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Illustration BA(hons)

Word count- 2571

Key words-

Propaganda

Fear

Consequence

Course tutor- Louise Burston

Dissertation Proposal

For my dissertation proposal I will explore three words which interest me greatly, especially in terms of the field of illustration. The words I am researching are Propaganda, Fear and Consequence. I have always been an avid lover of twentieth century history and the consequences of war, and I hope to find many interesting questions to answer. I will research how propaganda has had an effect on our lives since World War One, as well as how fear plays such an important part in the way that we see the world and our perceived enemies, and what are the consequences of these two words in reality?

Propaganda



Figure 1. Patriotic Postcard (1915) *Are we afraid? No!*

Defined as the spreading of information, particularly in the case of misleading or biased view points with the intention to persuade the masses of a political or religious agenda (Stevenson and Waite, 2011) propaganda to me, conjures up images of war and mind control, reiteration of a favoured rhetoric and a lack of diplomacy as can be seen in the mass marketed postcards of the early 20th century, such as *Are we afraid? No!* (fig.1) In what the British library refers to as a “Jarring image in a post-imperial age” which leads me to question how an image that we see as acceptable in 2021 might be viewed in the future. What is it about these images that make us feel uncomfortable today and how can we recognise these key elements of political persuasion?

The first time propaganda became officially noted was for the congregation of the Vatican called “Sacra congregatio de propaganda fide” created in the 1622 for missionaries campaigning on behalf

of the Catholic Church (fig. 2&3) This was a way to spread the word of God and had very little negative connotations in comparison to the propaganda we speak of today. (Scheufelen, 2020)



Figures 2 &3 : Roman Catholic Propaganda images (1622) *Sacra congregatio de propaganda fide*.

I am interested in researching exactly what propaganda is and when is it that propaganda becomes dangerous. I will do this by reading the work *Propaganda* by Edward Bernays (1928) and it's review by Mark Crispin Miller (2004) who explains that before World War One, the term was little known and used exclusively by those in the catholic hierarchy (Miller, 2004) so it leads me to wonder what was it about the twentieth century that brought this word to the forefront of our minds? We have always been involved in wars, but never had mass printing and poster design been so affordable and easily distributed. (Haste,

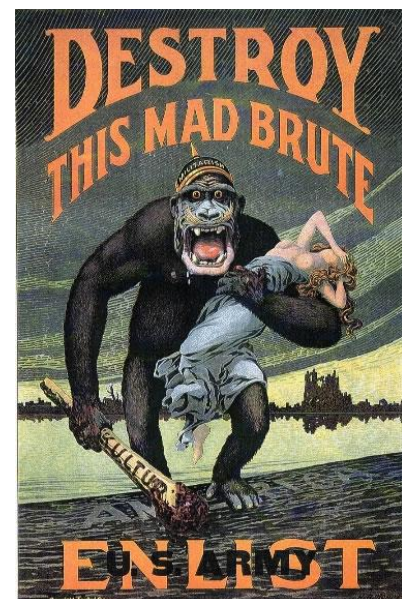


Figure 4. Propaganda CIP 1917

1977) Another reason why propaganda may have succeeded during World War One is the rise in literacy. Typography and graphic illustration became a powerful tool, allowing the semiotic interplay between words and imagery to play a part in the general perception of the

advertisements as seen in figure 4, where metaphors and adjectives collide to create a striking and possibly terrifying impression on the viewer.

If this is true, does the illustrator have a responsibility to it's viewer? By reading John Berger's *Ways of seeing* (1972) I will further analyse the effects these images have on us as viewer.

Propaganda manages to seduce even those it most horrifies is a paradox that Bernays grasped completely; and it is one that at least we must try to understand completely if we want to change the world that Bernays and others made for us. (Miller, 2004 p.30)

By researching the career of the nephew of internationally renowned Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud, Edward Bernays I will develop a deeper understanding of the core principals of propaganda. Known as the father of public relations (Miller, 2004) Bernays was an advocate of psychological persuasion on the masses. He worked alongside Walter Lippmann to create one of the most successful propaganda teams of all time, known as the Committee on Public Information (CPI) they together convinced the United States that war was the only way that one could remain safe and protect democracy by clever marketing and psychological conditioning. After the war using his experience at the CPI and influence from Sigmund Freud, he created an elitist power machine, becoming hired by mega-corporations and governments alike to gain power and control over the public's mind and money. (Scheufelen, 2020)

By further studying Bernays' very open account of his technique and motivations I will begin to understand how the psychology of persuasion has an effect on our everyday lives, be it art, business, education or politics and how by sharing only one side of an argument, we become easily manipulated into believing the narrative which the elite wishes us to, simply to benefit themselves.

Fear

Fear of unconformity, fear of race, fear of disease, fear of touch, fear of blood, fear of non-straight sex, fear of workers, fear of desire, fear of women, fear of subaltern rage, fear of colour, fear of desire, fear of crime, fear of “illegals,” and the fear of uprising: Fear is both the metanarrative that drives the disciplinary apparatus of the nation- state (police, Immigration and Naturalisation Services [INS], military, schools) and the intended effects on the body politic.

(Aldama, 2003 p, 1–2).

Defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the feeling of pain and unease caused by a sense of impending danger or the possibility of evil, fear is a common colloquialism in the English language. I am interesting in exploring fear on a deeper level.

Fear is easy to define but how easy is it to create? By studying the book *Historicizing Fear* (2019) by professors T. Boyce and W. Chunnu, both of whom have a background in social psychology and African American studies in the university of Colorado, it is possible to delve deeper into the causes and effects of fear mongering, and what happens when people give into the process of what is described as othering- the categorisation of a person who belongs to a subordinate social category defined as other. (Boyce 2019) The writers conclude that fear of the other is timeless and universal and very few racial or social groups are left unaffected by this innate human quality, however, it is indeed social construction that perpetuates these negative emotions, and the arts, be it music, film or illustration have always been an effective way to garner fear in order to justify violence and oppression. I find that the research on African American culture and the oppression of Black people- particularly in the segregation era a deeply troubling and fascinating time period to discuss with a rich collection of sources and academic writings about the social consequences and the psychology behind it.

Acts of racial violence were justified and encouraged through the emphasis on this stereotype of the Savage. The urgent message to whites was, we must put blacks in their place or else. (Boskin, 1986)

The Jim Crow museum is a vast collection of racist, anti-Black memorabilia which exists to educate. Mike Householder from the associated press described his experience there as startling, stating that “the n-word is prevalent throughout, and many items portray black men as lazy, violent or inarticulate. Black women are shown as kerchief-wearing mummies, sexually charged Jezebels or other stereotypes” (Householder, 2012)



Figures 5,6 &7. A collection of racist imagery (The Brute) The Jim Crow Museum (2021)

In this collection of racist imagery collected by the museum (fig. 5,6 &7) the illustrators involved had one goal in mind, and according to Dr. David Pilgrim it was to justify slavery and/or segregation. The images of what is defined by the Jim Crow Museum as the brute caricature- a hideous, subhuman and dangerous Black man, was created to insight fear into the minds of the white man, often portrayed as a threat to white women, the untrained or ‘free Black man’ was different to the subservient caricatures normally displayed in nineteenth century cartoons. The brute was the consequence of the reconstruction period, and if slavery wasn’t protected and fought for, then these uncontrollable caricatures would be lurking at your door (Pilgrim, 2012)

This leads me to consider what it is about the brute caricature that made it so possible for white Americans to be persuaded that Black men couldn't be trusted? Which introduces another word that interests me, Dehumanisation.



Figure 8. Racist Postcard, The Jim Crow Museum, 2021

Dehumanisation is the psychological process in which the majority racial group of a country begin to see 'the other' not only as different, but subhuman (Boyer, 2019) in this case by continuously describing Black men as beasts and drawing them in such a unrealistic way, with non-human features like the grotesque image seen in figure 8. The way in which the head is shaped in a gorilla like fashion to the over sized lips and exaggeratedly dark skin tone, has an effect on the psyche of the viewer. They no longer see

the other as an equal human, but as an animal who should not only be subservient to them, but doesn't feel pain or deserve the same rights as they would expect for themselves. (Jim Crow Museum, 2021)

In no greater way was this documented and discussed than in Nazi Germany, which leads me to my last word, consequence.

Consequence

The defendants in this case are charged with murders, tortures and other atrocities committed in the name of medical science. The victims of these crimes are numbered in the hundreds of thousands. A handful only are still alive; a few of the survivors will appear in this courtroom. But most of these miserable victims were slaughtered outright or died in the course of the tortures to which they were subjected ... To their murderers, these wretched people were not individuals at all. They came in wholesale lots and were treated worse than animals. (Taylor, The Nuremberg trials, 1946)



Figure 9. Advertisement for *The Eternal Jew*, Amsterdam 1942

When the horrors of the Holocaust- the mass execution of Jews and other ethnic minorities, had been revealed to the world, it seemed impossible for those who had not been indoctrinated into the Nazi regime of the third reich to understand how something so inhumane could happen in the twentieth century. Professor David Livingstone Smith explores this in his writing *Less than Human. Why we demean, enslave, then exterminate others* (2012) by exploring the depths of the psyche and the consequences of dehumanisation it is possible to see exactly why such an awful event was allowed to happen. Propaganda, fear and dehumanisation lead to the deaths of over six million people. In the documentary *The Propaganda Battle* (1984) a Nazi era film director

Fritz Hippler is interviewed. He directed what is described as one of the most dangerous movies of all time (Taylor, 2006, p.174) *The Eternal Jew*, a piece of anti- Semitic propaganda which was created by the instruction of head Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels to 'document' the lives of Jewish people in Poland. They were continually referred to as rats, vermin and bacteria. This movies last scene included parts of Hitlers own voice, where he quoted "international Jewry is the ferment of decomposition of peoples and states, just as it was in antiquity. It will remain that way as long as peoples do not find the strength to get rid of the virus." (Hitler, 1942)

The illustrations within the film and it's advertisement as seen in figure 8 were distorted, exaggerated and dehumanising. Along with this imagery and the words of their elected leader it is possible to imagine how the uneducated and afraid would be susceptible to manipulation.

What I find interesting is that the artistic director, Hippler was not found guilty at trial. He expressed he regretted the making of the movie, only because he had to be interrogated and put on trial, and although he felt that it was the most disgraceful piece of anti-Semitic propaganda of all time

(Holocaust, 2000) he concluded that in his opinion he felt

that he had played no part in the killing of Jews, and therefore did not deserve any punishment. He insisted that the film making was honest and that it was the responsibility of Goebbels, not himself. (Hippler, 1984)

Therefore I wonder, what is the consequence? Does an artist not have responsibility or are they merely a tool to be used in a Propaganda war? The film made by Hippler was so disgraceful that it is banned internationally, but was he a victim of the effects of dehumanisation and do the people involved in these crimes deserve leniency in regards to the psychological impact these propaganda images and movies have on their morality.

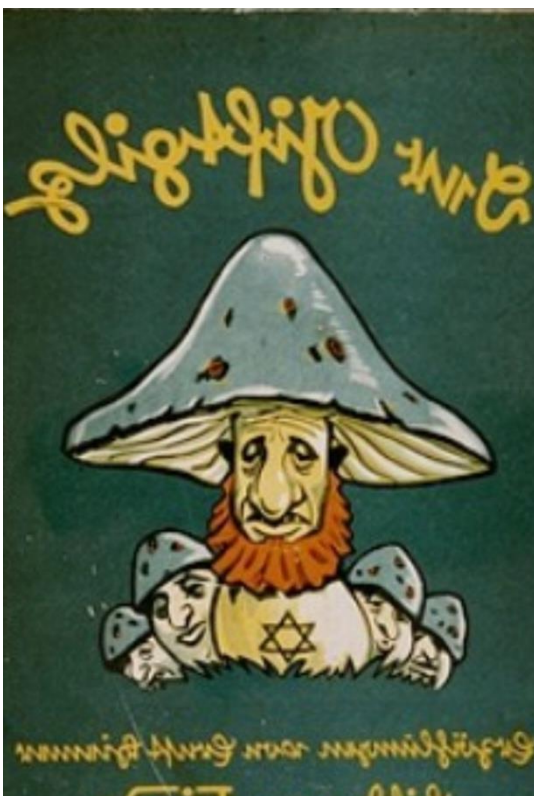


Figure 10. *The Poisonous Mushroom*, Der Streumier 1933-45

I want to study further into the thought process behind these artists and why they do not feel that they deserve to face the consequences of their political art, and I will do this by watching the mentioned documentaries in detail and deeper reading into the work of David Livingstone Smith. For example, many children's books in Nazi Germany had an anti-Jewish rhetoric such as *The Poisonous Mushroom* (fig. 10) commissioned by propaganda publicist Der Streummer. Their aim was to indoctrinate, and the illustrators involved in the creation of these books were possibly already indoctrinated. (Eltin, 2002) the worrying and disturbing images may have an effect on the psyche that I would like to explore in more detail.

The words explored have lead me question humanity, and how much control we actually have over own lives, this, taking into account my field of study, will focus on the arts, especially in the field of illustration. I have looked at propaganda and I'm very inspired to research Bernays and his career to gain a deeper insight into exactly how he managed to change public opinion en-masse.

The invocation of fear is powerful, and historically it seems that we have been driven by fear, so do those of us who have the power to create have the power to invoke fear? Our psychology suggests that fear is the driving force behind many atrocities, promoting hatred via propaganda, appalling imagery and encouragement of division by those who wish to benefit from it. (Boyer, 2019)

I have also considered what real life consequences illustrations have on people. Can an illustration really be blamed for a genocide? Can an artist be charged in a court of law for the context of their work? Which leads me to consider the question- *Is there a point when an illustration could be classed as a weapon?* To answer this I have found many books and resources in a modern and historical context, such as *Art, Culture and Media Under the Third Reich* (Eltin, 2002) which explores the historical case study of Nazi Germany, as well psychological analysis from writers such as David Livingstone Smith, an expert on dehumanisation. I will also read *Propaganda Blitz* by David Edwards (2018) as well as all sources mentioned in my bibliography.

Some subquestions I have thought of are- *How does propaganda really work? When would an illustrator be aware that they are being commissioned to create propaganda? How did illustrators during the third reich deal with the emotional consequences of the Holocaust? Are they to blame?*

Therefore the question I have decided answer and that I propose for my dissertation is-

Is there a point at which an illustration could be classed a weapon?

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