we want always has the potential to cause powerful emotions and to be exploited by propaganda. Although Milton Rokeach (1971) speaks of terminal and instrumental values, they are better seen as the highest court of appeal, whose word on otherwise irreconcilable trade-offs is final. And all trade-offs invoke them. As Alastair MacIntyre (1981) says, questions of ultimate goals are questions of values, and on values reason is silent. Yet reason cannot arbiter values, cannot prescribe, it is a tool in the service of values and not their replacement.

Propaganda does not try to destroy values, it attempts to conscript them. Every advocate knows that values are almost impossible to change overnight, but move slowly over time as a result of exposure to rival arguments and mature reflection. This is because they are difficult to challenge since they are not vulnerable to factual revision. Values can be neither proved nor disproved. They are also part of a structure where to revise one is to revise the relationships of all the variables in the system, a potentially life-changing event. Ellul is wrong in suggesting that a propaganda of virtue would get nowhere. On the contrary, appeals to selflessness are one of the most powerful appeals that can be devised, with high cultural resonance not merely in Christianity, but in the more general enjoyment of expressions of group solidarity.

Political rhetoric, verbal and visual, is value-drenched ('Give me liberty or give me death' (Patrick Henry); 'The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants' (Thomas

Jefferson). This element of appeal to values is especially strong when enlisted in controversy. Mussolf's (1991) analysis of congressional debates illuminates the role of value-referenced rhetorics. Opponents of bailing out giant businesses invoke free enterprise, and, fearing this appeal, supporters counter by defending their regard for this value and by asserting its positive relationship to the policy proposal: the same values are conscripted to suit the purposes of the rival partisans. Hence propagandists seek messages that resonate with values. Persuasion should speak to values, it should relive and reaffirm and revisit those emotional experiences that first gave them birth.

Hyperbole

An important function of propaganda is to stimulate, another is preachment to the converted. Propaganda is not dialogue but monologue. Hyperbole is another characteristic, and a technique (often associated with advertising) which carries the potential for self-parody. Hyperbole does not make the mistake of asking for belief, it is an illusion which we are exhorted to share, explicit and even paranoid. Our pet bigotries are dramatised and enlarged to surreal proportions, but the fantasy does nevertheless affect perceptions of the reality. Thompson (1979) claims that the media merely exploit prejudices, and this absolves our leaders. Others argue that propaganda is often a co-production and that people lend to it a suspension of their disbelief, and they have a need to see what they recognise as their own fantasies reflected in an equally fabulistic media, their own lies to themselves reflected and sustained by the larger lies of the public space. When critics claim that propaganda is 'manipulative', they perhaps envisage a passive recipient. While some propaganda exchanges may resemble this stimulus–response form, what is often going on in the propaganda process may be more subtle. The idea of people willingly misled strikes at the root of concepts of man as a rational decision maker, yet surely this is what occurred in Serbia, Rwanda and elsewhere.

While the relation of journalism to propaganda is a complex and elusive one, there are certainly hyperbolic moments in the history of journalism whose status as propaganda few would dispute. The determination of the British press to package opposition Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock as an ignorant boor and an alarming leftist is an illustration of this. Tabloids instructed reporters to discover all manner of blunders committed by Kinnock on overseas trips, and the indiscretions were duly produced. The *Sun* capped this process with one of the most lurid fantasies in the history of journalism, the eight-page pre-election spread 'Nightmare on Kinnock Street'. The contents can be listed at some length (McKie 1995): 'Unions will expect

Neil to cough up', 'Labour's lukewarm start on immigration', 'Apologies to Neil for an earlier *Sun* claim that he had never held down a real job', 'Gays to rule on planning applications' (even loft conversions and garages would have to be approved by gay and lesbian groups), 'Baby Carl would not have lived but for Tory NHS reforms', 'Lest we forget' (pictures and story on the winter of discontent), 'Alan Sugar of Amstrad blasts Labour's con trick', 'Tory doc barred as Kinnock visits hospital', 'It's Mao or never, swore Neil'. Allegedly a psychic asked some famous dead people how they would vote in the election. Conservatives were Churchill, Montgomery, Elvis Presley, Sid James, Queen Victoria. Labour supporters were Marx, Stalin, Trotsky, Robert Maxwell, etc. (p. 7). The *Sun* also claimed that the first day of a Labour government would see shares drop billions in value. Uncommitted voters were more likely to choose the Tories if they read a conservative paper, and in the year up to the 1987 election there was a 5 per cent overall swing to the Conservatives: among persistent readers of Tory tabloids it was 12 per cent (McKie 1995).

The emotion-driven hyperbolical propaganda text is exemplified by a two-page advertisement placed in *The Times* (17 February 1992) by the International Fund for Animal Welfare. The caption – large white letters in an 8 in. red box – read, 'To show you what kind of animal your MP is, we're naming names.' The use of the word 'animal' is a rather laboured *double-entendre*: pro-hunting MPs are animals and in the advertisement their names are marked with red dots. This may be contrasted with another, scarcely better-mannered advertisement (pro-hunting) that pictured a screaming thug with the caption 'The voice of reason?' (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 1992). Clearly an advertisement which is configured in such a way does not, as social and commercial advertising so often does, invite several interpretations. Meaning here is not a matter of negotiation between text and reader. It is a fixed and highly political meaning where all dissent comes to be associated with an iconic representation of mindless proletarian violence that instantly surfaces other civic fears about out-of-control youths: implicitly here they represent the same phenomenon. Their aim is to motivate sympathisers to action and to identify hunting as part of conservative, property-owning values.

The partisan propaganda approach may fail on several criteria: does it get opponents to question the vehemence of their resolve, does it persuade neutrals? The task of inciting core loyalists to action should not be sought at the cost of alienating other constituencies whose support or neutrality could be solicited: more ambivalence permits supporters, the neutral and even the opposition a limited degree of latitude in affixing their own meanings.

The persistence of classical propaganda

Propaganda has a popular image, that of the polemical rant, an explicit and shameless diatribe fomenting war and revolution in exotic places. The currency of this idea of propaganda does certainly anaesthetise people to its more ubiquitous and less visible or more sophisticated forms, but it is important to remember that crude propaganda, propaganda in its popular understanding, is still offering its benediction for the indulgence of mankind's most miserable instincts.

The continuity of classic propaganda of agitation (in Ellul's terminology) remains not merely a political force but also a social threat. Tribal and ethnic tensions, successors to the dying imperialisms of the twentieth century, are irritated by a propaganda that galvanises hatred into violence. Events in Rwanda were precipitated and orchestrated via polemical radio broadcasts which stigmatised the Tutsis much as the Nazis did the Jews: those broadcasts, their content, number and impact, are a critical explanatory factor in the genocide of the 1 million Tutsis. Serb and Bosnian Serb television adopted much the same role in ex-Yugoslavia – chauvinist hyperbole which demonised the Bosnian Muslims as 'Turks' and so forth, nightly decanting the noxious bile of sectarian propaganda.

Unfortunately the role of 'classic' propaganda in precipitating and sustaining modern conflict tends to be under-reported. News reportage is responsive and crisis-driven: causation and antecedent events are analysed only retrospectively, often superficially, with the focus on personalities and moments of critical evolution but not on phenomena of persuasion. Communications tend to be neglected because analysis and objective measures of impact are difficult (we ignore what we can't measure) or they are seen as manifestations of discontent rather than causes. Depth research or long residence is thus beyond the opportunity of the average portable newsman, and, when academics finally come to excavate the significance of communications, the discovery is no longer newsworthy. Time has marched on. The signature of propaganda on events is missed.

Subversion

Much of propaganda works, essentially, by subversion. Never in fact was that word more appropriate, since propaganda will rarely succeed by directly challenging a deeply held belief or value, but rather proceeds by misrepresentation that insinuates the individual's ideological defences. Gaining agreement with a certain definition and the ideological perspective it illuminates is the key, then perfectly logical arguments can then be deployed (and this essentially is what the activity of spin-doctoring

poles on). Techniques used to achieve these shifts in interpretation include:

1 *Redefining the situation.* Thus Philip Morris has consistently sought to have the cigarette issue defined as one of freedom of choice: no more, no less.
2 *The interrogative mode* is a way of getting people to rethink existing perspectives, which is why many propaganda slogans are framed as questions such as 'Who governs?' (Ted Heath), 'Whose finger on the trigger?' (*Daily Mirror* headline). An aspect of Hitler's rhetorical technique was to raise and answer the questions of critics at the beginning of his speeches (Blain [1988]; rhetorical theorists argue that this is a highly effective method, since successful persuasion is when the persuader has answered all the questions raised by the audience, or those the audience had in mind.
3 *The use of language* to reposition in the mind of the target audience some concept that earlier language had made problematic, so that the disabled become differently abled.
4 *Social endorsement.* Demonstrating something to be socially appropriate eliminates the embarrassment connected with it. Alternatively, show public disapprobation. More generally, persuasion must identify not what is objectively most important but what is most meaningful to the target audience. Campaigns targeted at teenagers would thus emphasise the social rather than the health consequences of smoking, drugs and other high-risk behaviour. To show endorsement by someone's social milieu is a useful form of persuasion, and advertising does this all the time: 'people can be talked into an emotional state, talked into a more intense emotional state but also talked out of an emotional state' (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003).
5 *Framing the 'evidence', real or manufactured, in the most favourable way.* For example, the assertion that 10 per cent of the population are in a state of abject poverty is more emotionally charged and therefore persuasive than the more impressive claim that 90 per cent of the population are comfortable. Labels matter. People will still feel that beef labelled 75 per cent lean is superior to that labelled 25 per cent fat, even after they have actually tasted it. The model of utility-maximising economic man calculatedly measuring up alternative choices neglects the impact of persuasion on the way these choices are presented.
6 *Illusory correlation* involves seeing events or features as related when they are not. Propaganda is constantly creating illusory correlation, in particular advertising, for example between the product and social success.
7 *The power of persuasion* is augmented by an advocate who does not appear to hector but to make an offer of friendship, fraternity and affiliation. (In fact this would be an alternative exposition of Hall Jamieson's

feminisation of rhetoric thesis.) Hence the persuasive (perlocutionary) act uses indirect means.

It may be necessary to position a message away from its true, objective position. Thus the 1997 Hyde Park rally in favour of country, i.e blood, sports was ingeniously positioned as a 'countryside' rally and we were told that some of those attending had, in fact, no special fondness for hunting. Then there is 'political correctness'. An important distinction between modern propaganda and that of earlier historical epochs is that propaganda now often has to be more indirect and therefore relies on devices such as coded language and the subtext. People cannot today be addressed directly in the language of their prejudices, even if accessed in the specific media appropriated by their group. This is because the collective consciousness has become progressively more sensitive to the agenda of every kind of non-mainstream group. Governor George Wallace of Alabama, for example, offered, especially after he had formally eschewed his earlier racism, many of the same populist sentiments as Reagan. It was greater urbanity, not a different ideology, that made Reagan electable.

Deceit in propaganda

Forgery

While much propaganda can be said to involve exaggeration – that, almost, is its definition – and indeed active misrepresentation, undeniably it sometimes involves the manufacture of falsehood, even forgery. Here we are in the realms of active fabrication and deceit. Thus Bush's spring 2003 State of the Union speech 'cited alleged documents stating that Iraq had attempted to buy 500 tons of uranium from the country of Niger. However, officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency looked at the documents and concluded they were counterfeits' (Rampton and Stauber 2003). Deception, it should be added, is one of the constituents the Pentagon includes in its definition of 'perception management'. Propagandists can do this almost openly with the audience even conscious of the falsehood being perpetrated, becoming willing co-conspirators in an act wherein they themselves are in a sense the victims. Once again, the explanation is that they are really being invited to share a mutual charade of anger, a point missed by critics who too easily reach for words like 'gullible' and 'naive', assuming the audiences have no recognition of the techniques being used.

The fabrication may not be obvious at all and the audience really deceived, an increasing criticism of certain television productions. This is nothing new. *March of Time* used real footage but also staged scenes when describing the rising Nazi menace (with some footage being banned in Britain: Taylor 1990). Such methods, of course, always carry the risk of

being nullified as propaganda when they are exposed. Rumour is another type of fabrication, though it has been more identified with wartime and black propaganda. Britain's black propaganda radio station Gustav Siegfried Eis circulated rumours among the German services, claiming to be run by a Nazi to the right of Hitler and specialising in the invention of stories about the private lives of the Nazi elite. Rumour was also a chosen instrument of the Nazis themselves, not least in the final days of the regime when claims were circulated that General Wenck and his army were poised to save Berlin, 'a false message spread right at the *Götterdämmerung* of the regime' (Herzstein 1978).

Deception has been described as an abuse of rational process, since it involves hindering in some way the passing along of information. Today in Western countries a more cynical and media-literate generation has shrunk the possibilities for classical or overt propaganda in that, to succeed, propaganda needs greater subtlety, even disguise. The incentives for it to become deceitful, which always existed, are now greater. One medium can through stylistic devices mimic another and more plausible form, as does the docu-drama, whose progenitors include *Citizen Kane* and *The Battle of Algiers*. Another method used quite openly is 'faction', giving assistance to the documentary exposition of a case by visually inventing part of it. This deliberate mixing of fact and fiction is a formula that could actually serve as a definition of propaganda itself. The Nazi newsreels represented an early variant of this: they were manufactured political consumer products, combining '*actualité* footage and propagandistic editing'. Television documentaries use this increasingly, such as the 'exposé' of the former Cabinet Minister Jonathan Aitken entitled 'Jonathan of Arabia', where actors dressed as pseudo-Arabs were filmed traversing the exotic sands of Morecambe Bay mounted on camels (*Daily Telegraph*, 15 April 1995). There were faked scenes in sex industry documentaries, fake guests on the Vanessa show (*Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 1999) and, notably, the faked Kerry–Fonda peacenik image (*Independent*, 18 February 2004). Another propaganda technique which has become a major influence in recent years is the propaganda video. This is an image-rich product retailed free to the mass media, whose intense need and *raison d'être* is the reproduction of images. The media thus feed off the propagandist, and the relationship is not parasitic but symbiotic, yet the public, their target, believe the images they consume transmit from an innocent source. Single-issue groups have been particularly noteworthy exponents of video propaganda, their tenacity enabling them to supply images that are more raw and authentic-seeming than those created by network television (see Chapter 7).

Propaganda does not have to create a text – an image, a symbol, a film, an article, a slogan. It can operate simply by a process of denial, by preventing

an opposition text from ever emerging or by rinsing out any negative perspective that might contaminate the mainstream media. In apartheid South Africa (Tomaselli 1987) one form of censorship was of course the direct physical intimidation of film makers; with arrests and confiscations, including (in the case of Sven Peterson's *Land Apart*) intimidating MGM's head office in California. Control of distribution, specifying who precisely can watch the film, is a significant form of counter-propaganda. Whites could be trusted with more subversive material, since the state operated in their interests, and about one in three films passed for whites was banned for blacks, the most ridiculous example being the ban on black viewers seeing the film *Zulu* (1966). The Minister of the Interior said 'there are some films which can be exhibited much more safely to the white child of fourteen years than to an adult Bantu', but much depended on who the audience was. Negative and even socialist views could be allowed. Nor historically has government censorship been the exclusive province of reactionary regimes. For example, Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) was banned by France until 1971 (*New York Times*, 4 January 2004).

Thus propaganda can be made through creative use of the censor's scissors as well as specifically commissioned propaganda films. Tomaselli (1987) points out that film 'may have the meaning inverted through censorship directives'. One example is where the South African directorate ordered cuts and conditions so that, according to the Appeal Court, 'the emphasis is thus changed from a successful to an unsuccessful terrorist attack'. (In another incident the Minister of Information said that no African had asked to be included on the censorship committee.) Decisions in a commercial environment made under political pressure (though not direct government diktat) can have the same impact. The effectiveness as propaganda of Susumi Hani's *Prophecy* and Terry Nash's *If you Love this Planet* was emasculated by the reluctance of distribution agencies to show them (Papademus 1989).

Censorship is not the prerogative of governments alone. During the 2003 Iraq war Al-Jazeera 'became a target of hacker attacks that kept its English-language site unavailable throughout most of the war and kept down its Arabic language site for nearly a week' (Rampton and Stauber 2003). And the most effective form of control remains the intellectual self-policing of the media themselves. Peace groups were denied the purchase of air space by all major networks, including MTV; anti-war demonstrations in European capitals were ignored. Rampton and Stauber claim that 'the rest of the world did not experience the war as the clean, surgical operation that was presented on US television, where major media outlets cited reasons such as taste, news judgment or concern about offending viewers to explain why they are rarely showed images of dead and injured civilians'. They add that during the entire war the *Chicago Tribune*'s front page had 'fewer than six'

pictures of 'dead or injured' bodies, while European and Australian publications were ten times more likely to mention cluster bombs than their American equivalents.

Propaganda may also critically pervert the political information system and hence the political agenda. An example of this is the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office, the focus of Lashmar and Oliver's *Britain's Secret Propaganda War, 1948–1977* (1998). We cannot really know the truth here until after 2020, when the relevant documents are declassified, but the impact of this group, founded in 1948 to 'expose the realities of communism and the lying communist propaganda', was apparently malign. It engaged, as it never should have done, in domestic campaigns, for example to discredit left-wing churchmen or anti-Common Market campaigners (a 'communist-inspired plot'). It supplied inaccurate information to diplomats and key political decision makers: according to Adams (1993) 'one report, for example, alleging the Cubans were in Guinea training Africans in guerrilla warfare, was questioned by King and eventually tracked down to a single, small German publication, in which it may well have been originally planted by the IRD, to lend credibility to its report', and only communism mattered: 'it could have survived doing work of value to this day, if only it had committed itself to promoting democracy . . . when a Labour Minister asked the IRD to produce a paper on South Africa it came back with one headed 'South Africa: the communist peril'. Propaganda can thus pollute the springs of information and fatally distort the policy agenda. There is a process of continually engaging in small deceits that lead inexorably to large deceits and the loss of moral perspective. The question of integrity is an interesting one: the inhabitants of the IRD were presumably blazing with moral zeal, loathing of sovietism and all its works. But this *idée fixe* blinded them to every other kind of abuse, their own included.

Bogus empiricism

Another device is empiricist or 'scientific' propaganda with its demand for 'proof'. Ultimately this is a utopian request, since the standards demanded of proof can be endlessly raised, but it places government's cause firmly under the auspices of science and makes them seem (and who would wish otherwise) to be on the side of reason, not emotion.

So 'proof' is often an argument deployed to conceal the sins of government, as with the December 1992 massacre of villagers in El Mozote, Salvador (Didion 1994). The US government at the time was seeking to certify Salvador as being still eligible for US aid and military assistance. A massacre was most inconvenient, and it therefore sought to discredit the reports on the grounds that there was 'no firm evidence', even though there were photographs of corpses. Here they were invoking the ideology of scientism by

demanding the exacting standards of evidence needed in the scientific laboratory but unnecessary in political decision making where a balance of probabilities may well be evidence enough. The *New York Times* did not support the journalist who had written about eye-witness accounts of the bodies, who was also vilified by the *Wall Street Journal*, and the subsequent US effort in aid of homicidal bandits 'became the most expensive attempt to support a foreign government threatened by insurgency since Vietnam' (Didion 1994). The state invited the press to become co-conspirators via its exploitation of a cultural reflex that all decisions be made rationally on the basis of empirical evidence, and its success in apparently persuading Americans to reject the contextual information provided by others was a masterstroke. The finest propaganda always does resonate with the deepest reflexes of a culture, and here propaganda created a legalistic distinction employed to rhetorical advantage.

Science's ostensible monopoly of truth can be used or abused. There is science, and then there is pseudo-science, and the role played by pseudo-science in propaganda has been, and is now, a critical one. Science is seen as the antithesis of emotion, which is equated with disproportionate reaction, and those who use overt emotive appeals are making an open declaration of their intent to manipulate. The self-concept of highly educated societies is of reasoning individuals who make their decisions on the basis of evidence and analysis, not feelings. Scientific empiricism is the core of modern Western culture, underpinning its material achievements, conveniences and technical strengths, so evidence becomes the stock in trade of argument and exposition, fashion magazines, for example, reviewing the results of the latest medical investigation at length. Implicitly, all our problems are ultimately technical ones and amenable to technical solutions. Under this ideology, the evidence of experts carries great weight and problems can be elucidated via data. Questions of interpretation are given less attention because the belief is that they can be made irrelevant by sufficiently vigorous pursuit of the 'correct' data. What cannot be measured tends therefore to be excluded from the argument and dismissed as subjective.

How then can there be intuitive or interpretative standards of truth, since these are neither demonstrable nor empirically verifiable? Relevant 'evidence' can be manufactured. In the case of alar on apples, a shoddy account by an environmentalist group was expounded on *Sixty Minutes* and caused mayhem: sales of apples collapsed (Vanderwicken 1995). For Hewson (*Sunday Times*, 31 March 1995):

> most junk science started with the tobacco industry and revolves round that simple word 'proof'. The tobacco companies just adore proof. It lets them hand out the moolah to their tame professors and then come up with the startling claim that there is no causal link between tobacco and that cocktail of diseases

> which millions of deaths seem to suggest are not unconnected with the dreaded weed.

He claims that Professor Richard Lacey, a member of the Ministry of Agriculture's own Veterinary Products Committee and an early whistleblower in the BSE (mad cow disease) crisis, was persecuted under the same logic: no proof to link BSE and Creutzfeldt-Jacob: 'never mind that a five-year-old can see that in matters of public health the burden of proof comes from a different direction to its legal cousin. We don't want scientists to prove that British beef is dangerous. We want them to prove it is safe'.

Since the US public places great reliance on data, a growing industry has developed to create the research to legitimise policy positions or marketing objectives. White bread won't precipitate the pounds, and it is nutritious, asserts a study from the people at Cooper Institute for Aerobic Research (its sponsors are the bakers of Wonder Bread) while Princeton Dental Resource Center assures us that chocolate may actually inhibit cavities; they are funded by Mars (Vanderwicken 1995). All this, of course, is a gift to the propagandists because it potentially offers what they most prize, concealment. 'Facts', the antithesis of emotion, can be allowed to 'speak for themselves'. The selection of some facts and the rejection of others, the choice of particular base years on which to draw figures, the claim that something must be a lie because there is 'no evidence', the privileging of some types of evidence over others – all these are famously part of the manipulative process, but unless exposed by the acuity of counter-analysis they are more successful than other forms of propaganda because the craftwork of manipulation is more submerged and the masses will give them the deference they have been trained to give impartial 'data' and expert scientific opinion. (There is also a technical component: very few have the relevant training to critique statistics and other analytic techniques.)

Why we need enemies

Propagandists invent their enemies. The creation of a despised 'other' is neither an essential part of all propaganda nor an integument of its definition. Nevertheless it is difficult to imagine a propaganda cleansed of victims: the creation of an internal or an external threat is achieved by seeking out blameworthy groups, domestic marginals such as Armenians or cosmopolitan threats such as the 'international' Jew. In psychology the 'granfallon technique', where groups cohere according to arbitrarily acquired labels, shows how easily 'otherness' can arise (Pratkanis and Aronson 1991). Schöpflin (1997) argues that thus 'the existence of community is preserved from pollution and thus its means of cultural reproduction kept safe from

outsiders'. Such 'otherness' is not merely a phenomenon of tribal and ethnic dispute. Academic, religious and philosophic arguments abound with the serial creation of enemies, and apparently closely related sects seem to hate each other most: Sunni and Shiite, Trotskyite and communist. The essential triviality of such destructive differences was satirised by Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*, where Big-endians and Little-endians are polarised over the issue of which way to crack an egg open.

People know, and know abundantly, what they hate: they are more ambivalent about their likings. As emotions our hatreds are more intense than our affections. This argument has been made by the social anthropologist Mary Douglas (1982): as discussed in Chapter 2, for her any choosing 'for' is a choosing 'against' because to choose *x* is a protest, with each choice a declaration of defiance against alternative lifestyles and a signal of allegiance to his or her opposing lifestyle. Much political behaviour is symbolic, and that symbol is of what we wish to be perceived as standing against. Lupia (1994) shows that less educated voters in California see any support for something from those they oppose, any endorsement, as negative symbols and they vote accordingly. The 'enemy' can also be more abstract, an idea perhaps, and the more sophisticated forms of propaganda may eschew a human enemy, though there is always a suggestion that only the less admirable human beings would associate with the discredited ideology. In the world of managerial propaganda, Oliver describes an evangelist for a new management theory thus: 'there was to be a discarded old order and a shining new order: the expression "cost world" was used to denote the old order and the "throughput world" to denote the new one, encompassing JIT, TOC and Total Quality. A large American was introduced' (Oliver 1995).

So propaganda usually needs an enemy, and if none exists it will create one – the social construction of enemies is one of the key defining characteristics of propaganda. The sense of superiority thus created is attractive to people at the bottom of some social pyramid, and they can be managed by creating a new people lower than they, upon whom they can look down. Those in the Middle East who are antagonistic to the West face an enemy that is richer and stronger but a sense of worth can still arise through recognition of the Westerner's moral deficiency and infidelity – their faith, and our faithlessness – convinced, in Samuel Huntington's words 'of the superiority of their culture, and obsessed with the inferiority of their power' (Huntington 1996). The absence of enemies sends us back, naggingly, introspectively, on ourselves – indeed, since the end of the cold war the United States has been seen by some as experiencing a problem of enemy deprivation. In this light, new enemies like Saddam Hussein are not just there but necessarily there.

We need enemies because we need someone to blame when things go wrong: the term 'witch hunt' is apposite and propaganda involves finding the appropriate victims. The qualifications for victimhood would include things like physical appearance, membership of some social subgroup, a tendency to look and feel intimidated: the key is separateness from the social mainstream. To Overing (1997) 'myths of alterity are not usually subtle, for they dwell upon the exaggerated excesses of the despised and threatening other'. Merely to be Afghan could have been enough, as in the case of the taxi driver paralysed in London, even though Afghans were themselves the first victims of the Taliban.

The social construction of an enemy fulfils several important functions. We define ourselves by reference to what we are not. This clarifies our values or where we stand, and gives us a coherent sense of selfhood. Second, it is only by reference to enemies that we became united, and the greater the internal discord within societies the more powerful will our need for enemies be: the propaganda construction of enemies is a source of social integration. Schöpflin (1997) argues that 'this process will frequently go together with the construction of mythic enemies who are attempting to destroy the collectivity in a demonic conspiracy'. According to Blain (1988), 'just as people can be talked into buying things they do not need, so the political leader can talk the desire for revenge into people. . . . The rhetoric of enemies is a potent means of gaining and sustaining social integration in modern society.' And Blain believes that 'political agents concoct a rhetoric of motives that they use to incite their followers to fight their enemies': he claims that the main effect of war rhetoric is social integration through the constitution of common enemies: 'a victim–villain hierarchy is necessary to the production of political incitement'.

Politicians, especially governments in trouble, look about for new enemies to manufacture. Hence in Britain New Labour's search for a 'reactionary' enemy (Blair's 'forces of conservatism') against which to define itself. It thought it had found one in the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and their failure to admit an undeniably bright state school student to study medicine (Stevens 2001). This served several purposes, including diverting attention from low state expenditure on education and the quality of state schooling. In totalitarian regimes, the creation of enemies is an important part of state activity. In Khomeini's Iran, for example, the figure of the author Salman Rushdie was a useful enemy because he could be presented as a blasphemer, thereby subject to a death sentence even though he lived in a Western country; some of his translators were in fact murdered. (It is difficult to imagine propaganda without enemies.)

Zimmerman (1995) had argued that when government assumes precisely the opposite role to that of protecting the competition of ideas, when

it uses its power over the mass media to exhort people to hate, then citizens look to the press not for information but for emotional reassurance: they can take satisfaction in discharging their anger at their neighbours. 'When you realise that highly manipulated pictures of the maimed and the murdered, the cleansed and the condemned, are seen every night by nearly everybody in the former Yugoslavia, you can imagine the enduring effect they have.' Moreover, enemies stimulate and focus the energy of anger and hate, they are great motivators to action, and the more horrible they are made out to be the more energised our anger becomes. Horrible enemies also cause fear, propaganda leads our imagination to paint in lurid colours what will be done to us if our enemies succeed. Indeed, many of the very worst atrocities are carried out because their perpetrators are fearful. Thus in Rwanda the Tutsis 'not only refused to reject the leadership that urges them to kill but sincerely believe their own survival depends on killing' (Block 1994). Enemies also freeze our conscience and assuage our guilt, nothing we do to them can possible be bad enough. Pointing out that in Rwanda 'the killings were neither random nor spontaneous', Block adds, 'but almost everyone you meet in the camps does not see their ordeal as self-inflicted but as the fault of the Tutsis. There is no guilt.' And after Nine-eleven Anne Coulter had proclaimed, 'This is no time to be precious about locating the exact individuals directly involved in this particular terrorist attack. We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.' Rampton and Stauber (2003) comment:

> Shortly after Coulter's column appeared, it resurfaced on the Web site of the Mujahidean Lashkar-e-Taiba – one of the largest militant Islamist groups in Pakistan – which works closely with Al-Qaeda . . . During the period when Coulter's article was featured, the site was decorated with an image that depicted a hairy, monstrous hand with claws in place of fingernails, from which blood dripped on to a burning globe of planet Earth. A star of David decorated the rest of the hairy hand, and behind it stood an American flag. The reproduction of Coulter's column used bold red letters to highlight the sentence that said 'Invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.'

Yet, even here, there arise propaganda lessons relevant to our current circumstances. Particularly here: in the management of the current crises, a necessary condition of success is that the doctrine and practices of one billion Muslims are not subject to denigration. Conversely, we must recognise that terrorists and their apologists can perform those acts – and we now know that no imaginable outrage is beyond them – because they have been convinced. Terrorists are persuaded, not born, and their monstrosities arise out of a process of conviction. That rhetorical activity which arouses and sustains terror, and which in current conflicts we should seek ourselves to avoid, is the creation of the demonised 'other', a phenomenon

which is historically the essential dynamic of propaganda, and whose key property – the conviction that some out-group does not share our common humanity – has been the preface of genocide throughout time. The terrorists have done what they have done because they have succeeded, first, in dehumanising us in their own minds. Conversely, the danger for us is that we generalise from errant individuals to the entirety of the population from which they were drawn.

Atrocity propaganda

Atrocity propaganda has been historically its most consistent feature and probably also its most effective. From Pope Urban II's 1095 sermon at Clermont mentioned in Chapter 2 (Taylor 1990), when the Saracens are described as pouring blood into baptismal fonts, to the Nazi film *Menschen in Sturm* with its depictions of Polish barbarities such as the wrecking of German schools, or films such as *Mein Leben für Ireland* (1941) (Herzstein 1978), propagandists have competed to depict steadily more dreadful images of the enemy. The reasons are not difficult to see: one of the most important aims in propaganda is to demonstrate, indeed, that the enemy is not like us, is a ruthless, amoral monster, in order to incite the mobilising emotion of anger. In *The Little American* (1917) Mary Pickford, the People's Darling, is torpedoed, gives information to the French and manages to escape a German firing squad. Nothing must threaten this illusion of enemy frightfulness (Taylor 1990).

We remember the enemy's atrocities and forget our own, and we commit further atrocities in retaliation, which may even be the intent of the atrocity propaganda. (In the *Baralong* incident, British sailors boarded a neutral American ship and murdered the German submariners who had taken refuge there.) When Nurse Edith Cavell was executed in 1915 British troops were told of the event and carried her picture into battle. In an incident soon afterwards German prisoners of war were massacred (Williams 1987) – ironic in the light of Nurse Cavell's final words. Atrocity propaganda is still effective, in spite of all that the twentieth century did to exploit the genre.

The 'other' can also function as an instrument of terror. During the Spanish Civil War General Queipo de Llano's nationalist propaganda broadcasts stressed the figure of the Moors, the colonial soldiers under Franco's command, their brutality and what they might do to Republican women, surfacing ancient Spanish fears (H. Thomas 1986). Of course there is the role of pure invention in atrocity propaganda (Knightley 1975). Subsequent exposures of organised collective fantasy after the Great War made people incredulous of atrocity rumours in World War II, though

truth and fiction remain interwoven, for there were indeed Belgian atrocities, with 6,000 civilians murdered, even if they were not as extensive, or depraved, as the British claimed.

In *The First Casualty* (1995) Philip Knightley describes World War I portrayals of Germany thus:

> The war was made to appear one of defence against a menacing aggressor. The Kaiser was painted as a beast in human form. (In a single report on September 22, 1914, the *Daily Mail* succeeded in referring to him as a 'lunatic', a 'barbarian', a 'madman', a 'monster', a 'modern judas', and a 'criminal monarch'.) The Germans were portrayed as only slightly better than the hordes of Genghis Khan, rapers of nuns, mutilators of children, and destroyers of civilisation. Once the commitment to war had been made, an overwhelming majority of the nation's political and intellectual leaders joined this propaganda campaign. Prime Minister Asquith, using the technique of atrocity confirmation by sweeping generalisation, told the House of Commons, on April 27, 1915, 'We shall not forget this horrible record of calculated cruelty and crime.' British newspapers lent their prestige to the campaign. The *Financial News*, in what now seems an unbelievable editorial, said on June 10, 1915, that the Kaiser had ordered German airmen to make special efforts to kill King Albert's children, that double rewards were paid to German submarine crews for sinking ships carrying women and children, and that the Kaiser had personally ordered the torturing of three-year-old children, specifying the tortures to be inflicted. A committee of lawyers and historians under the chairmanship of Lord Bryce, a former ambassador to the United States, produced a report which was translated into thirty languages, in which it was stated that the Germans had systematically murdered, outraged, and violated innocent men, women, and children in Belgium. 'Murder, lust, and pillage,' the report said, 'prevailed over many parts of Belgium on a scale unparalleled in any war between civilised nations during the last three centuries.' The report gave titillating details of how German officers and men had publicly raped twenty Belgian girls in the market place at Liege, how eight German soldiers had bayoneted a two-year-old child, and how another had sliced off a peasant girl's breast in Malines. Bryce's signature added considerable weight to the report, and it was not until after the war that several unsatisfactory aspects of the Bryce committee's activities emerged. Finally, a Belgian commission of inquiry in 1922, when passions had cooled, failed markedly to corroborate a single major allegation in the Bryce report. By then, of course, the report had served its purpose. Its success in arousing hatred and condemnation of Germany makes it one of the most successful propaganda pieces of the war.

It is perhaps the case, then, we have learned nothing and forgotten nothing: according to Jowett and O'Donnell (1992) 'on October 10, 1990, a fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti girl named "Nayirah" had shocked the Congressional Human Rights Caucus when she tearfully asserted that she had watched as Iraqi soldiers took fifteen babies from their incubators in

Al-Adan hospital in Kuwait City' and 'left the babies on the cold floor to die'. Subsequently the *New York Times* revealed she was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador, and that the public relations firm of Hill & Knowlton played a role in this: George Bush 'used the dead babies story more than ten times in the forty days following Nayirah's story'. (See also Bennett 1996.)

The story of the dead Kuwaiti babies continues to fulfil its designated task as atrocity propaganda. Rampton and Stauber (2003) remind us that 'the babies from incubators story did resurface briefly in December 2002, when HBO television premiered a "based on a true story" docu-drama entitled *Live from Baghdad* which recounted the adventures of Peter Arnett and other CNN reporters . . . [it] included actual footage of Nayirah delivering her false testimony and left viewers with the impression that the story was true'. Although the credits did acknowledge that the story was 'unsubstantiated', *Washington Post* television critic Tom Shales apparently reviewed this programme and wrote, 'The horror wreaked on Kuwait is brought back vividly during a sequence in which Wiener and his team travel to Kuwait to investigate allegations that Iraqi troops had ripped babies out of incubators as part of their plundering – remember?' These authors add, 'it may be unfair to single out Shales for his part in "remembering" an incident that never happened'.

Dehumanisation

What is perhaps curious is the voracious need of propaganda to demonise, and the ease with which it does so: any propaganda campaign can easily degenerate into mere vindictiveness, and many do, summoning up the imagery of the dehumanised enemy.

Nor is this dehumanised 'other' necessarily a certain group of individuals. every single member of the enemy population can be included. Gertrude Himmelfarb (1994) has complained that even some feminists do this, and modish feminism has eschewed the individual account: 'if women are victims generically, by the same token men are culprits generically'. Thus she claims that at the University of Maryland posters named sixty randomly chosen male students with the headline 'Notice: these men are potential rapists', and others had the names of all 15,000 men. (These were course projects in feminist art.)

To kill – and in history the function of propaganda has often ultimately been the creation of a mind-set that facilitates the act of killing – it is necessary to objectify. The 'other' is essentially an abstraction, a cipher either for evil or for inferiority. All reference to common humanity is bleached out, and when it does creep in, as for example between kidnappers and hostages, killing becomes more difficult, as George Orwell describes in *Homage to Cat-*

alonia, where a nationalist soldier he is about to shoot proceeds to urinate unawares, reminding Orwell of their common humanity and thereby saving his life. The 'other' is reduced to broad brush strokes, a few attributed dominant characteristics – whether the Marxist 'class enemy', the communist of the 1950s United States, or *Punch* magazine's nineteenth-century image of the Fenian as a savage whose features are barely human. Such polemics dwell on the symbols of otherness – facial types, dress. Eventually the mere symbol, such as communism's image of the silk-hatted capitalist, will suffice, the fuller picture is already understood so well that the symbol alone will signify it.

It is also important that propaganda stresses our superiority and the enemy's inferiority, that it teaches us that a vast chasm separates our merit from their redundancy. Naturally the Nazis paid particular attention to this. The German social welfare state was contrasted with British class injustice (Hitler proclaimed it was a war against Britain's ruling class), the British worshipped money and embraced the Jews ('Lord Cohn: the Judaization of the English upper class from D'Israeli to Hore-Belisha', Herzstein 1978); they were also deceitful, concentrating electronic beams in fishing boats, etc., and 'the splendours of plutocratic ritual are contrasted with the misery caused' (Herzstein 1978). This belief in our superiority is particularly useful as an incitement to the least privileged in society, taking their resentful focus away from those who stand above them to those who languish beneath them. They become grateful for their small privileges, and despise those who lack the good fortune to be members of the *Volk*. (The Orange Order and its political manifestations would be an example of this.) In order to dehumanise the enemy, it is necessary to put into circulation stereotypes which deny his autonomy as an individual character. In *Jew Süss* ('the best propaganda film of the Third Reich') a new Jewish stereotype is created, one different from the ghetto Jew of other Nazi propaganda, for Süss Oppenheim is a court Jew, and the ugly message is that some Jews have a veneer of civilisation, and they are the most dangerous (Herzstein 1978). A secondary merit of this stereotype is that it mobilises the latent envy of the have-nots for the polished, smart and successful. George Orwell's novel *Nineteen eighty-four* depicted a mythical dictator, Big Brother, and his fictitious enemy, Emmanuel Goldstein, who is a focus for populist rage, with acolytes roaring at Goldstein in quotidian hate sessions

The enemy will more usually be a real one, but the purpose of propaganda will be to motivate us by making us really hate. In Rwanda, Hutu propaganda such as Radio Interahamwe portrayed Tutsis as homicidal aliens who had to be liquidated, even though they had been in Rwanda since the fifteenth century. An atmosphere of extreme paranoia arose in which mass murder could masquerade as civic duty. As Block (1994) explains,

Hutu race ideology was derived from the 'hamitic theory' of the European colonisers, which posited the existence of superior northern African races – African Aryans, in fact. Hutus had their own version of this theory, and the foreignness of the Tutsi was a central tenet of Hutu propaganda. Radio Interahamwe was owned by their henchmen, it was hate-filled, increasingly virulent and singled out politicians who deserved to die. In ten weeks the militia killed half a million people, helped by Hutu civilians. Throughout the slaughter the radio continued to encourage Rwandans to fill the half-empty graves: 'When you kill the rats do not let the pregnant one escape. We made the mistake thirty years ago of letting them flee into exile, this time none will escape' (Block 1994). The parallels between Hutu propaganda and the Nazis – racist ideology, the enemy as a rat (a scene in *The Eternal Jew*), their threat to a superior civilisation, the need to eliminate them entirely – are almost too obvious to merit comment.

The language of contempt

In the process of dehumanising, it is particularly important to manufacture a new language, to separate us from the victim group and to render them contemptible. Such language may contain a distinct image of inferiority, such as Charles Murray's 'underclass', thus performing its ideological duty of devaluing them or, since words accumulate new meanings, terms not originally intended as vindictive, such as 'Sambo', acquire derogatory reference. Name calling, one of the methods of propaganda cited by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in the 1930s (Alfred Lee 1986; Elizabeth Lee 1986), is a way of instantly positioning and stereotyping an adversary by highlighting the key features which mark them out as other than us and represents the essence of their debasement. The Croats referred to the Serbs as terrorists, but the Serbs themselves exhibited a particular fondness for name calling: all Croats were Utasha (German allies in World War II), while Bosnian Muslims became 'Turks', a particularly inflammatory term, given the long history of the Balkans under Turkish occupation (Zimmerman 1995). Bin Laden exhorts his followers against 'Zionists and crusaders'. If the enemy is not really an alien, we can still find the ways of making them appear to be so. Language is used to divide us from others in our own country. Foulkes (1983) for example, making comparisons between the concept of un-American and Brecht's reference to the prevalence of the term un-German in Nazi Germany.

The diaries of Victor Klemperer (1998) are in part a study of the colonisation of language by ideology intent on severing the bonds of common humanity with another segment of the community: the Jews become for example a hyphenated entity, Jewish-Bolshevik. Democracies at war have also found it necessary to manufacture a nomenclature of derogation.

often with racial overtones: Huns, Nips, Wops, Argies and Yellow Peril were preceded in an earlier generation by the (rather kinder) fuzzy-wuzzy. Americans needed a rhetoric of enmity as well after Nine-eleven. For Geraldo Rivera of the Fox network, Al-Qaeda were always 'terror goons', US forces always 'heroes' (and the network audience was 50 per cent higher than the previous year). CNN was thus forced to 'burnish its patriotic credentials': it had 'ordered its correspondents to refer to the 11th September attacks each time footage is shown of civilian casualties in Afghanistan' (*New York Times*, 11 November 2001).

Otherness and the media

A good story needs a villain. Narrative structure in novel and subsequently film often arises from polarity, especially the primordial tension between good and evil, more particularly so since the evil personality evokes a raw, debased energy whose arousal and ultimate subjugation provide narrative momentum. Partly, too, this is because in literary terms it is easier to portray evil than good. Villains test the hero's competence and virtue, provide narrative drive and create opportunities for rich characterisation which the merely saintly cannot offer. (Even Dickens found it difficult to make virtue interesting: as Oscar Wilde said, one would have to have a heart of stone not to laugh at the death of Little Nell.) This structural imperative for a villain in the production of media texts creates a need to find appropriate targets and therefore the debased causes with which villainy is likely to associate. The Mafia cannot, of course, sustain this role single-handed: there is villain fatigue, and political correctness. New villains are needed, and it is this which makes Hollywood, not institutionally or endemically but on occasion, a propaganda machine.

An example of this is popular culture's engagement with a new villain, Big Tobacco (*Sunday Times*, 23 March 1997). Assaults on this provide opportunities for exposing the corruption of power and the avarice of business while avoiding accusations of being anti-business. In *Gasp!*, a novel by Frank Freudberg (1996), a dying smoker seeks vengeance against the faceless corporate monoliths who fed off his addiction: in *The Runaway Jury* (John Grisham 1996), anonymous corporate executives play with a major cancer lawsuit; in *The Practice*, a US television series, a young woman lawyer fights her old law professor in another court defence of cancer victims. The fact that these works stand primarily as entertainment, and that good entertainment often demands a villain, need not affect their status as propaganda. They stand squarely with the traditions of US populism as discussed by M. Kazin in his book *The Populist Persuasion* (1995). Oshinsky has argued (*New York Times*, 12 February 1995) that its rhetoric had always stressed the fight between good and evil, the

manichean universe, between the virtuous majority and an unworthy elite: 'Populist spokesmen tended to portray their opponents as the enemies of ordinary people, and thus of democracy itself', an interesting and clever link (for example, Williams Jennings Bryan and Father Charles Coughlin, and subsequently Rush Limbaugh). Joe McCarthy declaimed a deep liberal establishment conspiracy to advance the communist cause; another example would be Charles Coughlin's claimed conspiracy of the Jewish plutocracy (Warren 1996).

The need for narrative structures also dominates the manufacture of our news (Bird and Dardenne 1988). The essence of news is story telling, and again, stories demand, often if not usually, a villain to give them narrative drive and ethical meaning. The *Daily Mail*, for example, plays to the prejudices of the English middle class like a Stradivarius: a daily procession of bogus asylum seekers, thugs, illicit social security claimants, EU excesses, social worker stalinists and politically correct lunacies parade, menacingly and outrageously, through its pages. The reader is invariably left in a state of repressed rage. The editor of the *Daily Mail* knows what he is doing. The media's need for stories with villains also coalesces with our need to blame someone when things go wrong. With the Atlanta bombing, the only 'evidence' against Richard Jewel was that he fitted a profile drawn up by a police psychologist. This demonstrates aptly how our need for villains and instant answers can contaminate the process of public judgement.

Dobkin (1992) discusses Nimmo and Coombs' view of television as pseudo-reality. (They claim the 'romantic quest structure' has been particularly important in television news, while McGee called the quest a 'universal structure' that gives meaning to political practices and rituals.) Dobkin also quotes CBS news reader Fred Graham: news stories on CBS tended to become two-minute morality plays with heroes, villains and a tidy moral to be summoned up at the end. Graham added that despite the fact that many important events did not present clear-cut heroes, villains, morals, the correspondents became experts at pointing them.

Jewel was no terrorist, and real terrorists are the ultimate 'other'. However, the language of denigration confuses, not clarifies, the issues. In the first place, governments can be terrorists yet are seldom described as such (that of apartheid South Africa, for example). Instead, oppressive governments are seen as 'maintaining order', 'conducting operations', etc. (Steuter 1990). Second, the international media's reaction to groups such as the Tamils is seldom uniform and may change over time, their ethical judgements calibrated by a language which graduates from terrorists to guerrillas to freedom fighters: 'the choice of these terms is the formulating of our social judgement rather than the description of a set of phenomena' (Steuter 1990). Thirdly, there is a rationale for terror which the language of

denigration or pejorative hyphenation, while entirely justified as a visceral emotional and moral response to some bloody outrage, serves to obscure. The use for example of biological metaphors such as plague removes terrorism from the realm of social analysis, and the motives of terrorists are trivialised with words like 'game' or 'blackmail', or illicit linkages are made, e.g. 'communist-oriented ANC' (Steuter 1990). When the motivation of terrorist activity is made to seem this irrational, policy makers are led to say that force is the only option available.

Social integration

The creation of enemies is easy. The right inflammatory rhetoric, judicious selection of facts and malicious parodies of custom can successfully demonise vast swathes of the human race: 'there are many situations where the society in question lacks the cognitive instruments to see the message that is hidden behind the myth and will accept the causation that is being offered as proper explanation for its fate. The use of xenophobic narrative and scapegoating is an easy next step' (Schöpflin 1997). There is a particular call for the media to pioneer the responsible role. A climate of contempt is created for the enemy's culture, with even the more sophisticated members of the media competing in parody, for example the assertion in the *Daily Telegraph* (12 September 2001) and elsewhere in the British media that Islamic martyr-warriors believe they will be awarded seventy-two virgins as brides in heaven (with no authority from the Koran, which along with the other 'faiths of the book', Judaism and Christianity, explicitly forbids suicide). Those stigmatised as hostile 'begin to accept the demonic role assigned to them and behave in accordance with it' (Schöpflin 1997).

Jewel's case was a moral tale of our times that illuminates our need for heroes and villains: feted by the Olympics' business sponsors, he himself did not seek publicity but was soon its victim. Finally the *Atlanta Journal* announced, 'Hero guard may have planted a bomb', and offered a full profile of the loner as publicity-seeking drifter hero wannabe: he was the 'unabubba', investigated exhaustively by the FBI, followed on motor cycles. Yet fitting the profile was the only 'evidence' about him. (www.augustachronicle.com/headlines/102996/jewel.html)

Thus the activities of the news media compromise in large measure the search for villains, and the press thus creates whole categories of social enemies. Yet in Britain the *Sun* newspaper, once notorious for its social insensitivity, now takes a lead, with two pages devoted to the defence of ordinary Muslims, featuring profiles of five British Muslims (www.thesun.co.uk). Hollywood could be a powerful force, for if its media products today have a common ideological denominator it is the importance of social

integration: we can inspire inclusion just as we can incite exclusion. Partly this is a matter of symbols – for President Bush to visit a mosque after Nine-eleven was, as visual rhetoric, one of the most significant things he could have done.

Hollywood's need for enemies

Good entertainment needs an enemy. Hollywood's prolonged romance with the Nazis (see Uklanski 1999) was due not so much to a predilection for history as to the ability of Nazism to project superb villains. The need for enemies is inherently political, since in choosing our enemies we define what we are and also what we are not; our values are illuminated and defined by their obverse, and this process has a political character, since it involves choice over ultimate ends and means, what we as a community stand for or against. We understand ourselves by our selection of enemies. Thus drama needs binary opposition to create those attributes that are key in dramatic suspense: fear (there can be no dramatically effective enemy of whom we are unafraid: we desire their demise because of their unfathomable wickedness and coldheartedness), and identification – the 'our' (good) side stresses the best of our values and character.

Changing values do not result in a sophisticated and mature vision in which complexities of perspective and character are taken on board. They simply create new sorts of villain to replace the Red Indians, Nazis, Mafiosi and gangsters, complete with all the traditional attributes of villains, and Big Tobacco fits the bill admirably: rich, amoral, deceitful, powerful, it has no redemptive virtue. In *Feds* a mephistophelian pseudo-militia, CigSoc, attempts to besmirch the good name of an anti-tobacco prosecutor by secreting cocaine in his home, one character remarking, 'obscene profits and the fear of losing them are turning otherwise decent people into lying, deceitful manipulators' (*Sunday Times*, 23 March 1997). Political correctness and global harmony are, it is claimed, playing havoc with traditional sources of treachery. These workings can be seen, for example, in the farm film. It is the manichean good–evil universe that has been a staple of Hollywood from its first beginnings. On the side of virtue are the family and its farm and the role of agricultural labour, a synonym for honest toil. The villains are the banks, which foreclose on farms after having been promiscuous in their lending, and, beyond them, the big business which pressures them, 'masking their complicity with the allusions to the free market' (Webster 1988).

Hollywood has always needed villains. The little guy or girl against the rotten system, a decent man badly wronged who needs to be avenged are classic Hollywood down through its history. It is when the enemy is given some sort of political-social character, and often this is necessary both to

give the conflict meaning and because social political ideology is a major source for difference, that considerations of propaganda arise.

Yet enemies are not necessarily conceived as either human or indeed subhuman in propaganda. They can be turned quite simply into an abstraction, the enemy is portrayed as a mere elemental force of nature like a storm or forest fire. There are World War II films in which the enemy hardly appears and the real theme is man's mastery of hostile nature and its taming by solidarity and team work. The war film *Fires were Started* never sought to answer the question 'By whom?' Thus the enemy came simply to represent all that man must battle against to be a man, connecting the wartime public with all the natural oppressions that their ancient ancestors had endured.

Enmity in action: Slobodan's propaganda war

There was nothing inevitable about the genocidal 'ethnic' tension of former Yugoslavia. People had intermarried and lived together for years, and countries, as with Czechoslovakia, can and do sunder peacefully. That, for ten years, they had been killing each other in an orgy of fratricidal butchery not seen in Europe since World War II owed everything to the determination of Slobodan Milosevic and his henchmen to sustain dominance through the toxic agency of propaganda and their understanding of its power to mobilise the emotions of fear, rage and hatred. Through propaganda they created a rhetoric of alien threat that is always the necessary preamble to mass murder, and they sought to synthesise ancient and modern fears, the old terror of the Turk neatly elided with modern fear of Islamic fundamentalism.

The crisis thus arose also out of the propaganda tradition of communism. Marxism-Leninism, the post-war ideology of the Yugoslav state, was never a 'mere' belief system alone but a proselytising creed whose evangelism was an integral part of its ideology. This supplied a ready-made methodology for attaining and sustaining power. Nationalism was just a way for Milosevic's henchmen to retain control by reviving ancient and long dormant tensions: yesterday they were communists, today fascists. Power, not ideology, was what mattered to them. For the French theoretician on propaganda, Jacques Ellul (1973), 'ideology and doctrine are mere accessories used by propaganda to mobilise individuals. The aim is the power . . .'. This was abetted by some structural similarities between communism and ethnocentric nationalism. Both, for example, diminish the individual, making the substitution of one ideology for the other relatively easy. This propaganda assault was contrived round four principal themes: the Muslim as social and cultural

alien, the threat of an Islamic super-state, the international conspiracy against Serbia, and the atrocities of Serbia's enemies.

The first great theme of Serb propaganda was the foreignness and degeneracy of their Muslim neighbours. Orders to kill are seldom enough, they must acquire moral legitimacy through the bestowal of social sanction, and murder obtains its alibi through this rhetoric of otherness. This perception of the alien is not natural but socially constructed, it has some shallow basis in ancient differences, but mostly it is a fabrication. In Rwanda genocide was preceded by several years of anti-Tutsi radio polemics stressing Tutsis' foreignness even though they had been in the country for 800 years. The same was true of Nazi Germany. (Before then, the extinction the Jews faced was real enough – via intermarriage.) For Salecl (Zimmerman 1995) 'all nationalism, national identification with the nation is based on the fantasy of the enemy, an alien who has insinuated himself into our society and constantly threatens us with habits, discourse and rituals that are not our kind'.

In Bosnia this was achieved by sarcasm, by such devices as merging a Muslim newscaster's voice with film of chattering chimpanzees, or Serb newscasters mumbling phrases from Muslim burial rites with satirically bowed head; the stress on Muslim racial pollution, however, comes straight out of the imagistic lexicon of the Third Reich: 'it was genetically deformed material that embraced Islam. And now, of course, with each successive generation this gene simply gets more concentrated.' To Radavan Karadzic, Muslims were 'an urban population with no attachment to the soil' (Zimmerman 1995).

Another theme dear to the Serbs was the vision they had pedalled at various times of a 'Greater Albania', or of a muscular Islamic fundamentalist state digging deep into the heart of Europe and embracing Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Turkey and Iran. They spoke of a threatened Serbdom and the extinction of Serb identity. Serbs were the guardians of Christendom who had merely been defending themselves and European civilisation from Islamic fundamentalism. Serbs, then, were the defenders of the West, and the West was too craven, myopic and ungrateful to realise it. Schöpflin (1997) in his taxonomy of myths speaks of myths of redemption and suffering, 'where it is clear that the nation, by reason of its particularly sorrowful history, is undergoing or has undergone a process of expiating its sins and will be redeemed or, indeed, may itself redeem the world. East European myths posit a bleeding to near extinction so that Europe could flourish. These myths should be understood as myths of powerlessness and compensation for that powerlessness.'

Then there were the atrocities of Serbia's enemies. For the Serb leaders the believability of this was crucial to their programme of ethnic cleansing.

Serbs claimed to have found proof that Muslims were planning to circumcise all Serb boys and kill all males over the age of three and send women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five into a harem to produce 'janissaries' (Zimmerman 1995). Of course this is ridiculous, but propaganda does not have to ask for belief to be effective, people (as we have seen) become co-conspirators in magnified fantasies of their own bigotries and fears. Similar accounts also appeared about the activities of KLA in Kosovo even as the Serbs mutilated that nation. Projecting your own crimes on to your enemy is a familiar propaganda technique (as in the Nazi film featuring British concentration camps of the Boer War: Ohm Kruger, in Herzstein 1978).

Zimmerman (1995) also discusses Nato's great anti-Serb conspiracy (for no propaganda is complete without a conspiracy). After the Dayton accords, Serb anti-NATO propaganda shifted into hyperbolic mode, and the psychological prologue for the Kosovo war was strenuously prepared. NATO 'with their military transporters and tanks . . . are running over children and mothers on your Serb roads, arresting our best and bravest warriors who fought in the war only to save their people and Serbdom. They are bombarding us, poisoning us with radioactive bombs, destroying our homes and bridges, taking us to court . . . they want to exterminate our seed.' According to Zimmerman the Serb media manufactured the ultimate fiction, that NATO had used low-intensity nuclear weapons in Bosnia, and people were contaminated by radiation. One historical parallel was thus irresistible: films of NATO peacekeepers merged with archive footage of German soldiers, and television maintained a sentimental diet of World War II partisan films. The international community had betrayed the Serbs. The International War Crimes Tribunal was cast as a partisan body with no further aim than to criminalise Serbs. These themes were articulated through techniques of rhetoric, myth making and information control.

Control – of information, of images – was the core of Serb propaganda methodology. Zimmerman discusses how Milosevic had long learned to muffle internal critical voices almost to the point of silence by such devices as manipulating the cost of newsprint. By banishing all Western media from Kosovo he denied the West that which would most galvanise it into military action, visual images of massacred civilians, of which we could see the merest peep. The images and information the West got from Belgrade were also controlled: journalists could be expelled, telephones cut, pictures censored. The effect of information control on Milosevic's own people was, however, incalculable, and, as journalists such as John Simpson reported, most of them simply could not understand why the West was attacking them or assumed it was some malevolent international conspiracy against Serbia.

Another technique was the invention of specialised vocabulary, for words were the Serbs' stock-in-trade. All Albanians became potentially 'terrorists' or 'Turks', Muslim and Croat were 'evildoers', *ustasha*, Islamic *ustasha*, *mujahadeen*, *jihad* warriors, Muslim extremists, Muslim hordes, *ustasha* butchers. All Muslims became 'fundamentalists', and contradictions did not matter, the Muslim was the terrible terrorist but he was also simultaneously the smiling, dull-witted *balije* (rude peasant) (Zimmerman 1995). Such words direct thinking, they are sensitising concepts, in that a word or phrase is seldom value-neutral but embodies a picture, an image or an ethical judgement. To get our opponents to use our choice of words is the greatest propaganda triumph, though in the case of the term 'ethnic cleansing' – so reminiscent of *Judenrein* – this rebounded on the Serbs and propaganda became counter-propaganda.

There were, of course, the myths. Montgomery has argued, 'if Yugoslavia is to teach us anything, surely it is about the malleability of historical memory, myth and identity' (Zimmerman 1995). A mythic, folkloric Serbia had been created, with Kosovo as a kind of holy land, its sacrosanctity in no way diminished by the fact that for well over 500 years it had ceased to be Serb. Schöpflin (1997) speaks of myths of territory, a land where purity was safeguarded, where folk virtues were best preserved before contact with aliens. These interlocked with other utopian self-sustaining myths, such as that of the Serbs as gallant warriors, the image of martial prowess defined by a nightly television advertisement. Schöpflin further argues that:

> The Serbian myth of Kosovo essentially begins with the redemptive element, in that the defeat of Kosovo Polje is explained by the choice of heavenly glory over earthly power. Self-evidently, this is an *ex post facto* rationalisation of the military defeat of the Serbian forces by the Ottoman armies in 1389 and the subsequent conquest of Serbia; today the Albanians are reconfigured as Turks, the ancient enemy.

Myth, he adds, makes communication difficult, since 'mythical language is for intra-, not inter-community communication'.

Murder is a deeply unnatural act. We have no inherited predisposition to kill. We do it because we have been persuaded to, because our deepest emotions have been colonised by somebody else. The murderers going about their work in Kosovo were not monsters but normal men. Yet their barbarism is incomprehensible unless it is placed in the context that explains it, years of saturation propaganda at once sentimental, self-pitying, vindictive and xenophobic.

> The real culprits in this long list of executions, assassination, drownings, burnings, massacres and atrocities furnished by our report, are not, we

> repeat, the Balkan peoples. . . . The true culprits are those who mislead the public opinion and take advantage of the people's ignorance to raise disquieting rumours and sound the alarm bell, exciting their country into enmity. The real culprits are those who, by interest or inclination, declare constantly that war is inevitable, and by making it so, assert that they are powerless to prevent it. The real culprits are those who sacrifice the general interest to their own personal interest. . . . And who held up to their country a sterile policy of conflict and reprisals. (From the report of the International Commission to inquire into the Course and Conduct of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913; Zimmerman 1995)