

A Way with Words

The media has a *special* way with words. We often, to “their” benefit of course, underestimate the power of language and how one modern hieroglyph can completely pervert the interpretation of even the most elementary concepts. In fact we don’t even begin to understand how subtle these lexical sleights of hand are. In fact my own words include such a contrivance and you likely didn’t notice: “The Media”, a good one. These words do a lot of heavy lifting. Firstly they present the entirety of the news press, hollywood, bloggers, journalists as one homogenous blob - the media - and not a collection of individuals with their own biases, ideas and agendas. The goal of this formless description is to reinforce the narratives they (the wicked media who *definitely* have a unified and explicit agenda other than upholding whatever status quo is in vogue today -model minority comes to mind, to name one) whilst appearing impartial.

However, as well as covering every sin under the sun, it's also a term sufficiently shapeless to mean you (yes you, the enlightened truth seeker that you are) can insert whatever pre existing biases *you* want into their work and hopefully it'll validate your deeply misinformed opinions. When we use generalised terms like “The Media”, everyone from the propagandists at RT News, to the ultra conservatives at Fox, to the well meaning independent news groups are all implicated. And be your spite aimed at the unhinged bigots Breitbart or the weak willed liberals at CNN , using this 'umbrella' term means that I've just said what you've been thinking, regardless of what I've just said. HOW CONVENIENT it is that you can insert any political agenda you want into the gap that's left by such an ambiguous choice of language.

We often see the media as some source of infinite truth, a concrete entity. But in reality the media is just the middleman between us , the public, and a myriad of sources such as the police, the government, or so-called 'impartial' eye witness accounts who of course are riddled with their biases and political allegiances. In fact, “media” as a modern concept is derived from the latin word “*membrana*” which means middle. Admittedly, the news media is an efficient way to disseminate information that's integral to navigating the contemporary digital and social landscapes (I mean where else can a man get his dose of alarmism with his cup of coffee every morning?). However, despite its usefulness still one must diligently prod at this middle man to uncover not a single “truth” but to deconstruct the way the truth is crafted and why. Suffice to say after investigating this “truth” it becomes apparent that the phone cord that allowed the communication between you and the wider world , has been nibbled at by a host of ratkings joined at the tail by the lust for power and spreading a plague of

twisted truths and easy answers to complex questions.

And this is why nibbling is bad.... This polarization of what's actually quite a nuanced issue, especially within the realm of geopolitics, for example, is often manifested whenever we are at the cusp of warfare. "The media" (now defined as a simple conduit for information) feels the need to emphasise the warts of our next enemy of choice whilst also revering our supposed allies (which are often not really allies but just enemies of the 'enemy' - one might remember our short stint as allies to the USSR before the ensuing Cold War).

I'm sure we have all noticed that the ratings have something of a craving for certain narratives when it comes to the smorgasbord of geopolitical conflict, lambasting the acts of our enemies whilst remaining silent about what our allies are guilty of. For example Venezuelan Leader, Maduro, was pretty thoroughly denounced as a radical tyrant in both conservative and liberal news sources during the worst of the crisis in Venezuela earlier this year (of course his economic policies are ruinous without a doubt) but coming from a 'Media' that repeatedly fails to acknowledge the atrocities of the equally if not more egregiously tyrannical Saudi Royal Family (in their own nation and internationally) it's hard to take that lambasting seriously isn't it? Especially given that, when you dig a little deeper, you find that whilst Maduro was criticized for his part in causing food shortages, the Saudi Regime has gone out of its way to manufacture a famine in Yemen.

This linguistic sleight of hand diminishes the true severity of atrocities; whilst creating a media frenzy around one crime it often also diminishes another. In this particular case the disparity is because the UK relies on the Saudi's for oil and the Venezuelans as a rogue "socialist" state serve no purpose for the never ending accumulation of capital. Alas the inconsistencies in our Western media come in various shapes and sizes but more often than not the thirst for capital is a recurring motivation.

The main tactic is of course defamation, what separates a soviet famine from a famine that the Saudis made on purpose. But an even more petty tactic of distraction is also employed for example after there was push back against Lockheed Martin for their bombs being used on a school bus they made an ad that showed young children in America take a magical school bus adventure. Now if you google "lockheed martin school bus" word of their complicity in pedicide is buried under a hoard of feel good articles.

We live in a world that has more going on than just what Meghan Markle Middleton is doing "wrong" or what colour Obama's suit is. It's a way of wilfully

papering over the biggest injustices that are NOT known in our society. Another example that has corrupted my life directly is the model minority myth. For those who aren't privy to this concept (white people), the model minority myth essentially implies that actually it's all on the individual to improve their lives (which it often is) but it erases all the systemic issues that prohibit individuals from manifesting their true potential. Asians are often seen as the "Model Minority" basically because they have assimilated into whiteness- I mean 'polite society'- and even though the Chinese have the Triad, the Japanese have the Yakuza and the Filippinos have many gangs in LA such as the Santanas, the idea has spread that all Asians are perfect little angels who are also gifted at maths unlike the humble negro who is treated with scorn at an international level regardless of their accomplishments or background. The unique similarity between the misrepresentation of both these Chinese 'mathletes' and the Black people as Super predators, is that be it negative or "positive" stereotyping, it erases the individual and forces billions of people into one mold, often based on our imperfect (to say the least) racial categories.

The media choose not just what is said but also how it's presented too, it's the difference between a black mum having her mugshot all over twitter for stealing a big mac and a white mass murderer getting their highschool picture day photos published after a sordid blood bath.

That said, once we acknowledge that the poor middleman (the media for lack of a better term) is questionable to say the least, if not compounding dangerous stereotypes and propping up unjust wars, the question is; what can we do about it? To be painfully blunt, I don't see our corporate media sources changing anytime soon especially as modern Robber Barons like Jeff Bezos buy media sources like The Washington Post to reaffirm their control on all of serfdom (i.e. us). The ruling class's stranglehold on media outlets has been cemented and state owned media isn't always as unbiased as they want to appear (look no further than how the BBC has treated the 2019 election candidates), both have some vested interest in maintaining the status quo. If the source and the middlemen are both worthy of such heavy scrutiny there is only one link in the chain that really can be trusted. You. We, the public, frankly need to be more diligent with our consumption. Think of it like weight watchers but for truth and justice and not our poor definitions of physical health (alas another rant for another day). We are far too used to lounging on sofas, letting new anchors dock their ideas in our heads (and besides, Netflix is far more interesting). It's time to be proactive. It's no easy feat of course but now that you know the magicians' tricks you'll soon be the guy in the crowd of the show ruining the fun by pointing out that he swapped the rings around or that his assistant's legs are fake and sawing someone in half is definitely a health and safety risk.

Some ways to combat this include; reading about the same news story from a myriad of sources (focus on what details are unchanged); research who owns these news outlets and who their sources are (why might this influence their perspective? Look for obvious biases such as prejudice) and last but not least reverse google image search! It sounds simple but in a world where image and video is the only trustworthy proof, it's smart to research where the image came from, for example, sometime ago a facebook friend shared an article bemoaning refugees in Italy for rioting over what lunch they were given but after one quick google the only proof was from a protest 5 years earlier. My dear reader I understand your plight... not being duped by a host of megalomaniacal grifters is really hard! And using the easiest method of accessing all of *known* human history since the Great Library of Alexandria is really daunting.

So now you know: these are the tricks, the cards are fake, the rabbits are hidden in a secret compartment, the doves are already dead, your son is crying and look you've gone and supported the worst war since Vietnam and have bought into at least 50 racist dog whistles! What a mess. But now you know better right? (I can only hope so.) The TV news revolutionized how we interact and now the internet allows anyone to bring light to some pretty damning crimes. But there will always be bad actors, phony magicians and over zealous birthday clowns of the world. Take advantage of this flurry of information but don't let it take advantage of you.