

Studying Political Ideas: a Public Political Discourse Approach

Andrew Chadwick

How do parties, groups and movements construct shared frameworks of understanding? Answering this question must involve some analysis of the role played by political ideas. They are an inescapable fact of political life. Yet, as with most inescapable facts, controversy has raged over how they should be studied.¹ This article presents a framework for the empirical analysis of ideas. It aims to strike a balance between the presentation of a set of general assumptions, and a recognition that any framework must engage with particular evidence from the historical context under investigation, especially the processes through which ideational communication occurs. Elements from a variety of perspectives are combined to provide a 'public political discourse' approach, which: appreciates the importance of communication through the media; provides justifications for specific sources of evidence to be used; and places ideas in context. My main concern throughout is in developing a useful framework of explicit assumptions about how to study political ideas. It is not my intention to delve deeply into the philosophical roots of its elements, nor do I seek to provide a blueprint that is bought wholesale or not at all. It represents only one approach among countless possible others. Rather, my aim is to raise awareness of the fact that the assumptions which are brought to the study of political ideas are important determinants of the kinds of analyses we see produced. These assumptions need to be stated and defended, with a recognition that they obscure as many possibilities as they reveal.

This essay emerges from a partial sense of dissatisfaction with recent methodological debates in history, a field which has, since the 1980s, experienced a wave of revisionism. The shift has involved a widespread reappraisal of earlier class-based interpretations of politics and a reassertion of the importance of ideas, usually defined as 'discourses'. The examination of these, and the organizational structures of parties, movements, and the state, has gone hand in hand with a new sensitivity to the means through which historical evidence is mediated, along with the emergence of postmodernist approaches to political identities. Written from the perspective of one who enjoys having a foot in both disciplines – history and political science – this essay is intended to suggest to the political science community the ways in which some of the interesting developments in historiography over the past 15 years, if developed in the directions outlined here, might contribute to an understanding of the relationship between political ideas and political action. Although analysis of how ideas, parties and movements interrelate has always been a core concern of political scientists, it is interesting to note how few of the controversies that have raged in history have flowed into political science's mainstream. Yet

historians, often condemned by all social scientists for being 'atheoretical', have recently provided a rich and suggestive combination of theoretical discussion and empirical research.

It is valuable at the outset to consider briefly what has usually been meant by the terms 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis'. Basic definitional usage differs substantially across disciplines. In mainstream linguistics first, the dominant definition implies a focus on the interpretation of coherent units of spoken or written language, and the emphasis is on the formal analysis of such texts. It is mostly concerned with language use in action – in everyday conversation, or in classrooms or courtrooms, for instance.² Second, during the last 20 years 'critical discourse analysis' has sought to forge links between mainstream linguistics and critical social theory in order to comprehend the role played by language use in producing asymmetrical power relations and social and political identity. Still employing a practical focus on language use in action, it typically seeks to link the formal features of texts with social and political contexts, and often broadens out the definition of text to include symbolic representations which may appear alongside the written and spoken word.³ Third and finally, in the hands of theorists such as Foucault and Derrida, the terms are less easy to pin down, but there is a general level of agreement that they are used to understand how the totality of social relations is constituted by language and this does not necessarily require close analysis of written and spoken texts in the manner of formal linguistics. Indeed, in this vision, the concept of a 'text' can refer to any or all social and political phenomena.⁴ On the whole, revisionist historians have taken their inspiration from the third of these three definitions. I would argue that their neglect of the other two, but particularly the second – critical discourse analysis as the interrogation of text and context which draws upon both linguistics and critical theory – has proved a source of weakness. Norman Fairclough, a writer at the forefront of the development of critical discourse analysis as a distinctive field, recently criticized discourse analysts from outside linguistics for their failure to recognize that the 'texture' (form and organization) of texts should be viewed as equal in importance to their 'content' – an insight which I shall explore later in this essay.⁵

It is difficult to deny postmodernism's influence on the social sciences during the last 20 years, and the study of politics is no exception. Yet here the postmodernist approach has had a much greater impact on political theory than it has on what can be termed empirical studies. It is undoubtedly the case that postmodernism has so far failed to inspire research agendas that involve an established interface between evidence and theory. These observations do not assume a divide between the 'real' world of empirical work, and the 'less real' world of political theory. It is simply to assert that, as far as research is concerned, there have always been different forms of *practice*, and each form has its own conventions. Those who have adopted a postmodernist approach to politics have so far been less inclined to perform the characteristic practices of empirical political scientists and historians: using the 'archives', interviewing, 'thick description', and so on.⁶

The results of this retreat into theory are intriguing, especially in the light of recent developments in the related field of media/cultural studies. There the pre-occupation with language and discourse has impacted on the mainstream, and has

strongly informed empirical modes of research practice. In short, in both history and media/cultural studies, there has been a fruitful balance between theoretical coherence and 'making sense of the world' through empirical investigation. This is not to argue that postmodernist approaches have become hegemonic in either of these disciplines. Far from it. But it is to state that negotiations with the approach have been informed to a much greater extent by the usage of empirical research practice rather than claims to theoretical 'purity'.

The discipline of political science is therefore left in a curious situation. Recent work in the fields of historical and media/cultural studies have demonstrated that the chief concerns of the approach raise some important and interesting questions. It would be rash to say that both of these fields have taken a 'linguistic turn'; more accurate to describe it as a linguistic 'scenic route', a journey less direct, with less certainty of arriving at a precise location, but one all the more interesting for it. The linguistic scenic route has raised more questions than it has answered, but it has opened up a new range of possibilities from which political scientists engaged in 'empirical' types of research practice might learn. I turn now to a discussion of the new historical postmodernism.

Historical Postmodernism

The debate over the 'linguistic turn' in history has raged since the publication of Stedman Jones' essay on English Chartism in 1983.⁷ Stedman Jones is acknowledged to be the first to introduce linguistic theory to social history, though his remarks were initially tentative and cautious. This, along with a lack of immediate further clarification, soon led to a number of important critiques which stress: the misappropriation of linguistic theory and the superficiality of the approach;⁸ the similarity between it and 'traditional' histories of 'political thought';⁹ or the implications for a history seeking to establish causal explanations.¹⁰ It has also been argued that the methodology of Patrick Joyce, another major contributor to the postmodernist historiography, is merely eclectic, since it privileges the discourse of 'populism', thereby replacing one all-embracing category of explanation – 'class' – with another.¹¹ Nevertheless, Joyce's work has been at the forefront of the recent assault on traditional history. He wishes to give more prominence to 'the actual terms in which contemporaries talked about the social order, and to the means through which they communicated their perceptions'.¹² This involves a marked reluctance to impose preconceived judgements on political utterances. Instead, a sensitivity to the ways in which individuals and groups actually discussed their social and political positions brings into focus 'extra-proletarian identifications'; in other words, political identities which did not stem from recognition of a position in an economically-determined class structure. 'Class', as the major conceptual inspiration for social history since the 1960s, is not completely removed from the scene: it is acknowledged that elements of class identity have often been present which contradict and conflict with other identities. But the overwhelming emphasis in this approach is placed upon the limited role of social and economic structures (as traditionally understood) in determining political discourse.

Historians influenced by the 'linguistic turn' have therefore attempted to apply generalizations about the constitutive role of discourses in the creation of political

identity. The established tradition in social history has come under attack from an approach which rejects the view that ideas emerge 'automatically out of the "objective" economic and social interests of groups', and that parties, pressure groups and movements are the 'passive beneficiaries of structural divisions within society'.¹³ Historical postmodernism views political organizations as active participants in the creation of political alliances and shared discourses. In order to understand how coalitions of support are constructed, attention must be paid to expressions of political discourse. This points toward a 'recognition of the contested and constructive role of argument and ideas in the establishment of successful political strategies'.¹⁴ The central core of historical postmodernism is originally derived from a structuralist interpretation of language as generative of human consciousness, and therefore of political identities. Rather than language reflecting a prior social existence, it is said to create that very existence. Language is not a reflection of processes more 'real' than itself. Rather, existence is to be understood as produced by and within language, which in turn is said to exist as a system of differences. This interpretation originated with the Swiss structural linguist, Saussure.¹⁵ The arbitrary nature of words, and their use in different, 'encoded', ways are studied for how meaning is constructed *within* texts. Meanings are said to be the product of the differences internal to the system of signs rather than the relation between language and an extra-linguistic 'context'. In the hands of post-structuralists, it is the idea that language is anterior to what we experience as 'reality', and the lack of control over how languages are used, for example, by authors of texts, which has had a destabilizing effect on traditional history. The notion that we are able to 'read' texts as unproblematic expressions of authorial intent has been decisively rejected. All we are able to achieve is a sensitivity to the 'encoded' nature of language, attainable through 'decoding'. Along with this goes an assumption that texts are open to an infinite number of readings. This does not occur as a result of a reader's position in the social and economic structure, but is due to the ambiguities, openness and 'polysemic' character of the text itself.

It would be a mistake to argue that these historians have accepted all of the post-modernist 'project'. Work has tended to focus on the production of social and political identities through the examination of discourses in particular historical periods. This is, in a sense, why the work of Joyce and others has been criticized for its often traditional appearance 'on the page'. Nevertheless, it *is* the case that postmodernist historiography can be accused of throwing the baby out with the bath water. For in its rejection of a social existence outside of language, it becomes impossible (because unnecessary) to consider the interrelations between texts and contexts, between texts and the ideas contained within them, and the *uses* to which ideas are put by individuals, groups and classes; in essence the *communication, reception and mutation* of ideas. As I will argue later, a 'dialogical' conception of political discourse comes closest in providing the necessary balance between these three areas. It is possible to take the recent interest in language, and develop it in more fruitful ways.

First, however, I want to focus on the debates over the meaning of discourse in the new history. In Joyce's influential work *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848–1914*, for example, there are at least two definitions at work. In the first section of the book, which is mainly concerned with politics and

work, it is used to refer to 'bodies of utterance of a relatively formal, public sort, often associated with institutions'. This is clearly the realm of the printed word, the pamphleteer, political intellectual, newspaper columnist, or platform speaker. The second sense in which discourse is used – in relation to art and culture – refers to the 'symbolic, less formal and less public, often assumed and unspoken ways in which the social world is given form by people'. This second sense is much more inclusive, taking in mannerisms, gesture, clothing, and patterns of consumption: in short, 'culture', broadly defined.¹⁶ The ambiguity surrounding the meaning of discourse in the new history presents several important difficulties, but by far the most damning criticism is that the approach does not live up to its expectations because it has paid too much attention to formal discourse (Joyce's first definition), and not enough attention to the broader, symbolic definition. It has been argued that much of the work inspired by the linguistic turn seems to focus on coherent public expressions, which are seen as linked directly to the fortunes of existing political institutions, such as pressure groups and political parties.¹⁷

These are important criticisms. There is no escaping the fact that the study of language presents the problem of mediation. As Friedman has argued:

The past is ... triply mediated – first, through the mediations of those texts, which are themselves reconstructions of what "really" happened; second, through the fragmentary and partial survival of those textualizations which are dependent upon the politics of documentation and the luck, skill, and persistence of the historian-as-detective who must locate them; and third, through the interpretive, meaning-making gaze of the historian.¹⁸

If this is assumed, then a necessary component of a credible approach to the study of political ideas must include some appraisal of the implications of differing patterns of mediation. It is arguable that mainstream work, whether of a 'narrative' or 'analytical' kind, has generally belonged to the genre of 'realism', in which the synthetic and constructed nature of research becomes masked by the seemingly unproblematic use of particular kinds of source material, as the *definitive* sources. This is then joined to a simple concept of referentiality in which the historical narrative is a straightforward 'reflection' of the 'real'. But this paradigm ignores the necessarily intertextual nature of writing, the fact that all histories are positioned alongside other histories, and that even the ideas which are studied are themselves histories of a kind.¹⁹ Highlighting the contingency of historical explanation as it relates to source materials can open up avenues of explanation which have previously been neglected or simply ignored. There is, in short, no such thing as the 'definitive' source. Being aware of the constraints imposed by the selection of source material is not about getting the story straight; it is, in Kellner's witty formulation, about 'getting the story crooked'; alerting the reader to the contingency and unavoidable assumptions which are a part of all intellectual inquiry.²⁰ The neglect of this simple point is one of the reasons why those who study ideas in action have often found it difficult to answer the criticism: why did you look at *that* particular expression? If this deserves an answer, the study of ideas must involve some explanation of the sources of expression, and the hierarchies of evidence which are a crucial component of any research. How can this insight be developed?

Ideas and Communication Practices: a Taxonomy

In the study of political ideas more generally many begin by asserting their importance simply because they exist. This is a start, but it does not go very far in the direction of deciding precisely which sorts of ideas are more important for particular purposes. A way forward can be found if we appreciate that ideas are dependent upon communication practices. If they are to win support, ideas must be communicated to audiences, and audiences must be receptive. The rather vague definitions as they are used in both mainstream political science and postmodernist historiography suggests the need for a basic taxonomy of the main communication practices. The problem may be defined as one of levels of abstraction and communication. It is possible to generate such a taxonomy using two basic questions:

1. What are the principal styles of argument which characterize the communication practice?
2. What are the dominant media of communication which characterize the communication practice?

This provides at least three types of communication practice: ideas as philosophical discourse; ideas as public political discourse; and ideas as symbolic discourse.

Ideas as Philosophical Discourse

First, there are ideas communicated by the practice of philosophical discourse, in which certain concepts enjoy status because they may be seen as 'perennial'.²¹ Arguments about the nature of 'the state', for example, rely on a distinctive mode of reasoning about 'the state' which has a long ancestry. Political philosophers are at one remove from the political arena, and enjoy the fruits of idle speculation. Indeed, such practices have been celebrated in the mainstream of the normative tradition, especially by those who have used Aristotle's response to those who questioned the utility of philosophy when he wrote that 'to be constantly asking "What is the use of?" is unbecoming to those of superior mentality and free birth'.²² Communication at this level occurs mainly through narrowly circumscribed channels – works of political philosophy – whose main audience is literate, highly educated and familiar with the demands of the genre. The practice of philosophical discourse is thus confined to a small minority during any given period.

This does not, however, mean that the concepts discussed are always so confined: ideas as philosophical discourse may often radiate out into other areas of communication. Nevertheless, it is difficult to go as far down this path as Rawls when he argues that 'Political philosophy does not, as some have thought, withdraw from society and the world. Nor does it claim to discover what is true by its own distinctive method of reason apart from any tradition of political thought and practice'.²³ To accept this would be to lose the necessary distinction between modes of communication which is being established here. Put very bluntly, do the typical voter, the typical government minister and the typical philosopher enjoy the same daily diet of reading? The answer will usually be 'no'. It may sometimes be yes, but only to a certain extent; and I would argue that it is the differences in diet to which those who study the power of political ideas must be sensitive.

It is most often assumed that ideas as philosophical discourse are 'independent variables', that they influence political 'action', and that it is therefore acceptable to assume all of this, and study ideas in their 'purest' forms. Debate exists over the exact method to be employed: for instance, should the approach attempt to discern the 'core elements' of an 'ideology' (understood as a 'system of ideas'), or understand it as a tension between two extremes, such as libertarianism and collectivism?²⁴ But the fundamental assumption is that systems of ideas are to be studied in terms of their internal structures ('in their own right') and that, in order to do this adequately, it is necessary to focus on their most elaborate and demanding expressions.²⁵ As a consequence, those who study ideas as philosophical discourse generally pay very little attention to the processes of communication between producers and audiences.

Ideas as Public Political Discourse

Second, there are ideas communicated as what I shall term 'public political discourse'. At this level, ideas are articulated, debate and discussion takes place, but these debates are seen as supremely political interventions and as elements of particular political strategies. They may have been the product of quiet reflection, or they may have been written with the fierce heat of a polemic, but they are all politically motivated in the sense that they are primarily written for the times in which they are produced: they are public and are embedded within a political and historical context. Communication here occurs through a wide variety of channels, but especially regular, mass communications, whose main audience is seen as reasonably literate and educated, and has access to such media. Communication of this type usually (but not always) involves greater numbers of people than ideas as philosophical discourse. Public political discourse can thus be defined as a process centred on an intermediate level of the communication of ideas in political life, the analysis of which involves studying neither 'great works' of political theory, nor 'mass' opinion as it is expressed through opinion poll data, and which involves a focus on both the production and the reception of political ideas.

When it comes to the framework of analysis, it may often be assumed that ideas as public political discourse arise out of 'real' politics, that their success or failure is dependent upon the success or failure of particular institutions, groups, or classes, and that they rise and fall with the particular agent with which they are identified.²⁶ Yet this assumption is not strictly necessary. A different view, consistent with the historical postmodernist view of language as generative of human consciousness outlined above, argues that the distinction between 'real' politics and ideas is artificial. In this perspective, politics is a linguistic practice, and our understanding of any political practice is incomplete if it does not refer to the discourses that surround and construct it.²⁷

Ideas as Symbolic Discourse

Third, there exist ideas communicated as 'symbolic discourse'. This is the sphere in which symbols, ranging from the spectacular to the relatively mundane (processions, the wearing of particular colours, the burning of flags, and other iconography), contribute towards shared beliefs. It may also include bodily movements,

whether conscious or not, such as gesture, stance, facial expression. Most communication at this level is either direct, or mediated through unobtrusive forms. Like public political discourse, communication of this type usually (but not always) involves greater numbers than philosophical discourse. When it comes to the framework of analysis, the populist ethos of some approaches, such as 'history from below' or cultural anthropology, take pride in digging up ideas as expressed through symbolic discourse. As with public political discourse, those who study symbolic discourse devote much attention to the forms of communication in a way that those who study philosophical discourse generally do not.

These three types of expression: philosophical discourse, public political discourse and symbolic discourse, have different implications for the study of ideas. They involve different sets of assumptions about evidence and explanation, and yet it is precisely these assumptions which are rarely made explicit. In the rest of this essay I will explore the communication practice of 'public political discourse' in an attempt to indicate its usefulness for the study of how parties, groups and movements construct shared frameworks of understanding.

Desiderata for the Public Political Discourse Approach

The public political discourse approach involves several desiderata. First, it is desirable that in the historical period under investigation, the ideas were in the public domain. If not, there should be a sensitivity to the complex relationship between public and private utterances. This introduces an important, yet often overlooked, distinction. There are immense problems with treating evidence from private sources in the same way as published opinion. The latter, by their very nature, are written in the hope of consolidating or reconstituting the political beliefs of audiences. They differ from private views, which were never meant for immediate public consumption. To take one example, the research on early Labour Party ideas is peppered with references to the diary of Beatrice Webb, but if such a source is taken as evidence of the ideas of Fabian socialism, then this clearly involves an assumption that the distinction between ideas in the public domain, and those in the private, is one not worth making. The argument here, however, is that such a distinction is important, because ideas in this view must be communicated and disseminated during a particular time period in order to exert an influence during that period. Protagonists' private behaviour may differ substantially from that which is designed for public consumption, and the two should be highlighted through careful juxtaposition. An awareness of the effects of this divide on the production and consumption of political ideas is again helpful in establishing levels of influence.

It should be stated, however, that this distinction does not rest upon the classic liberal distinction between public and private spheres. It does not seek automatically to privilege what takes place in the 'public' sphere at the expense of the 'private' sphere. It simply states that there is a distinct mode of ideational communication – public political discourse – which is best captured by attention to publicly communicated political ideas. As the leading feminist historian, Joan Scott, has argued, the linkages between personal and political experiences need to be

acknowledged, but not at the expense of seeing *some* identities as fundamentally shaped by processes in the public sphere.²⁸

Second, the public political discourse framework requires prioritization of the media for the communication of ideas in any given historical period. The obvious notion that the media through which ideas are constructed and transmitted change dramatically over time is frequently overlooked. Communication at the beginning of the third millennium occurs through a wide variety of media, but it would be highly controversial to assume that print media are now the sole means for the expression of political ideas. A framework for the analysis of ideas in 2000 is bound to consider mass broadcast media as a major site of conflict, construction and transmission – a site which has little relevance for 1900. Analysis of public political discourse during the pre-broadcasting era involves special attention to the mediated printed word with specific political content: especially journals, newspapers, pamphlets, and leaflets. If analysis is focused at this level, and not solely upon ideas communicated as philosophical discourse, it encompasses a wider range of writers than small groups of intellectuals. It is regularized, accessible communication involving a community.

Third, although ideas communicated as philosophical discourse and as symbolic discourse are not the main focus, the concept of public political discourse does not preclude discussion of them. The aim might be to establish connections between the different communication practices, or it might involve a recognition that complex combinations of all three might characterize certain texts. Consider the textual form of the web page as a contemporary example, the illustrated novel as an older manifestation, or even the meaning constructed by the combination, in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, of the original engraved title page and the written words within.²⁹ It is therefore necessary to look at 'high' and 'low', 'elite' and 'mass', 'official' and 'unofficial', 'sophisticated' and 'simple', and the combinations of these in given texts. This conclusion has been reached, albeit via a different epistemological route, by Stedman Jones:

[T]here is no reason why the meticulous techniques devoted to the analysis of texts embodying more explicit, self-consciously reflective forms of thought or specialized forms of knowledge and mediated through highly formalized forms of communication, should not be extended to other kinds of text dispersed across the socio-cultural spectrum ... Similarly, and in contrast to the traditional approach to 'social movements', there is no reason why the 'intellective' elements of popular politics should not be analysed as rigorously and scrupulously as is customary in studies of the history of ideas ... [Few] attempts have so far been made to identify and trace the presence and interactions of different political, religious and other languages in the utterances and activities of large movements, mass parties, churches, religious groups or newspapers and their readerships in the modern era.³⁰

In widening the range of evidence, the public political discourse approach attempts to provide a panoramic view.

Fourth, the approach should make it explicit that ideas are deeply embedded in a context of political competition, rivalry, conflict, even struggle. Shared meanings are negotiated and constructed by elites and non-elites, engaged in dialogical,

reciprocal relationships (a point to which I return below). Yet meaning is never wholly fixed. Although asymmetrical power relations may exist, constituted both by discursive and extra-discursive factors, meanings are to be seen as perpetually undergoing contestation and redefinition, and are seen as an important source of collective and individual identity. It does not privilege certain ideas simply because they were expressed elaborately, or were developed by 'intellectuals' as political philosophers. Instead, it assumes that focusing on these intermediary texts can bring us closer to those ideas that were more relevant to the everyday political experiences of those involved. It must be stressed, however, that the concept of 'intellectual' is one worth retaining in its broadest sense. But the ability of intellectuals to create new and distinct political communities through the communication of ideas requires sensitivity to the negotiated relations between intellectuals and non-intellectuals.

Fifth, the public political discourse approach should begin from an important strand in critical discourse analysis concerned with the construction of meaning: 'intertextuality'. This concept is used to encapsulate how the meaning of a given text cannot be understood outside of its relation with the countless other texts to which it explicitly or implicitly relates. Texts are therefore seen as 'intersecting' within an 'indefinitely expandable web' of other texts, all of which have their own genres. It is therefore misleading to see a text as a hermetically-sealed unit, since both the producer and the audience are themselves producers and audiences of other texts. In this perspective, all writing and reading, and the construction of meaning as a result of this process, is intertextual.³¹ It follows that the validity of the meaning of a text is not something which can be 'read off' an external source of power, such as authorial intention, or economic structure, but is dependent upon the success with which it operates within a given 'framework of validation'. Given the intertextual conditions of their production and reception, texts may be seen (in a metaphorical sense) as 'authorless', and the production of meaning may become detached from any identifiable, conscious human agent. What has been termed a 'surplus of meaning' may arise.³² For a text to be successful, and for shared meanings to be constructed, it negotiates with, and refers (directly or indirectly) to, other texts. Over time, it may be added, new genres may emerge from the processes of intertextual communication. Frameworks of understanding are therefore built up, not out of the passive and unproblematic acceptance of 'seminal' texts, but rather from the processes of intertextual construction which take place in fairly stable, regular spheres, such as, for example, newspapers. Intertextuality therefore requires the panoramic approach to ideas just outlined. If we are to understand how meaning is constructed, and how that meaning contributes to political identity, this requires attention to a broad range of mediated intertextual evidence.³³

Multiple and Overlapping Public Spheres

The final desideratum is that the approach should involve an awareness of the communication infrastructures which parties, groups and movements employ. One highly influential approach to understanding the role of communication in democracies is Habermas's concept of the 'public sphere'. Although there has been a heavy normative emphasis in the literature, there have nevertheless been attempts

to apply the framework to concrete instances of communication.³⁴ Habermas argued that the development of early modern capitalism heralded a new era of communication which fostered a culture of enlightened critical public debate among the propertied, middle class. This culture was based upon an independent press, the reading of novels, discussion in physical spaces such as coffee houses, and so on. According to Habermas, this 'public sphere' developed in western Europe during the eighteenth century, reached its high point during the mid-nineteenth century, and subsequently declined during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as it increasingly came to be policed by economic monopolies and the state. The model therefore locates the development of particular forms of communication, providing a dynamic, macro-level perspective indicating how the structures which facilitate public political discourse have changed over time.

But it is still a blunt instrument for conceptualizing the communication of ideas. The demise of a single, relatively undifferentiated sphere of communication is difficult to portray empirically. Habermas charts the collapse of the public sphere in late-nineteenth century Europe, but it is arguable that it was precisely this period which saw the proliferation of many new and different groups and discourses, in particular feminism and socialism. The dissemination of these was carried out vigorously through channels of public political discourse. It is difficult to imagine labour, radical, socialist and feminist movements in isolation from the various newspapers they sought to establish. The single public sphere as a framework is therefore too restrictive, because it misses the emergence of new political groups, each with their own distinctive infrastructures of communication.³⁵ Utilizing a panoramic perspective necessitates sensitivity towards such minority discourses. The clash of relatively marginal currents must be incorporated into the broader landscape.

Recently, Susan Herbst has developed an approach to public expression 'outside the mainstream' by adapting the metaphor of the public sphere.³⁶ While she is concerned primarily with marginalized groups, one of the implications of her work is that, in order to develop a multi-layered notion of conflict and consensus, it is necessary to explore how groups, movements and parties develop and make use of their own distinctive channels of communication. This can illuminate all forms of political communication in which a party or group seeking to influence public political discourse constructs its own network of communication. Herbst uses three main concepts: 'linguistic space', 'community-building' and 'communication environments' to describe the communication relationships which groups, movements and parties develop in order to advance their own ideas, and which lead to the emergence of multiple public spheres. A modified version of this approach provides an important component of the public political discourse framework.

'Linguistic space' specifies the channels set up by group leaderships in order to communicate to their supporters, for their supporters in turn to communicate back, and for both leaders and supporters to communicate to the wider public.³⁷ The opening up of linguistic space facilitates the development of shared ideas by providing stable, regular opportunities for communication. While it may refer to the organized output of an established institution such as a political party, linguistic space does not assume that ideas are always formally attached to such institutions.

In this view, many different participants contribute to debate: they need not be formal representatives of organized opinion. Herbst's second concept – community-building – specifies the functions of public spheres for providing cohesion between groups and their supporters. It is suggested that processes of communication serve to draw boundaries around the group, constituting insiders and outsiders, thereby defending the group's beliefs from external attack.³⁸ Finally, Herbst's concept of the 'communication environment' refers to the power groups have to shape the patterns of communication in a particular field.³⁹ The 'powerful' in this sense have the ability to determine the boundaries of the communication environment, to decide who is able or unable to communicate and to influence the content of political discourse.

I would argue that Herbst's second concept, 'community-building', requires some modification because it does not seem to allow for the possibility of cross-fertilization between groups and parties. If all groups simply provided their supporters with their *own* communication networks, there would be little chance of building alliances based on points of consensus with other groups. It is therefore necessary to amend Herbst's theory by adding the notion of *overlapping* public spheres, which refers to the process whereby groups seek to build consensus based on common preoccupations and shared meanings.

Herbst's approach is complementary to the concept of public political discourse outlined above. It suggests that there are reciprocal relationships between elites and supporters, and it points to the ways in which groups and parties, large and small, seek to disseminate their ideas. In pointing to the infrastructures of communication set in place by parties, groups and movements, the concept of multiple, overlapping public spheres is an important dimension of the approach. It is useful for making sense of the consensus built up between different groups over specific issues. The notion of multiple and overlapping public spheres encourages us to look beyond narrow institution-based approaches, towards a recognition that groups and movements seek to forge alliances and constituencies of support. It aids in encapsulating shared meanings that are intertextually constructed.

Authors, Texts, Audiences and Contexts

Having established the principal features of the approach in the broadest sense, it may be useful at this stage to explore further the importance of the relations between texts and contexts. To argue for placing ideas in context is not particularly novel. But neither is it straightforward. There are contexts for ideas as philosophical discourse just as there are contexts for ideas as public political discourse and symbolic discourse. There *is* a distinction, nevertheless, to be made on the basis of the levels of internal coherence to be found in philosophical discourse and those of my other two categories. To completely ignore this would be to make highly unrealistic assumptions about how ideas 'work'. If all forms of ideas were as internally coherent and elegantly structured as political philosophy, it would be possible to argue that they 'work' highly efficiently, 'in their own right'. But if, as I have argued, the category 'political ideas' is not exhausted by philosophical discourse, then we need to recognize that the vast bulk of political discourse is not

particularly coherent, and, further, that its effectiveness is not based upon its elegance as a 'system' of ideas. As Hall puts it,

*most ideologies ... are rag bags, replete with many options usable by different groups at will ... It remains vital, in other words, to examine not just belief but the circumstances that make it seem plausible to particular actors at particular historical conjunctures ... Religion, or ideology more generally, tends to be seen in highly intellectualist terms. To concentrate exclusively on ideas in this sense is, however, a mistake. Community matters quite as much as doctrine to most believers.*⁴⁰

Ideas are acceptable to certain groups in certain contexts, and it must not be assumed that a constituency of support will always exist for ideas simply because they are expressed with elegance.

How are we to conceptualize the interaction of authors, texts, audiences and contexts? Quite obviously there are many possible answers to this question, but here I want to proceed in two neglected, but particularly suggestive, directions. One involves transposing some of the ideas developed by the Bakhtin circle of Russian linguists, whose influence has primarily been felt in literary and cultural studies.⁴¹ The other involves a reappraisal of the work of the North American political scientist, Murray Edelman.

The work of the Bakhtin circle⁴² is oriented around the nature of linguistic expression and interaction. But its novelty lies in its rejection of the two competing approaches that have dominated critical linguistics during much of the twentieth century: Saussurean structuralism and Freudian subjectivism. Bakhtin and his followers criticized Saussure's seminal *Course on General Linguistics* for its view of language as an abstract, self-contained system, divorced from its position in a context of human agency, contradiction and struggle. Freudians, on the other hand, were criticized for an individualizing perspective, which naively saw language as the creation of the psyche. To divorce words from the context of their use was, for Bakhtin, an incomplete method of analysis. To study meanings in the Bakhtinian framework is to study discourse between individuals as members of social (and political) groups and classes. It is to avoid the extremes of Saussurean structuralism, Freudian subjectivism, and, it may be added, deterministic Marxism.

The central concept here is 'dialogism'. The Bakhtin circle argued that language inhabits the boundaries between separate human consciousnesses, and it is only through examining the reciprocal relationships between speakers and audiences that we are able to discern the meaning of discourse. This view was based upon a micro-level theory of communication. In essence, argued Volosinov, all utterances must produce a response, but, crucially, the act of utterance contains within it an anticipation of response from another. As he put it:

... word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee. Each and every word expresses the 'one' in relation to the 'other'. I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown

between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee.⁴³

Discourse is 'dialogical', and it is within this dialogism that we must analyse the construction of shared meanings.

If we accept that political discourse is dialogical, we can add a number of other insights. The first of these is the concept of 'speech genres'. Bakhtin argued that discourse generates shared understandings mainly through speech genres. Communication through these creates an environment of familiarity which helps provide a bond between addresser and addressee. Genres create and manage readers' expectations, reducing the amount of 'work' the text has to perform. Speech genres, once established, can be said to provide all-important 'shortcuts' to the shared understandings which are crucial for ideas to gain a foothold, exert, and reinforce, their influence on public debate. As Bakhtin argued:

Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres*...an essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance is its quality of being directed to someone, its *addressivity* ...the utterance has both an author and an addressee. This addressee can be an immediate participant-interlocutor in an everyday dialogue, a differentiated collective of specialists in some particular area of cultural communication, a more or less undifferentiated public, ethnic group, contemporaries, like-minded people, opponents and enemies, a subordinate, a superior, someone who is lower, higher, familiar, foreign, and so forth.... Both the composition and, particularly, the style of the utterance depend on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance. Each speech genre in each area of speech communication has its own typical conception of the addressee, and this defines it as a genre.⁴⁴

As an illustration, consider the effectiveness of a cultural genre such as soap opera in managing television viewers' expectations. Or, consider the example of a Conservative leader's speech at the Party's annual conference. What binds speaker and audience together are the expectations, part consciously held, part unconscious, which have been built up, over long periods of time, about how a Conservative leader is *expected* to speak. Leaders and supporters are able to build ties of reciprocity based on these short-cuts to meaning. By the same token, consider the differences between the speech genres appropriate for platform speeches, and those for cabinet meetings. Each has its own conventions.

Although genres make the building of shared understandings easier to achieve, they are never final. Discourse is, for the Bakhtinians, necessarily conflictual, and it is precisely the creative process of construction and reconstruction, in which meaning is never wholly fixed – a struggle between a unifying or 'centripetal' force, and a fragmenting or 'centrifugal' force, which provides opportunities for discursive change.⁴⁵ The forces of fragmentation create what Bakhtin terms 'heteroglossia', a state in which multiple voices coexist and challenge each other. It is in the working out of conflict between those who wish to impose their own,

monologic perceptions and those who seek to challenge them that the creative work of discourse is played out.

In his much-cited work, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Murray Edelman proceeded from the assumption that 'The realistic study of political language and its meanings is necessarily a probing not only of dictionaries, nor of word counts, but of the diverse responses to particular modes of expression of audiences in disparate social settings.'⁴⁶ The approach understandably owes much to the public sphere of American social science in the 1950s and 1960s. It makes free use of social psychology and functionalist sociology, two paradigms whose influence on political science has since declined.⁴⁷ However, what is certain is that Edelman attributes to language a power to shape politics. As with the dialogical approach, its effectiveness is to be found, not within language alone, but within the meanings that are generated by the process of 'role-taking' by individuals. It is *usage* which matters here, and if sufficient numbers of individuals use language in the same way in the same context, 'common political meanings and claims arise'.⁴⁸ Language acts to shape and 'catalyze' behaviour.⁴⁹

It is not difficult to see the similarities between this view of language and that of the Bakhtin school's concept of speech genres. Edelman, too, explored how diverse forms of political expression convey meaning in themselves, regardless of their content. Distinguishing between four political 'language styles', which he termed 'hortatory', 'legal', 'administrative' and 'bargaining', Edelman effectively collapsed the conventional division between content and form, arguing that 'style ... convey[s] meaning', and that this phenomenon is dependent upon the 'settings' in which language is produced and received.⁵⁰ For example, usage of a hortatory language style conveys an acknowledgement that the public has the 'right' to an influence over decision-making. Political elites must make appeals to their public, and the characteristic discourse signifies this by virtue of its style. Legal language, to take another example, conveys to 'the public' an impersonal, objective 'definition of law', with its own regular procedures, while to the elite it signifies precisely the opposite: ambiguity and openness which can then be exploited by judges, lawyers, politicians and bureaucrats to serve their interests and facilitate peaceful conflict resolution. Edelman also argued that while situated political discourse usually involves a combination of various language styles, using a particular style in the 'wrong' context blunts its efficacy. Thus, the rhetorical flushes of hortatory language, designed as they are for a mass public, are unlikely to have much impact in a context where a 'bargaining' style would be more appropriate, and vice versa.

In Edelman's account, language, symbol and ritual serve to promote social and political conformity by facilitating the expression of commonality. They therefore 'fix' future behaviour. At the level of national politics, rituals which affirm national greatness serve to unify a society otherwise divided along class, ethnic or gender lines. But it is possible to expand this unifying function of language to cover the study of parties, pressure groups and movements, where hortatory language predominates. Such language incorporates audiences because it rests on the unspoken but intrinsic assumption that the audience must be appealed to and persuaded; it perceives itself as valued, as worthy of making a contribution, however indirect, to public debate. Even if the demands on which the appeal is based have little chance

of being met, individuals are, in an important sense, 'consulted'. They therefore accord their leaders greater legitimacy, because they perceive them as behaving responsibly and not arbitrarily. As Edelman argues, 'The network of social alliances cemented by these meanings constitutes a framework upon which evanescent political alliances and interests are built and a rhetoric in which they are expressed and related to more enduring interests and myths'.⁵¹ In groups with little chance of success, especially those seeking radical change, hortatory language assumes an important role in keeping the group together, in unifying an audience. Thus, to transpose White's insightful formulation, the *content* of the hortatory language *form* has the effect of creating and reproducing political identity.⁵²

Conclusion

The Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism, speech genres and heteroglossia, combined with Edelman's view of language styles, serve to capture the reciprocity which is at the heart of how political movements construct shared frameworks of understanding. While this certainly does not exhaust all of the potential ambiguities and pitfalls of the relationship between texts and contexts, it does go some way towards an argument in favour of retaining such a distinction. When combined with the key elements of the public political discourse approach – focusing on texts in the public domain; prioritizing political communications media in a given period; establishing connections between 'high' and 'low', 'elite' and 'mass', 'official' and 'unofficial', 'sophisticated' and 'simple'; placing ideas in a context of political conflict; recognizing intertextuality; and mapping relationships using the metaphor of multiple and overlapping public spheres – they constitute an explicit and defensible set of assumptions and prescriptions for the study of political ideas. If political science is as much concerned with asking questions as it is with answering them, I will hopefully have succeeded in demonstrating how discussion of the manner in which we ask can be a helpful preliminary to how we answer.

About the author

Andrew Chadwick, School of Politics, University of the West of England, Bristol, Frenchay, Bristol BS16 1QY, UK; e-mail: Andrew.Chadwick@uwe.ac.uk

Notes

I would like to thank participants in The University of the West of England's School of Politics Special Research Seminar, held in Bristol, December 1998, and participants in the workshop on Political Ideas and Political Action held at the LSE, January 1999. I am grateful to the Centre for Social and Economic Research of The University of the West of England for granting the Fellowship which made the research upon which this essay is based possible. Any errors or shortcomings, are, of course, my own.

- 1 The list of references in this note may have proved extremely long. By way of avoiding this, I refer readers to one article, which extracts 27 'definitional elements' from 85 sources on the concept of 'ideology'. M. B. Hamilton, 'The elements of the concept of ideology', *Political Studies*, 35 (1987), 18–38.
- 2 See, for example, D. Nunan, *Introducing Discourse Analysis*. London: Penguin, 1993.
- 3 N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity, 1992.
- 4 See, for example, M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock, 1972.
- 5 N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman, 1995, pp. 4–5.

- 6 Not only is this due to postmodernism's inherent objections to such methods, it is also a quirk of political science itself. Postmodernism has largely been confined to political theory because the rest of the field has been dominated by the mainstream institutionalist or behaviouralist approaches. If we examine the major developments in postmodernism's impact on the social sciences and humanities, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the major events have been the publication of new theoretical texts by celebrated authors such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and Baudrillard, rather than insights derived from empirical types of research practice. One could argue that all intellectual paradigms exhibit such characteristics, but this would be to miss the extreme to which postmodernism has swung. We do not usually look in the book review columns for the latest 'application' of a postmodernist approach to (for instance) political parties, pressure groups, public administration, public policy, constitutions. We look instead for the latest theoretical exposition of what, as an intellectual paradigm, postmodernism *is*. It has carved out a niche where theoretical research practice is the norm, and where engagements with the work of others in that field has proved more intellectually rewarding. Like all writers, postmodernist theorists have craved an audience, a community of the interested.
- 7 G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832–1982*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, especially the Introduction and ch. 3, 'Rethinking Chartism'. There were, of course, several 'linguistic turns' during the twentieth century, from Ludwig Wittgenstein through J. L. Austin to the emergence of J. G. A. Pocock's and Quentin Skinner's approaches to political thought in the early 1970s. Though they are inevitably related to the developments in the field of social history, in that field the linguistic turn is usually taken to indicate the influence of postmodernist approaches to language, the roots of which are usually traced back to the early twentieth century structuralist linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure.
- 8 D. Mayfield and S. Thorne, 'Social history and its discontents: Gareth Stedman Jones and the politics of language', *Social History*, 17 (1992), 165–188. See the defence by J. Lawrence and M. Taylor, 'The poverty of protest: Gareth Stedman Jones and the politics of language – a reply', *Social History*, 18 (1993), 1–15, and the counter-attack by Mayfield and Thorne, *Social History*, 18 (1993) 219–233. See also A. Marwick, 'Two approaches to historical study: the metaphysical (including 'postmodernism') and the historical', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30 (1995), 5–35, especially pp. 28–30.
- 9 D. Thompson, 'The languages of class', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 52 (1987), 54–57.
- 10 B. D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: the Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990; L. Stone, 'History and postmodernism', *Past & Present*, 131 (1991), 217–218; R. Price, 'Languages of revisionism: historians and popular politics in nineteenth-century Britain', *Journal of Social History*, 30 (1996), p. 246. See also D. Nicholls, 'The new liberalism – after Chartism?', *Social History*, 21 (1996), 330–342, p. 331. For a critique based on the US experience, see J. Appleby, L. Hunt and M. Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*. London: Norton, 1994.
- 11 J. Epstein, 'The populist turn', *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), 177–189.
- 12 P. Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 1, 12, 17–18.
- 13 J. Lawrence, 'Class and gender in the making of urban Toryism 1880–1914', *English Historical Review*, 108 (1993), 629–652, especially pp. 630–632.
- 14 Lawrence and Taylor, 'The poverty of protest', p. 12.
- 15 F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, translated by R. Harris. London: Duckworth, 1983. The original text was published in 1916.
- 16 Joyce, *Visions of the People*, pp. 17–18.
- 17 N. Kirk, 'The continuing relevance and engagements of class', *Labour History Review*, 60 (1995), 2–15.
- 18 S. S. Friedman, 'Making History: Feminism, Narrative and Desire', in D. Elam and R. Wiegman, eds, *Feminism Beside Itself*. London: Routledge, 1995, 11–53, p. 13.
- 19 R. Berkhofer, 'The challenge of poetics to (normal) historical practice', *Poetics Today*, 1988, extract reprinted in K. Jenkins, ed., *The Postmodern History Reader*. London: Routledge, 1997, p. 149.
- 20 H. Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation*. London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, pp. vii–viii, 9.
- 21 M. Bevir, 'Are there perennial problems in political theory?', *Political Studies*, 42 (1994), 662–675.
- 22 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VII, translated by T. A. Sinclair. London; Penguin, 1962, ch. 3.
- 23 J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. New York; Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 45. I am grateful to Nick Buttle for alerting me to this and the preceding reference.

- 24 For a classic example of the 'core ideas' approach, see B. C. Parekh, *The Concept of Socialism*. London; Croom Helm, 1975. For a more nuanced version, see M. Freedén, *Ideologies and Political Theory: a Conceptual Approach*. Oxford; Clarendon, 1996. The classic 'tension between two extremes' approach may be found in W. H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition: Volume II: the Ideological Heritage*. London: Methuen, 1983.
- 25 R. Barker, 'A Future for Liberalism or a Liberal Future?', in J. Meadowcroft, ed., *The Liberal Political Tradition: Contemporary Reappraisals*. London: Edward Elgar, 1996, pp. 177–197, p. 184.
- 26 For discussion of this approach see R. Barker, 'A Future for Liberalism or a Liberal Future?', p. 184.
- 27 A. W. Sparkes, *Talking Politics: a Wordbook*. London: Routledge, 1994. See also, J. Street, 'Political culture – from civic culture to mass culture', *British Journal of Political Science*, 24 (1993), 95–113, pp. 100–102.
- 28 For further discussion of this issue see J. Scott, 'Women in history II: the modern period', *Past & Present*, 101 (1983), p. 156. For an opposing view see J. Rendall, Introduction to J. Rendall, ed., *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800–1914*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, pp.1–27.
- 29 A detail from the original title page of 1651, depicting the sovereign's body composed of thousands of tiny human figures, can be seen on the title page of the *Penguin Classics* edition of 1985. T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*. London; Penguin, 1985.
- 30 G. Stedman Jones, 'The determinist fix: some obstacles to the further development of the linguistic approach to history in the 1990s', *History Workshop Journal*, 42 (1996), 19–35, pp. 28–29.
- 31 This approach has been fruitfully applied to the long-standing debate over the 'post-war consensus' in British politics. See J. Marlow, 'Metaphor, intertextuality and the post-war consensus', *Politics*, 17 (1997), 127–133, pp. 131–132 and J. Marlow, *Questioning the Post-War Consensus Thesis*. Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996. See also, M. Worton and J. Still, eds, *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. Manchester; Manchester University Press, 1990, and Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, ch. 8, 'Discourse and Text: Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis Within Discourse Analysis'.
- 32 The phrase was used by Ricoeur. For an illuminating discussion see Michael Freedén's contribution to this volume, pp.301–321.
- 33 The importance of a text's relations with other texts is, of course, one of the general preoccupations of Quentin Skinner, J. G. A. Pocock and the 'Cambridge School' of political philosophy. A major implication of Skinner's work is that the problematic nature of the relative importance to be ascribed to different ideological utterances forces the historian to discover as precisely as possible which texts questioned, rather than reinforced the mentality of a period. But the Cambridge methodology differs from that presented here, in that it is still ultimately concerned with the 'great works' of political philosophy. See Q. Skinner, 'On Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', reprinted in J. Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*. Cambridge: Polity, 1988, pp.29–67.
- 34 J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: Polity, 1989; G. Eley, 'Edward Thompson, Social History and Political Culture: the Making of a Working-Class Public, 1780–1850', in H. J. Kaye and K. McLelland, eds, *E. P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity, 1990, pp.12–49; G. Eley, 'Nations, Publics and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century', K. M. Baker, 'Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas' and D. Zaret, 'Religion, Science and Printing in the Public Spheres in Seventeenth Century England', all in C. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992, pp.289–339, 181–211, 212–235; J. Vernon, *Politics and the People: a Study in English Political Culture, 1815–1867*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; D. Zaret, 'Petitions and the 'invention' of public opinion in the English revolution', *American Journal of Sociology*, 101 (1996), 1497–1555. On the USA see M. P. Ryan, 'Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth Century America' and M. Schudson, 'Was there ever a Public Sphere? If so, when? Reflections on the American Case', both in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*; M. Schudson, 'Historical Approaches to Communications Studies', in K. B. Jensen and N. Jankowski, eds, *A Handbook for Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communications Research*. London: Routledge, 1991, pp.175–189. The point that the Habermasian approach involves an empirical argument is very often overlooked. See, for example, R. Blaug, 'Between fear and disappointment: critical, empirical and political uses of Habermas', *Political Studies*, 45 (1997), 100–117, which, despite its title, does not consider this dimension. For a brief commentary, see A. Chadwick, 'A communication on R. Blaug's 'Between fear and disappointment: critical, empirical and political uses of Habermas', *Political Studies*, (1997), 661–662.
- 35 Ryan, 'Gender and Public Access'. See also Eley, 'Nations, Publics and Political Cultures'.
- 36 S. Herbst, *Politics at the Margin: Historical Studies of Public Expression Outside the Mainstream*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- 37 Herbst, *Politics at the Margin*, p. 2.

- 38 Herbst, *Politics at the Margin*, pp. 22–23.
- 39 Herbst, *Politics at the Margin*, p. 30.
- 40 J. A. Hall, 'Ideas and the Social Sciences' in J. Goldstein and R. O. Keohane, eds, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*. London: Cornell University Press, 1993, 31–54, pp. 41, 49. Original emphasis.
- 41 Social historians have been surprisingly reticent in this area. For use of Bakhtinian theory, see, however, M. W. Steinberg, "'A Way of Struggle": Reformations and Affirmations of E. P. Thompson's Class Analysis in Light of Postmodern Theories of Language', *British Journal of Sociology*, 48 (1997), 471–492. See also, R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 38–42.
- 42 There is some debate over the authorship of the Bakhtin circle essays. The controversy, which dates back to 1973, centres upon whether Medvedev and Volsinov signed works which were originally written by Bakhtin. The murky politics of the Stalin period have rendered the issue irresolvable in the eyes of Morris, the editor of a recent anthology, who argues that the strongest evidence supports the view that all three authors provided significant contributions. This essay conforms to this line by referring to each article by its original signatory. See P. Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volosinov*. London: Edward Arnold, 1994, pp. 1–5.
- 43 V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929), translated by L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 86. Original emphasis.
- 44 From M. M. Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres' (1952–53) reprinted in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, translated by V. W. McGee, edited by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1986; passage reprinted in Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader*, pp. 81, 87.
- 45 M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' (1935), reprinted in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, translated by M. Holquist and C. Emerson, edited by M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp. 291–292.
- 46 M. Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. London: University of Illinois Press, 1964, pp. 130–131. It should be stated that Edelman does not appear to have been influenced by the Bakhtin school. There are no references to their work in the text.
- 47 Politics emerges as a force for the emotional involvement of the mass, a site on which 'hopes and fears or 'psychological tensions' and 'inner problems' are projected, which presents only 'threats' or 'reassurances', but which results in 'a remarkably viable and functional political system.' Thus the meanings of political symbols are to be found deep within the psyche of individuals and simultaneously in the society where they function. Edelman, *Symbolic Uses of Politics*, pp. 8, 9, 13, 15.
- 48 Edelman, *Symbolic Uses of Politics*, p. 115.
- 49 Edelman, *Symbolic Uses of Politics* p. 123–24.
- 50 Edelman, *Symbolic Uses of Politics*, p. 133.
- 51 This contrasts with administrative and bargaining styles of language, which often provoke resentment among the mass audience, a sense that they are being excluded from the decision-making process, as, indeed, they are. Edelman, *Symbolic Uses of Politics*, pp. 138, 151.
- 52 H. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.