Persuading People

An Introduction to Rhetoric

Second Edition

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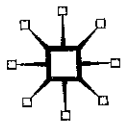
To our daughters
Hester, Jane and Laura,
without whom this might have been finished earlier,
and to the new generation



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Introduction: Rhetoric Defined

Rhetoric: a 'Loaded Gun'?

This book has been written in accordance with a very definite order of priorities. Its main purpose in studying persuasive techniques is to encourage you to develop them for yourself. Its secondary purpose is to analyse persuasive practice both written and spoken, because you need to analyse the persuasive language of others before you can adequately synthesise your own. This kind of analysis derives from a long tradition of rhetorical theory, and our third purpose is to enable you to look back and make use of the evolving concepts and practices of rhetoric from its earliest beginnings.

All this will involve the development of a variety of critical skills. In order to form judgements about the effectiveness of any kind of persuasion, we shall need to place it within its functional, structural and socio-historical context. In practice, this means looking at extracts ranging from Shakespeare to the newspaper cookery column, from John Keats's poetry to John F. Kennedy's speeches. Progressing through a range of examples from successive periods, we shall examine how persuasion is used for many different purposes – at one extreme to create the ultimate tragic emotion, at the other to sell us a car. In so doing, readers will have the opportunity to learn to recognise the flexibility of persuasive techniques, and to develop this skill for themselves.

The very word 'skill', however, may seem suspicious to some readers in its cool neutrality. In the context of craftsmanship or technology it has strongly positive connotations (a skilled craftsman, a beautifully made piece of furniture, or machinery): in a language context, however, the idea of 'skill' can suggest manipulation, superficiality, irresponsibility, even cynicism.

The real question should be, to what *purpose* is the 'skill' applied? That expensive handmade chair might be primarily a sign of status in today's machine-made culture, rather than something of practical use.

In this perspective, the 'skill' of making the chair is as problematic as the rhetorical 'skill' employed to sell it. This contrast illustrates the range within which any skill, whether exercised on wood or on words, must operate. We may ask now whether there is anything in the skill itself to govern its use one way or the other? Surely not. Yet it is a recognised fact that, historically, rhetoric has not always been linked to an earnest concern for objective truth, and this has fed an anti-rhetorical tradition which began with Plato and continues right up to the present day. Is it possible to defend the loaded gun of rhetoric against this view by adapting the well-worn words of the Gun Lobby, and claiming that 'It's as good or bad as the people who use it'?

The answer has to be 'no'. There may be a measure of truth in it, but it has to be an inadequate reflection of the true nature and value of rhetorical skills. The conventional mistake is to see the 'skill' in subjective terms, as though rhetoric were simply a manipulative tool with which *A* works on *B*. It is significant that one of the most impressive cases made for rhetoric during the past twenty years, justifies it in terms of *social* psychology. In the second edition of *Arguing and Thinking* (1996), Michael Billig demonstrates the value of rhetoric, not as monologue but as dialogue. He points out how the habit of rigid *generalisation* (categorisation), which is likely to produce prejudice when applied to social groups or to the regulation of social behaviour, may be countered by the exercise of rhetoric in its *particularising* social context. After all, a consciously developed tendency to make exceptions to general rules, to look for arguments on both sides of the question, has always been part of a rhetorician's training. This reflects what actually happens in our society today, at all levels of public and private discussion and debate. Moreover, Billig argues that the structural pattern of rhetoric, with every argument implicitly, if not explicitly, opposed by a counter-argument, offers an exact model of human thinking. The constant movement between *logoi* and *anti-logoi* represents our thought process as we move from example (particularisation) to generalisation (categorisation) and back again.

This *dialogic* model of the human cognitive process is highly relevant to a study of persuasive language for all sorts of reasons (particularly structural), and we shall be referring to Billig's ideas again. If (as he suggests) every argument, every generalisation, invites an exception or a counter-proposal from the individual/group invited to listen, then, whether or not this response is openly expressed, substantial benefits in terms of human freedom and social dynamism will accrue from this dialogue or interaction:

> The power of speech is not the power to command obedience by replacing argument with silence. It is the power to challenge silent obedience by opening arguments. The former result can be obtained by force as well as by logos, but the latter can only be achieved by logos, or rather by anti-logos.
>
> (Billig, 1996: 78)

Rhetoric Defined

But we are getting ahead of ourselves, not only in terms but in concepts. What is meant by 'logos' and 'anti-logos'? What is 'interaction'? More to the point, what is rhetoric? We must establish these basic definitions, particularly focusing our attention on the nature and character of rhetoric, before describing the methodology of the book. In so doing, we shall advance each of the three purposes outlined earlier (i.e. the rhetorical analysis of texts, the practice of persuasion and insight into the history of rhetorical theory – itself a complex and inherently controversial area of study). Although most, if not all, of our readers will be new to this subject, and primarily interested in an introduction to rhetoric, we also wish to encourage and enable further exploration. Accordingly, some aspects of our discussion may appeal more to the potential scholar of rhetoric than to the general reader.

Rhetoric could be very broadly defined as the 'arts of discourse', or, more precisely, the 'art of persuasive discourse' in that this 'most widely used and overworked term' refers both to spoken and written language. As Katie Wales notes (2001: 113), the word 'seems to be used for all those senses of language, which, in the words of Bakhtin, emphasize its concrete living totality (1981)'. She offers nine different senses, which – though important – it is impossible for us to explore. More simply, we shall use the term 'discourse' in our book to denote a series of connected utterances or continuous written forms of communication. The term 'discourse analysis' is similarly complicated; it describes the structural analysis of spoken language, but can also be applied to written texts in which case it is termed 'text linguistics'.

We therefore use the description of rhetoric as 'persuasive discourse' advisedly, aware that some readers may have encountered differing interpretations of the term, as a result of work in other areas of language study. Rhetoric is one of the oldest surviving systematic disciplines in the world: its original insights and techniques remain largely valid, and it has survived precisely because of its capacity to adapt to ideological and social change. To demonstrate this remarkable continuity, we shall

now quote one of the earliest definitions and descriptions of rhetoric, deriving from Aristotle (384–322 BC), and, later in the chapter, compare this with some modern theoretical accounts of language function.

> Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever. (This is the function of no other of the arts, each of which is able to instruct and persuade in its own special subject; thus, medicine deals with health and sickness) . . . But Rhetoric, so to [speak] appears to be able to discover the means of persuasion in reference to any given subject. That is why we say that as an art its rules are not applied to any particular definite class of things. (Aristotle 1926: 15)

Rhetoric is thus defined by its unique breadth of application, and (it is implied) by its adaptability to new subject areas as they evolve. There are, for instance, recent studies which explore the rhetoric of science, for example Simons (1989), Gross (1990) and notably Jeanne Fahnestock's *Rhetorical Figures in Science* (1999). As our book will show, the question of subject is intimately related to the situation or context in which persuasion takes place.

Aristotle classifies the 'means of persuasion' in three main categories, and from these categories we derive three permanent working principles of persuasion, which will be used to underpin the structure of our book. These are: *ethos* (persuasion through personality and stance); *pathos* (persuasion through the arousal of emotion); and *logos* (persuasion through reasoning).

But how does Billig's dialogic view of rhetoric mentioned earlier fit Aristotle's definition of rhetoric and its function? This can be demonstrated by drawing an analogy between the art of persuasion and the handling of a chess problem. Both the rhetorician and the chess player will prepare in advance by anticipating counter-strategies from their opponent. Their essential skills will be demonstrated, regardless of the inherent strength or weakness of the argument or the disposition of the chess pieces. And just as the initial layout of the chess problem implies a potential *dialogue* as well as a contest, so the rhetorician's search for 'means of persuasion' implies a potential *counter-persuasion,* before the debate has even begun. Either way we arrive at a dialogue.

Dialogue is not only the technical term used by Billig in his definition of rhetoric; it is also a familiar word used to denote conversation, discussion or debate. Linguists have a more precise and revealing term – particularly relevant for our purposes – which is *interaction.* This

term is important because rhetoric (as we have already seen) is a persuasive dialogue, and as such can be described as a *controlled* interaction. The rhetorician seeks to *exploit* specifically the ideological, personal and contextual elements involved in every interaction. Even so, the audience's response can never be entirely predictable, however shrewd the rhetorician's choice of 'means of persuasion' (see Aristotle, above). An audience may not realise they are being persuaded; even if they do, their response can be compliant, resistant, or a mixture of both. On any given topic, something which enables the rhetorician to interact effectively with one audience may not work with another.

It should now be clear that dialogue and interaction are both key terms for our understanding of the nature of persuasive discourse or rhetoric. Returning to Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, we shall now differentiate between the two kinds of rhetorical 'subjects' to be explored in our study. We shall use the term 'functional persuasion' to describe all kinds of persuasive discourse (spoken or written) concerned with everyday life, where real people are being persuaded to a real purpose. We shall apply the term 'literary persuasion' to the techniques by which prose writers, dramatists and poets seek to convince or persuade us of the imaginative truth and emotional significance of their discourse. Our next point concerns the adaptability of rhetorical skills and the conditions governing them, which will necessitate some consideration of the historical context of rhetoric. Thus the reader will acquire a keener sense of how, throughout its history, rhetoric has always been sensitive to and moulded by the social, political and cultural conditions of the moment. We will at the same time indicate several specific areas of enquiry for readers with more specialised interests.

Rhetoric in History

Rhetoric has its roots in the culture of Greece and Rome, as an acknowledged system of persuasive techniques. Our intention, however, is not to put too much stress on historical distance. It is more important for a potential persuader to recognise rhetorical skills as still relevant today. In the following brief survey, two important points will emerge. The good news is that rhetoric is still endlessly adaptable; the bad news is that within any society there seems to be a direct correlation between the erosion of political freedoms and the limitation and degeneration of rhetoric.

Full accounts of the history of rhetoric may be found in Kennedy (1980) and Vickers (1988) among others, with Murphy (1974) and Mack (1993; 2002) providing major individual studies of medieval and Renaissance rhetoric respectively. What we offer here is some brief illustration of rhetoric's changing character and potential.

Rhetoric grew with the democracies, political assemblies and law courts of Greece and Rome, though it received setbacks as a result of imperial autocracy and barbarian invasion. Throughout the Middle Ages, though narrowly channelled and fragmented by both Church and State, rhetoric remained central to medieval culture as it evolved; its spectacular revival as a complete system in the Renaissance was based on rediscovered texts. Since the seventeenth century, although it declined as a taught discipline, rhetoric has continued to flourish as a practical political instrument. Today rhetoric is enjoying a critical revival, not only continuing its political functions but also developing new variants in the media explosion of the twenty-first century.

In the Greek city states and later in Rome, rhetoric served the dual function of deliberation and decision-making. It provided the means of accusation and defence in the law courts, and of persuasion in senates and popular assemblies. Power and prestige were thereby conferred on the orator/rhetorician, and an increasing demand for rhetorical education resulted in the systematisation of rhetoric as an independent academic discipline. Three distinct types of persuasion were developed to serve three specific functions. These were: *political/deliberative debate* (centring on what was expedient or practicable as public policy); *forensic/legal advocacy* (concerned with justice); and *demonstrative oratory* (the oratory of praise or blame, typically employed at funerals or other formal occasions). Unfortunately, the social functions of this last type of rhetoric laid it open to charges of triviality when used in other contexts as a vehicle for display or public entertainment. It is notable, however, that Aristotle (virtual founder of natural and social science in the western world) strongly upheld rhetoric's importance within the polity of Athens.

The runaway success of rhetoric invited counter-attack. This had already appeared in Plato's *Gorgias* (Plato, 1960), where Socrates deplores the skill professed by the Sophists (i.e. rhetoric teachers), describing it as a mere 'knack' of disguising falsehood or ignorance as plausible truth (Plato, 1960: 46). Plato's view is recognisable today in the contempt for 'mere rhetoric' expressed freely by people who exploit it themselves! A more developed refutation of Plato's demonstrably unfair view than we have time for here is given by Crowley and Hawhee in their invaluable guide to rhetorical practice, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* (1999). Like C. S. Lewis (Renaissance scholar, Christian apologist and author of the 'Narnia' tales), Plato tended to be disdainful of rhetoric but used it brilliantly when it suited his purposes. In the *Phaedrus* dialogue (Plato, 1973) he demonstrates what is to him the acceptable form of rhetoric – namely when it is tailored to the 'type of soul' or individual being addressed in one-to-one dialogue. He did not think that rhetoric addressed to groups could achieve anything of value, being inevitably fallacious. He thus creates his own version of the idea of *kairos* (fitness or timeliness) – which is derived ironically enough from the Sophists whom he despised. *Kairos* means the exact matching of language to the addressee's individual situation and needs. We shall be exploring this concept further in Chapter 4.

As Roman society evolved from the Republic to the Empire, the uses of rhetoric changed and diversified. Cicero (106–43 BC) used persuasion in both public and private contexts, in political and legal speeches, in letters, and in dialogues on a range of subjects including rhetoric itself. Whilst recalling other orators' memorable speeches, Cicero (like Plato) also focused on *kairos*, identifying three roles or 'duties' for the effective orator. The enduring importance of these 'duties' places them second only to the Aristotelian proofs. Cicero's formulation had the effect of making people think about how the three roles interact, whether they help or hinder each other, and how they achieve this. Later, Cicero identifies these duties as: *teaching* (or proving): *delighting* (giving pleasure); and *moving* to action or to reaching a decision (Cicero, 1988: 356–7). Cicero's important addition of the 'duty' of *delighting* may seem odd to us. We tend to dissociate pleasure from the immediacy of persuasion: for us it is more likely to be linked at one level with 'reading for pleasure', or reading or rereading at a deeper level. But it is essential to note that according to Cicero *pleasure* has a significant role in the process of persuasion itself. Can we, therefore, glimpse a link between Aristotle and Cicero by trying to square Aristotle's 'proofs' with Cicero's 'duties'? If *logos* (typically) proves and teaches, and *pathos* moves or stirs feeling, does *ethos* (when aptly expressed) generate pleasure? We shall explore these questions further in the next chapter.

Once the authority of the Emperor took precedence over the authority of the Senate, political rhetoric became a matter for behind-the-scenes advice and intrigue, rather than vital public debate; even law-court rhetoric had less scope. Nevertheless rhetoric did continue to be studied and practised. In AD 94 Quintilian, the Spanish-born

Professor of Rhetoric, published his comprehensive work on rhetoric, *Institutio Oratoria* (see Quintilian, 1920–2). He had worked as a barrister in Rome, and acted as tutor to the nephews of Emperor Domitian. Quintilian showed how the discipline of rhetoric drew on other educational studies such as moral philosophy and literature, and in turn, contributed to them. (We shall be discussing later Quintilian's emphasis on the moral qualities of the persuader, his power to stir emotions, and the means by which this was achieved.)

Rhetoric contined to be taught at a high level of sophistication right up to the time of St Augustine (AD 354–430). Theorists and teachers of rhetoric refined techniques for arriving at the essential 'point at issue' in dispute (see Chapter 4) and for generating argument about the issue. They developed sharper techniques to alert listeners and readers to the qualities of style in speech and writing, such as clarity, vigour and simplicity. They also extended the range and usefulness of elementary exercises, well supported by examples for imitation by students. We will provide similar opportunities for exercising practical persuasion in our final chapter, by adapting some of this material. As Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and was adopted as the official religion, deliberative rhetoric, infused with new energy and urgency, became the medium of preaching, systematic teaching and disputation, inciting its new audience to *spiritual* rather than political choice and action. Augustine incorporated these techniques and concepts, together with Platonic philosophy and Greek and Latin literary models, into a fully intellectualised Christianity (see Augustine, 1995). For him, sacred rhetoric sought to stir the highest and purest forms of emotion, as it directed the will and intellect towards God.

Despite this Christianising of rhetoric, after the barbarian invasions and the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west, rhetoric entered its Dark Ages. A reduced number of classical rhetorical texts remained in circulation, but although literacy was maintained in the monasteries and their schools, and recovered quite quickly in the evolving feudal kingdoms and city states, rhetoric had largely lost its earlier political, legal and social roles. However, what was lost to rhetoric in one area, was gained in several others. Both reading and writing of texts (old or new, sacred or secular, central or peripheral to European culture) was in effect rhetoricised by the customary provision of scholarly prologues, proceeding along dialectical and rhetorical lines (see Minnis, 1988). These prologues offered ways of analysing the texts, of judging their nature and of positioning them in the universal scheme of knowledge. For example, in the Middle Ages, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was regarded

as an *ethical* text, a direct warning against the very passions Ovid depicts so enthusiastically. Thus, within this Christianised perspective, rhetoric was assigned the task of giving imaginative or emotional weight to authoritative truth, rather than discovering or radically reinterpreting it.

Further specialised forms of rhetoric began to evolve at this time, reflecting new social, cultural and intellectual priorities. The rhetoric of preaching encouraged dramatic and satirical representations, not only in the pulpit but also in literary genres such as drama and satire. One special branch of rhetoric (*ars dictaminis*) was devoted to the writing of letters (a skill vital to contemporary diplomacy); another, the *ars notaria* governed the composition of legal documents; both branches tended to draw on key surviving texts written by (or attributed to) Cicero, such as *De Inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, for their style and argumentative method. Modern scholars such as John Ward have also discovered a clear correlation between changes in rhetorical theory and practice, and national and international political conditions. When public speaking once again became part of the political process in cities like Florence, classical rhetoric texts which had been used as preliminary or supplementary guides to composition returned centre-stage as practical handbooks. Unfortunately the subsequent rise of dictatorships inevitably reversed this development (Ward, 2001: 195–218).

Was there, however, a gain for poetry even where liberty was lost? In royal or ducal courts, an increase in wealth and numbers led to a greater need for entertainment (or coded 'in-group' advice). Hence there was greater scope for rhetorical elaboration in poetry, speeches and descriptions. Specialised rhetorical guides to the writing of poetry appeared, serving the purposes of both the political and cultural establishment. Yet it was still possible for anti-establishment dissidents to make use of rhetoric, for example the poet William Langland in *Piers Plowman*. He not only expressed the discontent of the forgotten, the marginalised and the disempowered, but also provided a model for future satirists (see Langland, 1967; Paulin, 1986: 58–9). Clearly the Middle Ages enormously broadened the scope of rhetoric. Whether transmitted, accidentally preserved or invented, it was applied at every significant level of existence from religious and artistic to political and practical. Rhetoric during the Renaissance also enjoyed 'rebirth'. The complete works of Aristotle and Quintilian were disinterred and studied exhaustively; comprehensive new treatments of the subject were published in Latin and various vernaculars; and in Italy (as elsewhere) rhetoric was

again studied and practised as an 'art' with universal application. However, a tendency towards political autocracy throughout Europe partially threatened, partly encouraged its revival. In England the spread of printing had made rhetorical texts readily available, having a crucial effect on the rising art form of drama. Marlowe and Shakespeare (products of the Renaissance grammar school) both exploited their rhetorical training, sometimes in ways that were directly subversive of the political, social and religious order of the day (see, for example, Dollimore, 1984; Shepherd, 1986).

Rhetoric had a similarly important role in the religious Reformation of the sixteenth century, one which puts rhetoric itself to the test. The Dutch humanist scholar Erasmus, seeking to discover common bonds of spirituality and morality to counteract the turmoil of outward differences, used the rhetoric of contrasts in his unsuccessful attempt to establish communication at deeper levels than religious division (see Erasmus, 1999). The great Lutheran educator Philip Melanchthon drew on Augustine's rhetoricising of the centrality of emotion in religious salvation, and sought to express his own perception that the transforming emotion of faith worked through the rhythmical, repetitive process of preaching (see Cockcroft, 2003: 63–5).

The teaching of Peter Ramus, logician and educator (1515–72), also must have made it easier for people who lacked a thorough training in academic logic and rhetoric to join in the pamphleteering controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His death in the massacre of Paris made him a Protestant hero, and gave credence to his radical approach. Ramus had developed a simplified method of logical investigation and argument which he regarded as a *dialectical* rather than a rhetorical procedure, and which was supported by a curtailed rhetoric focusing almost entirely on stylistic features. Though some accused him of writing 'idiot's guides' to inevitably complex subjects (see, for example, Leishman, 1949: 110–16), Ramus made it possible for younger and less skilful writers or speakers as well as for practised rhetoricians to think through a topic, rather than blindly following a formulaic procedure (see Brinsley, 1612: 182–3). He demystified the processes of persuasive arguing and writing, making them accessible to a new generation of reformers and pamphleteers, whether self-taught or grammar school-trained.

It's significant that Ramus secured his own appointment as the Royal Professor of Philosophy and Eloquence in the University of Paris. This reflected his strong belief that disciplines *other* than rhetoric, such as logic, ethics and medicine, each had a part to play in achieving

Quintilian's ideal, 'the good man skilled in speaking' (see Henderson, 1999: 43–56). Even within this larger context, his system has its limitations; arguably it fits written persuasion better than the spoken variety, where you are more likely to have to think on your feet, perhaps an easier task for more traditionally educated persuaders. In fact, the narrowing down of rhetoric by Ramus had an effect opposite to what he intended. By insisting on the conceptual separateness of different branches of study, he indirectly encouraged the sixteenth-century critic to go further beyond the bounds of rhetoric (however broadly defined), in the development of critical theory and practice. This meant drawing on a much wider range of disciplines, ranging from rhetoric itself to philosophy, history, medicine etc. This process of combination will be immediately apparent to anybody who studies Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (written *c.*1582). Here we see the origins, not just of modern critical and historical reading, but also of the concept of 'literature' itself, as the object of such readings.

Ramus's stress on the contribution of other disciplines to 'eloquence' has particular practical significance for us. However comprehensive a persuader's skills, without real knowledge of the subject area within which an issue has arisen, nobody will be persuaded. This accords with Aristotle's concept of a common technique applicable 'to any subject whatsoever'. Other resources potentially available to persuaders are literature and criticism (both of which often overlap with rhetoric).

As the culture of England (and later, of the new political entity Britain) mutated from the early modern or Renaissance world-view to the more materialistic, science-based culture of eighteenth-century 'Augustanism', rhetoric both contributed to the change and was itself profoundly affected by it. In her study of *Rhetorical Figures in Science*, Jeanne Fahnestock shows how the patterns of thought and perception embodied in the verbal structures of rhetoric promoted scientific observation and understanding. This had already been seen in the early seventeenth century in the use made of *antithesis* by Francis Bacon, the pioneer of scientific methodology (Fahnestock, 1999: 59–65). With the beginnings of systematic psychology based on observation, new conclusions were reached about the relationship between sensory perception, emotion and reasoning, centring on the 'association of ideas'. Rhetoricians such as the Scot George Campbell based their systems on the new philosophy of mind evolved by John Locke and David Hume. According to Hume, 'the qualities, from which . . . association arises, and by which the mind is . . . conveyed from one idea to another, are three, . . . *resemblance*, *contiguity* in time or place, and *cause*

and *effect*' (Hume, 1911: I, 19; italics as in original). (In Chapter 3, our strategy for exploring the relationships between ideas using ten 'models' of argument will be seen as a purposive development of this involuntary process 'by which one idea naturally introduces another'.) Hume argued that 'ideas', simple or complex, are derived directly or indirectly from our sense impressions. His word for the way our minds work with these ideas is 'imagination'. Moreover, since this process tends to be accompanied by emotion, the evaluation of emotion became at this time more closely linked to the judgement of ideas, reason being a specific, voluntary and focused activity of the imagination. Accordingly, eighteenth-century rhetoric reflects and promotes a new way of integrating *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* by way of 'the sentimental'. Quite contrary to its belittling modern sense, 'sentimental' then signified a capacity for finely tuned, perceptive and sympathetic feeling, occupying 'the middle place between the pathetic and that which is addressed to the imagination, . . . adding to the warmth of the former the grace and attractions of the latter' (Campbell, 1963: 80). Imagination combined rational discernment and moral insight, thus tempering *pathos* into sentiment.

According to Adam Smith, the great Enlightenment economist and moralist, sentiment is particularly intensely felt when we contemplate the mental pain of another person: 'What he suffers is from the imagination only . . . and we sympathise with him more strongly upon this account, because our imaginations can more readily mould themselves upon his imagination, than our bodies can mould themselves upon his body' (Smith, 1976: 29). Such sympathy was most valued when the sufferer showed fine moral qualities, especially if s/he appeared to be restraining rather than indulging emotions! Pleasure (cf. Ciceronian *delectatio*) was also involved, because sympathy for moral heroism of any kind would inevitably be accompanied by admiration, and would then draw further on the imagination for appropriately 'vivacious' or figurative language. This insight is as relevant to literature as to rhetoric; indeed during the eighteenth century rhetoric began to be absorbed into the discourse of literary criticism, to which it had given birth two centuries previously. However, there was an incipient problem: the increasing stress on refined style and 'sentiment' meant that rhetoric's capacity for addressing serious political and philosophical issues might be seriously diminished.

As the nineteenth century unfolded, much of the best and most fruitful insights on persuasive language came not from rhetoricians but from poets and philosophers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In a

sharply perceptive essay on 'method', Coleridge (see, for example, Bailey, 1965: 137–46) shows how clear thought and effective communication depend on a careful balance of generalisation and particularity, keeping everything in a clear frame, sticking to the point and moving forward at the appropriate pace. Shakespeare's characterisation shows what happens when 'method' is lacking. Hamlet's brilliant but melancholy and wayward mind generalises too much, going off at tangents, while the comical, put-upon pub landlady Mistress Quickly rambles on from one irrelevant particularity to another. For Coleridge and his successors, the skill of method (so far as it is a skill, and not the result of innate intelligence), derives from the reading of literary, critical, philosophical and scientific texts, rather than from systematic rhetoric. Here we see an interesting change; Coleridgean method married to the reading of texts and criticism has become the standard way of developing students' writing skills, rather than the study of rhetoric. But as we shall see in the later chapters of the book, this situation is being reversed and rhetoric is once again being taught in centres of higher education.

Herbert Spencer's seminal essay on style (see, for example, Bailey, 1965: 147–72) raises the question of *economy* in speech and writing. Assuming that any audience has finite reserves of energy, a persuader must not demand unreasonable amounts of effort from his listeners or readers, as they follow argument or respond to feeling. For example, he gives guidelines for the appropriate and differentiated use of Anglo-Saxon monosyllables and Latin polysyllables ('grand' should be used to convey an idea of magnitude and 'magnificent' used to convey its emotional impact). Though Spencer leaves some questions unanswered (for example, is it possible for language to build up the energies of its audience rather than simply depleting them), his concern for the effectiveness of lexical choice paves the way for the work of the twentieth-century Czech linguist Jan Firbas and his theory of Communicative Dynamism. He takes the argument beyond word-choice to the choice of word-order (see Firbas, 1992). This has important implications for anybody seeking to combine forcefulness and economy in stylistic choices (thus enhancing rhetorical skill).

In an age of scientific and democratic progress the concept and process of *cause* and *effect*, long recognised as a vital element of the *logos* proof, became crucial. John Stuart Mill (see Bailey, 1965: 173–92) offered a scientifically based critique for determining when phenomena were causally linked and when they were simply contiguous, establishing a standard of rigour still applicable to persuasive language whenever

important issues depend on the validity of this link. We shall refer to this when considering the validity of arguments.

The twentieth-century revival of rhetoric as a discipline in its own right was pioneered by such writers as I. A. Richards, Kenneth Burke, C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca. Richards entitled his published lecture series (1936) *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. It is not by chance that this recalls George Campbell's book of the same title, as Richards and Campbell share a scientific approach to their subject. Richards places metaphor at the centre of rhetoric because it employs images which are meaningful to both persuader and audience, as shown in his fifth and sixth lectures (see Richards, 1965: 89–138). This promotes the ultimate aim of rhetoric which (in his view) is the prevention or reduction of misunderstanding. He introduced the terms 'tenor' and 'vehicle' to his analysis of metaphor, meaning the 'the initial idea to be conveyed' and 'the image chosen to convey it'. These usages are very different from the Hallidayan concept of 'field, tenor and mode'.)

Burke in his *A Rhetoric of Motives*, first published in 1950, went beyond the traditional understanding of rhetoric by introducing (among other factors) the unconscious as an important factor in persuasive effects (see Burke, 1969: 3–46). He linked the strategies of persuasion to the *motives* underlying them, showing how the forms of expression chosen by a speaker or writer modify the deeper impulses driving communication. Rhetoric can provide a way of giving voice to what would otherwise be unspeakable or inadmissible. He suggests that effective rhetoric entails both an 'identification' with the audience's values, preoccupations, characteristic emotions and modes of expression, and an equally powerful appeal to the audience to empathise with the entire persuasive process. Indeed, a compelling 'motive' for the audience's engagement is rhetorical expression itself. Although unconscious motivation might be more characteristic of literary rather than of functional rhetoric, Burke points to comparable ways in which persuaders can unmask their opponents' motives, and examine their own.

Finally, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's fully systematised *The New Rhetoric*, first published 1958, challenges J. S. Mill's scientific approach to *proof* (see above). Returning to the idea of *kairos*, they exhaustively investigate what makes language actively persuasive, and ask how an audience is taken beyond mere rational conviction to the point of active 'adherence' to committed action or belief. A good contemporary example of this would be the relative failure of the anti-smoking lobby to convince the most committed smokers to give up their habit (they accept the cast-iron proof that smoking damages their health, but they

don't stop smoking). *The New Rhetoric* looks at the various means – argumentative, relational and stylistic – through which such obstacles are surmounted. The authors bring the art of rhetoric full circle, showing how the working principles initiated by the Sophists and developed by Aristotle should be applied under modern conditions.

The ongoing revival of rhetoric has involved both of the approaches combined in this book: analysis and composition. Some books (e.g. Leith and Myerson, 1989; Andrews, 1992) have explored the persuasive function within a wide range of genres from lecturing and folk singing to weather forecasts, television news and fashion shows. Over the same period, major books on rhetorical practice have been published, including Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (3rd edition, 1990) as well as Crowley and Hawhee's *Ancient Rhetoric for Contemporary Students* (2nd edition, 1999). Importantly, these thorough-going classroom texts (showing with many illustrations how rhetoric is applied to contemporary issues) promote its restoration not only as a means of enhancing expression, but also as a crucial tool for active citizenship.

Methodology and Procedure

It is now time to indicate in detail what our methodology will be. Perhaps unsurprisingly in view of what has just been written, we shall return to Aristotle. From his analysis we can derive useful structural principles that will enable us to achieve the necessary balance between a practical procedure simple enough to work with, and a theoretical understanding complex enough to constitute a true account of rhetoric.

In his *Rhetoric* (I.ii.3–6) Aristotle distinguishes three kinds of 'proofs' or 'structural principles': persuasion by 'moral character' (*ethos*); persuasion by 'putting the hearer into a certain [emotional] frame of mind' (*pathos*); and persuasion 'by the speech itself, when we establish the true or apparently true' (*logos*). He explains that the 'proof through character' depends on confidence, which 'must be due to the speech itself, not to any preconceived idea of the speaker's character'. He accounts for the 'proof through emotion' by pointing out that 'the judgements we deliver are not the same when we are influenced by joy or sorrow, love or hate'. Aristotle then continues (I.ii.7):

> Now, since proofs are effected by these means, it is evident that, to be able to grasp them, a man must be capable of logical reasoning, of

> studying characters and the virtues, and thirdly the emotions – the nature and character of each, its origin, and the manner in which it is produced. (Aristotle, 1926: 17–19)

This seems a pretty tall order. By this test nobody can persuade effectively who has not done advanced courses in applied dialectic, moral philosophy and psychology! In a single short book we can hardly offer our reader the sort of understanding that Aristotle requires for the full development of persuasive ability. But we have to make a start somewhere; and by substituting the term 'structural principle' for Aristotle's general concept of 'proof', we have already achieved something. In place of an abstract blanket term we have implied a process, combining method, balance and flexibility. We intend to use the Aristotelian terms *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* throughout the book as a convenient reminder of the three 'proofs'. Most importantly, our discussion in the first four chapters will be based upon these 'structural principles'.

(a) Personality and stance (or ethos*)*

We divide the concept of *ethos* into two interdependent concepts, personality and stance. 'Personality' is recognisable in any spoken exchange which gives us confidence in the person we're talking to. Whatever the context, and whoever the persuader might be, he or she will have impressed us by a range of qualities. These will be comparable to qualities that Aristotle identified as communicating *ethos* within the cultural context of the Greek city state. Eugene Garver summarises these qualities in *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* (1994). Trust is built up progressively by impressions of someone's moral strength (*arete*), benevolence (*eunoia*) and what we might translate as 'constructive competence' or the ability to offer shrewd, practical but principled advice (*phronesis*) (see Garver 1994: 132–8). *What* was said to us will have been less important in giving us a sense of their personality (a vital aspect of ethos) than *how* it was said. To be able to identify with an audience, impress them with our individuality (or disturb and reorient their attitudes by an apparent withdrawal of sympathy) is central to the communication of personality. In persuasive spoken discourse especially, this interactional skill is essential to the success of the exchange. How is this success achieved? It results from whatever combinations of vocabulary, intonation and structural organisation are called for by the circumstances of the exchange.

Yet *ethos* involves more than contact between speaker and audience, persuader and persuadee. There must also be a wider framework of attitudes, a sense of the persuader's position or viewpoint about what's being discussed (the *issue* giving rise to the interaction). We call this aspect *stance*. Consider the difference between a personal complaint made by an individual, and one made on behalf of a number of individuals constituting a community linked by occupation, social class, culture or nationality. The broadening of stance is measurable: at one extreme is the self-obsessed, boring talker, and at the other, the great public orator.

Interestingly, Aristotle's recommendation to a rhetorician ('study the characters and the virtues') would seem appropriate advice for the persuader keen to make effective use of *personality* and *stance* in persuasion. S/he can achieve this through responding to the psychology and values of the audience, and choosing language that reflects both.

(b) Emotional engagement (or pathos*)*

It probably does not require Aristotle to inform the potential persuader that audiences can be persuaded through their emotions. In adding the term *engagement* to our version of this structural principle, we denote the need to orient emotional appeals precisely towards audience and topic, and to found them on sources of feeling accessible to speaker and audience, writer and reader. This link between emotive source, persuader and audience constitutes 'engagement'; and though individual experiences of emotion will vary, most of us can access a wider range of emotion through the power of imagination – for example, the use of powerful imagery creates empathy. We shall see in Chapter 2 how persuasion uses a variety of linguistic means to achieve empathy and create 'engagement'.

(c) Modelling and judging argument (or logos*)*

Looking up *logos* in the standard Greek-English dictionary (Liddell and Scott, 1973), one discovers an amazing range of meanings reflecting the Greek genius for conceptual thought. At different periods *logos* has had many senses directly relevant to rhetoric. Senses III.1, 2, 4, 5; IV; V.4; and VI are successively defined as 'plea'; 'arguments leading to a conclusion'; 'thesis'; 'reason or ground of argument'; 'inward debate'; 'speech' (i.e. oratorical discourse); and 'verbal expression'.

As a structuring principle in rhetoric, *logos* includes: the process of identifying the *issues* at the heart of debate; the range of diverse arguments in the discourse; the structure of thought these arguments compose; and the sequencing, coherence and logical value of these arguments. Moreover, in order to be comprehensible, discourse has to be logical; as we shall see in Chapter 2, *logos* structures emotion as well as reasoning. The 'models of argument' that we consider in Chapter 3 represent the various resources available to the persuader; and the processes of judgement which we discuss in Chapter 4 involve the assessment, selection, focusing and ordering of argument.

(d) Rhetoric and modern linguistic theory

We have used Aristotle's description of rhetoric as a means of presenting the methodology in this book. As another 'way in', we shall also explore the usefulness of modern linguistic theory in our study of persuasive discourse. At this point we shall refer as briefly as possible to these different linguistic approaches (just to list them looks daunting!). The aim is to link them with traditional rhetorical approaches, showing how modern persuasive discourse and ancient rhetorical theory and practice both intuit language as a system of signs functioning within particular social and cultural contexts. Rhetoric, as we will see, exploits the persuasive potential of such sign systems. Indeed, it is increasingly clear that modern persuasive discourse and old rhetoric are not only both part of the same dynamic progression but function in surprisingly similar ways, and are explicable using modern theories of communication.

Certain names spring to mind as key linguistic theorists (Roman Jakobson, Ferdinand de Saussure, Mikhail Bakhtin, Michael Halliday, and the social psychologist Michael Billig); key areas of linguistic theory include discourse theory; the co-operative principles; frame and schema theory; politeness strategies; narrative structure and story-grammar; gender theory; the role of social context; and language and power. All of these in different ways will help us to a better understanding of persuasion, the persuader and the persuadee.

(i) Jakobson and Saussure (Formalism and Structuralism)

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) have had enormous influence on modern literary and linguistic theory. A helpful basic introduction appears in *The English Studies Book* (1998) by Rob Pope, and a more detailed account can be found in Terence Hawkes's *Structuralism and Semiotics* (1977: 76–87). Saussure introduced the idea of the word as 'sign', made up of the *signifier* (sounds/written symbols) and the *signified* (meaning/concept). This exploded the idea that language is a direct representation of reality – it is an arbitrary grouping of sounds (phonemes) or written signs (graphemes) that have culturally agreed meaning. At the heart of all human communication lie multiple sign-systems (e.g. grammar, syntax, vocabulary) whose function is conveying meaning between readers/writers, listeners/speakers. For Saussure, language functions along opposing axes: the *vertical/paradigmatic* axis (where a word is *chosen* from a range of semantic options) and the *horizontal/syntagmatic* axis (which represents the more fixed relationship between words in the sequence of phrase, clause or sentence). The resourceful persuader will exploit the multiple opportunities for word choice in a carefully ordered sequence to achieve maximum effect.

Jakobson's ideas about the poetic function of language are important, but the concept of *binary oppositions* or polarities in language, the concept of *equivalence* and the modelling of the *speech act and its functions* are more relevant to our purposes. The concept of binary oppositions is another version of Saussure's model above; significantly, it also echoes the dialogic/oppositional structure of rhetoric we have already noted. The idea of equivalence (also Saussure-derived) helps us to understand how rhetorical tropes (figures of speech such as *metaphor* and *metonymy*) work in persuasive discourse. If we substitute words because of a perceived/intuited similarity, our trope is based on equivalence or association. Jakobson located this poetic process at Saussure's famous intersection of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, where the speaker/writer *selects* one word (from a range of semantic options) and *combines* it (with other words) into a chosen syntactic pattern. This selection/combination model explains why trope is important to successful persuasion; persuaders can use trope to select, combine and maximise the effects of their persuasive discourse. (For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 6.)

The third of Jakobson's ideas relevant to our study of rhetoric is his modelling of the speech act and its associated functions. This provides us with a valuable methodology for analysing dialogic structure and function. In Jakobson's view the formula or structure of every speech event or written communication follows the same pattern:

'addresser' > 'message/context/contact/code' > 'addressee'

Moreover, each communicative event is oriented towards a single language function: this function could be *emotive* (oriented towards the *addresser*: 'My best friend won't speak to me'); *referential* (oriented towards the *message* and *context*: 'The next train to York is late'); *conative* (oriented towards the *addressee*: 'Now you listen to me!'); *phatic* (oriented towards social *contact*: 'Hi! How are you?'): *metalinguistic* (oriented towards the *code* or language itself: 'What does this word mean exactly?'); or *poetic* (oriented towards the *message*: 'My love is like a red, red, rose . . .').

In our study of rhetoric, we shall be relating these functions to the Aristotelian proofs of *ethos, pathos* and *logos*. The early theories of Saussure and Jakobson, by modelling how communication works, have drawn our attention to dialogic structure, oppositions in language and the sources of trope.

(ii) Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975)

Mikhail Bakhtin's writings, increasingly important in the latter half of the twentieth century, are of interest to literary and linguistic theorists alike. Particularly useful for our purposes is M. Holquist's collection of Bakhtin's essays called *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin declares that all discourse (whether written or spoken) is *dialogic* or double-voiced, 'echoing other voices and anticipating rejoinders'. Indeed, Bakhtin's own term for what he calls 'multi-layered' discourse is *heteroglossia*, meaning 'many voices'. M. V. Jones (1989: 108) quotes a passage of vital importance for rhetorical *ethos* in its social and political aspects. In every dialogic interaction, Bakhtin observes that 'prestige languages [are trying] to extend their control and subordinate languages [are trying] to avoid, negotiate, or subvert that control'. This 'struggle of voices for dominance' is in many ways comparable to the persuader at work, as s/he prepares for the potential opposition or *counter-persuasion* generated by the persuadee (with or without the intervention of a rival persuader). For Bakhtin, dialogue is a dialectic between an authoritative discourse and an inwardly persuasive discourse, as demonstrated by David Murray in his essay on *Heart of Darkness* (Tallack, 1987: 115–34). (Looking forward to Chapter 2, pp. 69–71, and its discussion of the 'reversal of bias', Bahktin's theories about dialogue and multiple voices will alert us to the ways in which previously repressed 'voices' and emotions can suddenly become dominant.)

(iii) M. A. K. Halliday (1925–)

Michael Halliday's theory of language as function within a social context challenged the structuralist views of Saussure and (later) Chomsky. Unlike them, Halliday stressed the key importance of *meaning* as the determining factor in all aspects of language function (whether realised through grammar, phonology, lexis or any other system). Although structure remains present in language at a linear level (syntax), Halliday (following Saussure) would argue that every 'language user' has multiple options or paradigms available within the networks/systems of grammar, phonology and lexis. These language choices (whether in spoken or written form) are always determined by audience, context and purpose. Bad rhetoric, however, tends to forget both context and audience in its obsession with its own purposes. Good rhetoric on the other hand has always taken into account the importance of audience and social context. Halliday's reworking of these ideas, however, has provided crucial and generous theoretical support for the modern persuader in maintaining this essential balance.

Halliday's theory of the three language metafunctions (1973: 36–42) is crucial to our linking of new linguistic theory with old rhetoric. Present in any interaction, these metafunctions are: (i) the *ideational* function (expressing ideas about the real world, which we will link with *logos*); (ii) the *interpersonal* function (concerned with social relationships, which we link with *ethos* and *pathos*); and (iii) the *textual* function (the spoken or written enactment/realisation of language choices, which will also be linked with *ethos*). These distinctions will be seminal in our subsequent discussion of rhetorical method, structure and process.

(iv) Discourse theory

Although (as we saw above) Katie Wales gives as many as nine differing 'senses' of the term 'discourse' (Wales, 2001: 113–15), Rob Pope's helpful explanation may be more appropriate for our specific purposes (1998: 188–9). Three of these 'main meanings' are of particular relevance: (a) discourse as language above the level of the sentence/utterance with the emphasis on verbal cohesion and textual coherence; (b) discourse as dialogue in general or conversation in particular, primarily associated with conversational analysis, but also extended into work on pragmatics and speech acts; and (c) discourse as communicative practices and 'ways of saying' that express the interests of a

particular socio-historical group or institution (i.e. potentially competing discourses of law, medicine, science, education etc.).

Speech act theory was developed by the philosophers J. R. Searle and J. L. Austin. Austin described utterances as *performative* (they perform the action in the words 'I promise to marry you') or *constative* (they make true or false statements about the world). Communication is 'a co-operative venture between a writer/speaker and one (or more) readers/listeners', and Austin defines this communication as 'either an illocutionary or a perlocutionary act' (see Steinmann in Nystrand, 1981/2: 296). *Illocutionary* speech acts are expressive, descriptive, directive; they make statements and convey information; *perlocutionary* speech acts are intended to achieve certain results in a listener. The persuader will be able to draw on these kinds of speech act as means of fulfilling Cicero's three rhetorical 'duties' (to teach, to delight, to move). Whether fully engaged persuasive discourse constitutes performative or constative utterances, or includes both, is worth bearing in mind as more examples of persuasion are discussed in each chapter.

Successful conversation happens when 'felicity conditions' are met and the *cooperative principle* is governing. One of the most accessible theories about successful speech derives from the 'conversational maxims' defined by H. P. Grice: 'give exactly the amount of information which is appropriate' (Maxim of Quantity); 'be truthful' (Maxim of Quality), 'be relevant' (Maxim of Relation), 'be clear' (Maxim of Manner) (see Grice, 1975; Crystal, 1997: 117). If you violate/flout these maxims, your communication will be less successful or may even fail. Persuaders need to be aware of this! Similarly, they need to be aware of another dimension of the cooperative principle, implied meaning or *implicature*, where seemingly irrelevant comments are actually relevant ('It's hot in here!' 'Shall I open the window then?'). The listener has correctly interpreted the implied meaning behind the first statement. Implicature is an extremely useful instrument in persuasion.

Austin's and Grice's ideas about successful conversation chime significantly with our previous explanations of *ethos* (personality and stance), and suggest that what holds good for conversation may also apply to more protracted persuasive discourse. Grice's 'maxims' will be prove useful not only in Chapter 1, but also in Chapters 5 and 6, where we shall be analysing the role of persuasive ordering and persuasive style, as well as exploring how violating conversational maxims may also have persuasive significance.

Politeness theory began as early as 1967 when Erving Goffman (1982) noted the importance of 'face' in conversation: positive face

reflects our basic need to be approved of; negative face our need not to be imposed on. (The relevance to persuasion should be clear.) We use positive politeness strategies when we notice/attend to our hearer's wants, exaggerate interest/approval or seek agreement. Using negative politeness strategies includes apologising, being indirect or hedging and being pessimistic (Brown and Levinson, 1978). In successful conversation/persuasion we need to avoid face-threatening acts by respecting social distance/status and avoiding a power imbalance (a neat formulation of this is 'distance + power + rate of imposition = degree of face-threat'). As we shall see in Chapter 1 these factors will be vital in determining stance and undermining the opponent. (See Chapter 1 and especially p. 33 on exclusion/inclusion.)

Structure in spoken and written language can be observed in theories about dialogue and genre variation. We have already noted the dialogic and dialectical nature of rhetorical structure. Conversation analysts Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and exchange structure theorists such as John Sinclair (with Malcolm Coulthard, 1975) and Malcolm Coulthard (1985, 1992) have provided valuable insights into the structure and function of interaction, which is of great value to potential persuaders. Other theorists who have studied the structure of written and spoken language include William Labov (1972) whose *narrative structure* theory has been highly influential. He argues that narrative is central to all forms of spoken and written language (from comic anecdote to the novel) and that it is a 'unit of discourse with clear boundaries, linear structure and recognisable stages in its development' (Susan Cockcroft, 1999). A narrative starts with the *abstract* (summary of the story). Next is the *orientation* (context in which it takes place); then the *evaluation* (point of interest in the story); the actual telling of the story (*narrative*), followed by the *result* (what actually happened), and the *coda* which signals the end. Some of these 'stages' are obligatory, some are optional. What is important is that the structure is endlessly replicable, and its clarity and familiarity offer much scope to the potential persuader. We shall be exploring the parallel with persuasive order in Chapter 5.

Frame theory (Goffman, 1974; Gumperz, 1982) and *schema theory* (Schank and Abelson, 1977; Schank, 1982, 1999; Tannen, 1993) provide a broader view of the structuring of discourse. Frame theory argues that we use past experience to structure present usage – that is, we pick up contextualising cues or *frames* that enable us to respond appropriately to a linguistic situation; in fact, we have *schemas* (sets of expectations) for a whole range of contexts, and we are disconcerted if they are disrupted (e.g. the doctor tells us about *his* health problems

when we go to consult him about our own). A skilful persuader can make use of an audience's *schemata* (plural) to engage or challenge their expectations, as we will see in the course of the book.

Sociolinguistic approaches to persuasive discourse will need to take into account the work of Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1974) on sociolinguistic variables. These include gender (Coates, 1998), age (Coupland et al., 1991) and social context (Coupland and Jaworski, 1997), as well as the role of power and ideology in language (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough argues that genre can be defined as social action (because it is determined by specific social and historical contexts), and hence discourse/discursive practice in textual form reflects social practice. Hence language is an enactment of ideology and power. The relevance of these theoretical perspectives (and others described above) to our study of persuasion will be more specifically spelt out later in the book.

(e) Rhetoric: the methodology

Our aim is to cover the first three stages in the process of rhetorical composition, as traditionally conceived. In a book of this length we are not able to treat the fourth and fifth stages, memory and delivery; the latter would, in any case, be served best by a workshop methodology, and the former has closer links today with psycholinguistic theory. The structure of our book will be as follows. We begin by examining the sources of persuasion, with four chapters devoted to the three Aristotelian 'structural principles' (Chapter 1 to *ethos*, Chapter 2 to *pathos*, and Chapters 3 and 4 to *logos*). We then go on to address persuasion in action (Chapter 5, 'The Persuasive Process', and Chapter 6, 'The Persuasive Repertoire'). Finally, Chapter 7 ('Practising Persuasion') uses the traditional rhetorical exercises, the *Progymnasmata*, as the basis for a range of rhetorical activities, some recent, others traditional. We conclude with some suggestions about collaborative projects in persuasion and about applications of rhetorical skill in everyday life. To whet the reader's interest in what is to come, we will end this introduction by demonstrating the role of rhetoric in a major twentieth-century text.

Examplar: The Rhetoric of *Catch-22*

The following extract is from an American novel about the Second World War, *Catch-22*, in which the author, Joseph Heller, urges us

persuasively to accept his view of the lunacy of military logic. The narrative voice is partly Heller's own, but mainly we hear the voice of his hero, Yossarian (Heller, 1962: 46):

> There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to, he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.
>
> 'That's some catch, that Catch-22,' he observed.
>
> 'It's the best there is,' Doc Daneeka agreed.

The passage is intended to persuade the readers (with whom the author is in dialogue) that Catch-22 means death. The *ethos* of Yossarian (the one sane man in a world gone mad) is conveyed through the tone of controlled hysteria. Taut, short statements are balanced by conditional clauses ('if he was sane . . .', 'if he flew them . . .', 'if he didn't want to . . .'). Yossarian's colloquial and concrete language ('crazy', 'grounded') is contrasted with more abstract phrases ('concern for one's own safety', 'the process of a rational mind', 'absolute simplicity'), which smooth over the realities of war and death.

Yossarian's use of *pathos* is part of his grimly humorous tone ('Yossarian was moved very deeply and let out a respectful whistle'), though there is relatively little direct appeal to our emotions, except through the cumulative force of logic. Indeed, what is conspicuous in this passage is Heller's masterly use of *logos*. Every statement is immediately undermined, every proposition promptly refuted, in order to hammer home the dreadful futility of Catch-22, ironically described by Doc Daneeka as 'the best there is'.

We can see how the interconnecting networks of grammar and syntax function to enact the mad logic of Catch-22. Modal verbs ('could', 'would') are used to hint at an underlying uncertainty; complex sentence structures mirror the impossibly complex situation of the airmen. Only Orr's apparently simple situation is described in straightforward syntax: 'Orr was crazy and could be grounded.'

There are other linguistic devices here of the kind which we will be introducing later, and which are well known to traditional rhetoric. We

encounter the repeated antithesis of 'crazy' and 'sane', and the paradox which results; there are many examples of repetition, particularly of phrases such as 'fly more missions'.

Through this necessarily brief analysis, we have sought to demonstrate a variety of approaches to rhetoric already detailed in this introduction, and which will be spelt out in greater detail in the following chapters. It should be clear to the reader that we have identified the Aristotelian structuring principles, that we have made use of the tools of modern linguistic analysis, and that we have alluded not only to the use of traditional rhetorical devices but also to the dialogic structuring of persuasion described by Billig.

In the section below, we start a practice which will be continued at the end of each chapter, namely, to provide some suggestions for readers who may want to pursue further inquiries about one or more major aspects of the chapter they have just finished. At the end of this Introduction, we are offering readers some ideas for in-depth investigation of one particular topic, the history of rhetoric. Despite the fact that this area of knowledge provides a crucial context for our discussion of rhetoric, the overall balance of the book necessarily limits any more detailed treatment. The key theoretical approaches surveyed above will, on the other hand, be progressively applied in the following chapters, and provided with comparable follow-up under the heading '*Further Exploration: Theory and Practice*'.

Further Exploration: the History of Rhetoric

There are several ways into this topic. One is to start with a survey of the whole history of rhetoric (see Kennedy, 1980). Another way is to focus on rhetoric in a particular period such as the Renaissance in England (see Howell, 1961; Mack, 2002); or readers can go directly to the main classical texts on the subject of persuasion. Interestingly, Michael Billig, an important advocate of rhetoric in the context of social psychology, gives a vivid account of how his own interest began, browsing amongst long-unread volumes in the university library (Billig, 1996: 7–8). His major book provides a model of how to adapt ancient thinking to modern purposes.

Some more specialised areas of interest are the morality of

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rhetoric; the nature of its collective and individual roles; its adaptability; and the question of its demarcation from other disciplines. In her 1984 study of Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* (among other texts), Lynette Hunter focuses on the way that 'positive rhetoric' achieves its interactive stance with the persuadee. Eugene Garver's book (1994) is at once a case study of how Aristotle's *Rhetoric* reflects Athenian culture and a source of widely applicable insights into this seminal text.

Readers will find Quintilian surprisingly engaging and accessible in Butler's translation (1920–2). His writing illuminates the relationship between rhetoric and Roman education, shows the influence of reading on persuasive style, and reflects the central importance of Cicero – who was Quintilian's hero and exemplar – within Roman rhetoric.

Debra Shuger (1988) traces the progress of Christian rhetoric from St Augustine, examining its distinctive forms of *pathos* and its characteristic structure and style. James Murphy (1974) demonstrates in a ground-breaking study the innovative achievement, variety and pedigree of medieval rhetoric. Peter Mack (1993) and Walter Ong (1958) examine Renaissance thinking about the relationship of rhetoric and logic (with all its repercussions).

1 Personality and Stance

In the Introduction we emphasised the social and interactional nature of language, and showed how this is relevant to rhetoric. We offered some broad definitions of rhetoric, and focused particularly on the Aristotelian 'proofs' which are central to our argument. We placed rhetoric in its historical context and also linked it with current linguistic theory. In all this, our purpose was to provide accessible ways of approaching rhetoric for everyone who has an interest in the subject (with pointers for further exploration).

In this chapter we shall start with an examination of *ethos*, the first of Aristotle's three proofs, focusing on its main components, *personality* and *stance*, and then considering how these components function in persuasive practice. The term *ethos* (a Greek loan word) has contemporary usage quite different from its traditional rhetorical context. Today we mean the set of values held either by an individual or by a community, reflected in their language, social attitudes and behaviour. When Aristotle used the word, *ethos* meant the proof brought about by the character or virtue of the speaker, and revealed in his speech. Thus modern usage represents a broadening out of the term, and this sense is implicit in what we mean by the stance. In our terms, stance signifies something inherently interactive, reflecting group values, but decidedly subject to the persuader's own control. Personality (deriving from *persona* meaning 'actor's mask') still reflects this meaning in the context of rhetoric. It links a persuader's unique individuality with the act of persuasion, accentuating those character traits best matched to the audience and topic. The more individually engaged a persuader seems to be, the more convincing the persuasion. *Stance* and *personality* constitute the main focus of this chapter on *ethos*, and both will be illustrated in a series of examples selected from literary and functional persuasion.

Before further exploration of the distinction between personality and stance, we need to refocus on interaction. However speakers or writers use paralinguistic features (i.e. body language, gesture, vocal variation) or graphological features (i.e. layout, graphics, illustration) to

enhance the appeal of their persuasion, its ultimate success depends on choosing language appropriate to the subject of the discourse, its context and (above all) to its audience. An audience is unlikely to respond favourably if the persuader has not 'tuned in' to them; moreover, he or she will need to maintain this sense of being 'tuned in' to their likely attitudes and responses. Speaker/writer and audience are interdependent in the persuasive process; their reciprocal involvement means that they shape and are shaped by each other.

What do we mean by 'audience'? The answer becomes clear if we look at how an audience actually functions. From infancy onwards, the central medium of communication is language, to which our response may be positive, negative or indifferent. As a child grows, this response will be less *subjective*, and more affected by social experience and attitudes. More complex responses will appear as we become mature users of language; for example, an adult audience may be opposed to the message but sympathetic to the speaker, or vice versa. As readers or listeners we can be persuaded against our better judgement into agreeing with something inherently opposed to our real views; we can also be persuaded to collude with the speaker or writer. Manipulating the audience is, after all, a skill learnt in childhood: then we were arguing for another ice cream; now we might be persuading a friend to come out for the evening instead of studying. In daily life we all play orator and audience by turns. Rhetoric is only a more consciously structured and focused form of manipulative or collaborative verbal interaction, one which requires a particularly astute assessment of the audience.

Personality

We shall now offer a 'camera eye' or cinematic view of the persuasive interaction, periodically stopping the process and presenting a series of 'freeze frames' of persuader and audience. Our first set of frames gives us various shots of the persuader in the act of launching his initial appeal to an audience. Imagine him in the pose of orator (a man of letters? a political demagogue? a head teacher?). What specific features of gesture or expression, what words frozen on the lips, does the imagination pick out? Is the speaker truthful, or merely clever and adept? Isocrates, writing a speech in the character of his former pupil Nicocles, King of Cyprus, claims that 'speaking well [is] the clearest sign of a good mind, which it requires', and that 'truthful, lawful, and just speech [is] the image . . . of a good and faithful soul' (Isocrates, 2000:

171). Following this lead, Quintilian claimed that 'no man can be a good orator unless he is a good man'. Meanwhile (and in sharp contrast) we have Plato's unflattering description of the persuader as a mere 'expert in rhetorical sublety' (*logodaedalos*), skilled in structuring speeches to give the appearance of proof, but without any concern for truthfulness (or indeed any real knowledge of the subject) (Plato, 1973: 83). Like Isocrates, Plato believed that the persuader should be a good man, but unlike him he regarded the persuader as one whose primary gift lay in one-to-one interaction (i.e. philosophical dialogue). Such interaction requires specific insights into the 'soul' of the individual persuadee, with a view to enlightenment and transformation. All this reflects the Idealist philosopher's suspicion of the relativistic and pragmatic persuader. Today's characteristically dismissive use of the word 'rhetoric' inclines more towards the Platonic than the Isocratean view of the persuader.

This may be because the concept of 'image' (a modern version of *ethos*) is at once highly powerful, and also suspect in our society. Personal image (speech, dress, life-style), 'corporate identity' (company logo, house-style, ethos) and political 'charisma' (voice, language, 'grooming', appearance) are all too familiar. The contemporary cult of celebrity commodifies and celebrates everyone in the public eye, from popular culture heroes such as footballers, musicians and film stars to bishops, politicians and even certain kinds of criminals. Public relations has become as admired and essential a profession as law, accountancy or finance, as consultants shape the carefully cultivated 'images' of their clients. In the private domain, because most of us know the falsity of our own 'public image', we also tend to view other people's 'images' with suspicion. In the public domain, national and international figures are less critical, both of their own highly polished images and of the images of fellow 'celebrities', and become even more image conscious as their publicity machines whir faster and faster. Celebrity is achieved by being in some way distinctive, and this distinctiveness is itself persuasive. Therefore it is hardly surprising that persuasive language frequently stresses personality. Particularly in functional persuasion (advertising, political argument, the language of law or religion) success is frequently bound up with the way the persuader's personality comes across. Examples of 'celebrity endorsement' abound; to give examples is almost invidious because celebrity itself is so evanescent. Nevertheless, popular figures who are used to sell products include fashion models, sportsmen and women, film stars, actors and comedians. The nature of the product is less significant than the

public's level of recognition of the 'face' selling it. Even out of the public domain, we all recognise the importance of projecting ourselves and our personality in exchanges ranging from the professional (such as teacher/pupil, doctor/patient, social worker/client) to the everyday (service encounters, chats with neighbours and with friends). To sum up: any interaction involving spoken or written persuasion will inevitably start with the communication of personality or image (though the persuader may subsequently modify it, as circumstance and audience dictate).

Stance

Aristotle's view of the orator's personality has been extended today as a result of the media explosion which, according to the 1960s cult book *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, has reduced the world to a 'global village' (McLuhan, 1962: 31). Our opening 'freeze-frame' of the orator still remains the initiating point of the persuasive process. But what of the other side of the persuasive interaction? We shall now look at a second, corresponding set of 'freeze-frames', this time of the audience, as they respond with amusement, cynicism, distrust, unqualified enthusiasm or thoughtfulness to the selected mode of persuasion. Their initial response and ultimate assessment will be substantially affected by what they recognise as the persuader's stance, as much as by 'personality' or 'image'. We might say to a friend making a case for some cause, '*Now* I know where you stand!' We have recognised their stance whether we agree with it or not.

However impressive the personality of a persuader, his or her attitude or stance will be crucial. Stance can be defined in a variety of ways. As we shall see in Chapter 4, a persuader defines his or her position by taking a stand on an *issue*, and by observing the key principle of *kairos* (or timeliness). This means being aware of the current state of opinion, and of any immediate pressures on the audience. Through a recognition of *kairos* the persuader can establish empathy with an audience and choose what to bring to its attention (see Crowley and Hawhee, 1999: 30–43). Observing *kairos* also requires openness and responsiveness on the part of the persuader, a willingness to work with the audience, and a readiness to change. An interesting study by Lynette Hunter, *Rhetorical Stance in Modern Literature*, explores the subject extensively. She argues that stance expresses not *what* someone believes but *how* he or she believes it, and that this will be conveyed variously in relation to

topic and audience (Hunter, 1984: 5). A persuader's stance may be open or closed, firm or indecisive, rigid or flexible. It may be highly structured and disciplined, developing a stage-by-stage process of interaction like a game of chess in which new moves match changes in the audience's response. It may be unpredictable, disorganised, uncontrolled, even falling apart. What is certain is that stance is dynamic and very much part of *persuasion as a process*. Michael Billig applauds Quintilian's Principle of Uncertainty – that there can be no fixed rules governing success in persuasion (Quintilian, 1920–2: 288–91; Billig, 1996: 92). Both stress the need for pragmatism, flexibility and adaptability in the use of persuasive stance, whether in monologue or dialogue. Lynette Hunter (1984: 14) takes the specific example of political persuasion, and sees stance as crucial in effecting a 'strategic connection' between individual and community. She distinguishes between 'positive rhetoric' (which reveals value, as the persuader's stance shifts or broadens in response to the audience); and 'negative rhetoric' (which hides value and persuades from a single viewpoint). She argues moreover that *naïveté* towards stance, on the part of an audience, results in something even worse: 'incomplete involvement, lack of rigour and passivity, leading to submission to imposed strategies'. Indeed, she asserts that 'the audience needs to assess stance, to determine the strategy and participate in the values revealed in the manner of its mediation' (Hunter: 1984: 64).

So how is stance achieved? Someone may ask the question: 'Where do you stand in relation to this topic, this issue and this audience?' If this query does not provoke an immediate response (reasoned or intuitive), we will undoubtedly need to deliberate more carefully on our stance, before seeking to persuade an audience on this particular topic. We may feel justified in adopting an authoritative stance in relation to our audience and refusing to yield a single point; or we might choose to veil our stance in irony before the intended disclosure of our real position. We may adopt the kind of stance which Lynette Hunter considers preferable, and interact openly with our audience, indicating our initial position on any topic and the progress of any changes in that position. We may even seek to project a consciously rhetorical personality as part of our stance, such as Radical Questioner, Reviser, Devil's Advocate, Mediator, Moderator, Gadfly (or any one of a dozen other roles). From this idea of 'projection' we can move easily to the next question concerning stance in the persuasive process.

How is stance actually communicated? Billig argues (1996: 165)

that 'humans, through their use of language, possess that most important capability which makes rhetoric possible: the ability to negate'. This is reflected in the choice of rhetorical language, positive or negative, and explicitly signals stance. When, say, a military force crosses a frontier uninvited, should that situation be described by commentators in positive or negative terms? Is it a 'liberation' or a 'rape'? Was the notorious Brinksmat bullion theft a 'robbery' (police) or a 'heist' (producer of television programme)? (The producer's choice recalls Michael Caine's world of entertaining villainy in *The Italian Job*, rather than the reality of criminal violence.)

Similarly, the communication of a persuader's attitudes will represent their stance on any issue, whether political, religious or ethical. According to Lynette Hunter, drawing on the example of Plato's *Phaedrus*, this is a costly process, a kind of death. True positive rhetoric open to the audience will always involve a 'giving away of self to realise other . . . a manifestation of loss' (Hunter, 1984: 64). But what is the gain? The communication of stance to an audience will surrender the persuader's pre-existent subjectivity in favour of a fresh intersubjectivity, as the audience responds to the persuader.

Another helpful way of exploring this aspect of communicating stance is provided via Stephen Levinson's refinement of Erving Goffman's concept of 'footing' in discourse (Levinson, 1988). As part of his or her stance, a persuader may emphasise that s/he represents certain important interests that include the audience in their benefits; similarly any negative aspects are downplayed, to avoid any possible feelings of exclusion being aroused in the audience. In an alternative tactic, when the persuader is in an empowered position, his or her stance can convey the threat of exclusion from benefits available to other people. For example, imagine a head-teacher warning, 'Some of you haven't been showing the level of commitment required for success in these examinations.' Stance here is linked to *pathos* and to saving face. A persuader's stance (whether personal or representing others) often pre-supposes and plays upon human emotional need, from anxiety about exams to hunger for possessions or people's desire to belong to whatever group is most fashionable. In many real-life situations, persuasion may involve concealing or down-playing the interests behind the persuader; for example, a supermarket chain boasts about its cost-cutting policy but fails to mention how this benefits itself and disadvantages its suppliers. Again, persuasion may highlight the interests of others (e.g. 'All our profits from tomorrow's trading will go to the Children in Need appeal').

(a) The persuader and the self

Contemporary psychological, political and linguistic theory suggests that the self is socially constructed and evolved. Michael Billig would go further than this; he argues that the self is actually constructed through dialogue and dialectic (implying it is located in language). Another view (that of the Freudian critics Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva) proposes that an awareness of subjectivity develops as soon as the child becomes conscious of 'otherness' (Jefferson and Robey, 1986: 151–63, 197–9). If social identity begins with entry into the symbolic world of language, this may indeed be the first use of rhetorical stance, because the language acquired by the growing child constantly defines and redefines its position as 'subject'. And, crucially, the child's experience of the world and of its sense of self is determined by gender. It is impossible to discount the effect of gendered experience (both individual and social) on persuader and audience within the persuasive process. Not only is the persuader's own gender likely to have influenced and be influencing everything from language choice to social attitudes, but the audience (whether mixed sex or single sex) will have equally significant gendered experience. Thus a persuader needs to be aware not only of personal experience and attitudes to gender, but also of the ways in which gender is represented in society/media (e.g. gender stereotyping) as well as the crucial area of gender politics. The stance of the persuader must reflect gendered intelligence and perception in order to ensure that appropriate choices are made to differing audiences. Thus a female persuader addressing a strongly feminist (probably all-female) audience would need to ensure that (regardless of her own gendered experience and attitudes) her persuasive stance was appropriate. Indeed, any persuader, male or female, has to be aware that gender is a crucial dimension of intersubjective communication, and that exploitation of gender stereotypes and sexist attitudes can be a double-edged sword in terms of effective persuasion.

Two other important aspects of identity and 'the self' relevant to persuasive stance include the sociolinguistic variables of age and ideology. Although the age/generation of persuader and audience may seem irrelevant, persuaders need to be aware of the potential dangers of stereotyped and/or agist representations. For example, a 'generation gap' between audience and persuader may create an equally difficult 'credibility gap' unless careful attention is paid to potential problems, and action taken. Intergeneration persuasion can be hugely successful but it doesn't happen unless the persuader attunes his or her stance in relation to the audience. Similarly, the ideology upon which a persuader's sense of self is based will be expressed through stance (unless concealment is preferred). An audience may also have a known (or likely) ideological position, and the persuader will need to take this into account.

Whatever approach is adopted, and whether you are engaged in the kind of profound interaction envisaged by Lynette Hunter, or in a relatively superficial contact for a practical purpose, the persuader's attitude to self will be a key aspect of stance. However, 'just being yourself' is not always the best way to start persuading an audience! Rather, you will need to apply a combination of intuition and calculation to determine how much of your 'real self' should be revealed to others in the interaction – and how far this 'self' should risk challenge or suggest the possibility of change in response to audience and context. Your subsequent strategy may be anything from flattery or convergence to outright confrontation. Having selected what aspect of self to present, the persuader must then decide how much ego and 'personality' to inject into his or her presentation. Whilst an over-impersonal stance will seem chilly and bloodless, an 'ego-trip' or flashy display of personality will be just as repellent. Persuasion must project vitality and intelligence, and as Walter Nash, citing Quintilian, puts it, 'at the heart of all writing is *calor cogitationis* – warmth of thought' (Nash, 1989: 215; Quintilian, 1920–2: IV, 94–5). It is this warmth, energy and exuberance of personality which, appropriately channelled, will assist the persuader, finding expression via changing mood and tone. These moods and tones are an inseparable element in stance and its development; they involve the expression of emotion, ranging from extremes of pity, rage or grief to ironic humour. We shall discuss some of these now, in association with *ethos*, rather than waiting till the next chapter on *pathos*.

(b) The persuader as humorist

Despite its occasional savagery, humour seems a good example of this particular category of *ethos*-linked emotion. It may suggest a detached, non-serious stance; but since humour is a familiar defuser of tension, it may more properly be seen as a signal of serious shared experience. Because it conveys 'warmth of thought' as an indicator of stance, humour must also (if it is to display real vitality) be an expression of the persuader's own personality. Nash comments that '[in] rhetorical

humour, as in all other aspects of rhetoric, there is a compact, a presuppositional understanding, between the beguiler and the beguiled' (1989: 167). This 'compact' may be an agreement to laugh *with* someone, or to laugh *at* someone; it may involve ironic self-deprecation; or, less obviously, it may be a deliberately misleading 'compact', a carefully prepared salutary shock. An audience might suddenly be brought from laughing at others to the realisation that those 'others' resemble themselves far too closely for comfort. The persuader might be laughing at them, with the intention of jerking them out of complacency into self-reappraisal. (The persuader's real stance can thus be rather different from his assumed one – a breach of Grice's Maxim of Manner [see the Introduction, above]). Conversely, there is the obvious danger that humour may too readily beguile an audience into accepting unexamined propositions. Indeed, a more suspect use of humour (from the perspective of *ethos*) is when a persuader adopts a stance towards an important person or issue which uses stereotyping to deflect more detailed examination.

We must conclude then, that in the context of stance, the persuasive resource of humour requires responsible management.

(c) Persuader and topic

Another problem is posed by what we might term 'risk-taking'. This concerns the topic of the persuasive discourse, and the persuader's stance towards it. Although inconsistency of argument is frequently encountered in rhetorical exchanges (and is only a problem if somebody notices!), inconsistency of stance will expose the persuader to damaging accusations of distortion or hypocrisy. An inability to face the demands of the topic squarely will shed a glaring light on the would-be persuader. To be successful, the persuader must address any potentially negative response from the audience, and deflect it. Another risky way for the persuader to cope with inconsistency of stance is to 'change sides', moving adroitly from criticism to justification, or vice versa. Such a shift of position might either be preplanned, or a spontaneous reaction to the audience (as described by Lynette Hunter). Nothing can be more persuasive to an audience than the sense that, with the speaker, they are deeply involved in the issue, responding honestly to its demands, and jointly reaching a decision. Risk-taking can have its rewards!

We can now consider the next stage in this study of *ethos* in the

persuasive process. We will focus on a third set of 'freeze-frames' of audience and persuader, caught in a moment of vital interaction. What will the persuader do now? Having adopted a stance, will he or she choose to maintain it throughout or make a sudden shift?

(d) Persuader and audience

It should now be clear that an effective orator needs to be on his or her toes all the time; as Cicero urged, he or she will require *ingenium* (creativity), as well as *animus* (spirit or talent) (see Cicero, *De Oratore,* I.xxv.113, cited in Nash, 1989: 211–12. The only assumption he or she can make is that the audience are at least willing to be persuaded, because they are there! In the Introduction we noted Austin's term 'perlocutionary', meaning the use of language to change people's attitudes. The changing of attitudes lies at the heart of all persuasion; Kenneth Burke would argue that this is the vital point, whether the persuadee is in a position to take action on this change, or not (1969: 50). According to Burke, this is achieved when the persuader identifies with his auditor: 'You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his' (1969: 55). This tallies exactly with our view of persuasive interaction, and provides a timely reminder that such 'identification' may oblige a persuader to adjust, relinquish or diversify his or her own 'ways'.

Plainly, a two-way process occurs between the sender and the receiver of a message. But what Burke describes above as a process of 'identification' between persuader and audience may be more complex. Will the pattern of mutual reflection and balance always be the same? If the person we are seeking to persuade is at the same time seeking to persuade us to a different viewpoint, or if we are addressing an audience which is adjudicating a debate between *two* viewpoints, can there be any direct correspondence? Gordon Wells in his essay 'Language and Interaction' offers a model (1981: 69), which we reproduce here by his kind permission, and which may be of particular interest and assistance, as it focuses on an early example of persuasive interaction. Although Wells is studying mother–child interaction, it is convenient to use this model as a simple 'base line' version of adult persuasive interaction.

The Sender/Message/Receiver figure below (Figure 1) is a more complex version of the Saussure/Jakobson model of communication described in the Introduction. It clearly demonstrates the crucial status

and position of *topic* in the relationship between persuader and persuadee. Topic provides purpose and creates coherence. The figure also shows how important orientation is in relation to the immediate context of the message as well as the audience's state of mind. The first necessity is that the message should be understood within its context, with expectations of sender and receiver governed by similar *schemata* (as we will show in Chapter 3). In addition, the persuader's orientation towards the audience (which we call stance) will reflect his or her assumptions about that audience. Are we talking down to them, pleading for their help and forbearance, or consulting them as equals?

You will notice that the situations of Sender and Receiver in the figure are similarly patterned, except for an important reversal of overall direction. Even so, a figure can only represent in a rather drawn-out way what happens in a split second of discourse; and it is approximate in other respects. As Wells is quick to point out (1981: 64), 'it seems unlikely that such a simple, uni-directional model accurately describes what typically occurs'. Compare the relatively straightforward attitude of the mother as Receiver (working hard to understand her child's imperfect communication), with the selective listening of a Receiver more interested in preparing to argue back. Yet more problematic is the situation in which an audience is listening to a debate, and is subject to the contradictory attempts by each persuader to 'talk their language – complicating the process of decoding the messages from both sides.

We must remind ourselves that the most basic features of language have an important part to play in persuasion: they lay the foundations of meaning and human contact. How can the persuader convey his personality and stance most effectively to the persuadee? We will turn to Halliday's theory of language function (see the Introduction) to establish some further criteria that the persuader must observe. First of all, persuasion must fulfil the *ideational* function by using language directly related to the audience's experience. At the same time the *interpersonal function* (linking the sender and the receiver) should be clearly signalled, perhaps through the frequent use of personal pronouns and modal verbs ('I *would* argue . . . *you will* agree . . . *we should*'). The pronouns map out the degrees of distance between persuader and persuadee and reflect changes in that distance; and the use of modal verbs provides emphasis, conveying the speaker's identification with the audience and respect for their judgement. Other grammatical features (such as verb tense, syntax, word order and variation in sentence type) will lend *textual* cohesion and coherence to the persuasion. The dialectic of persuasion, as modelled in Wells's diagram, is now established.

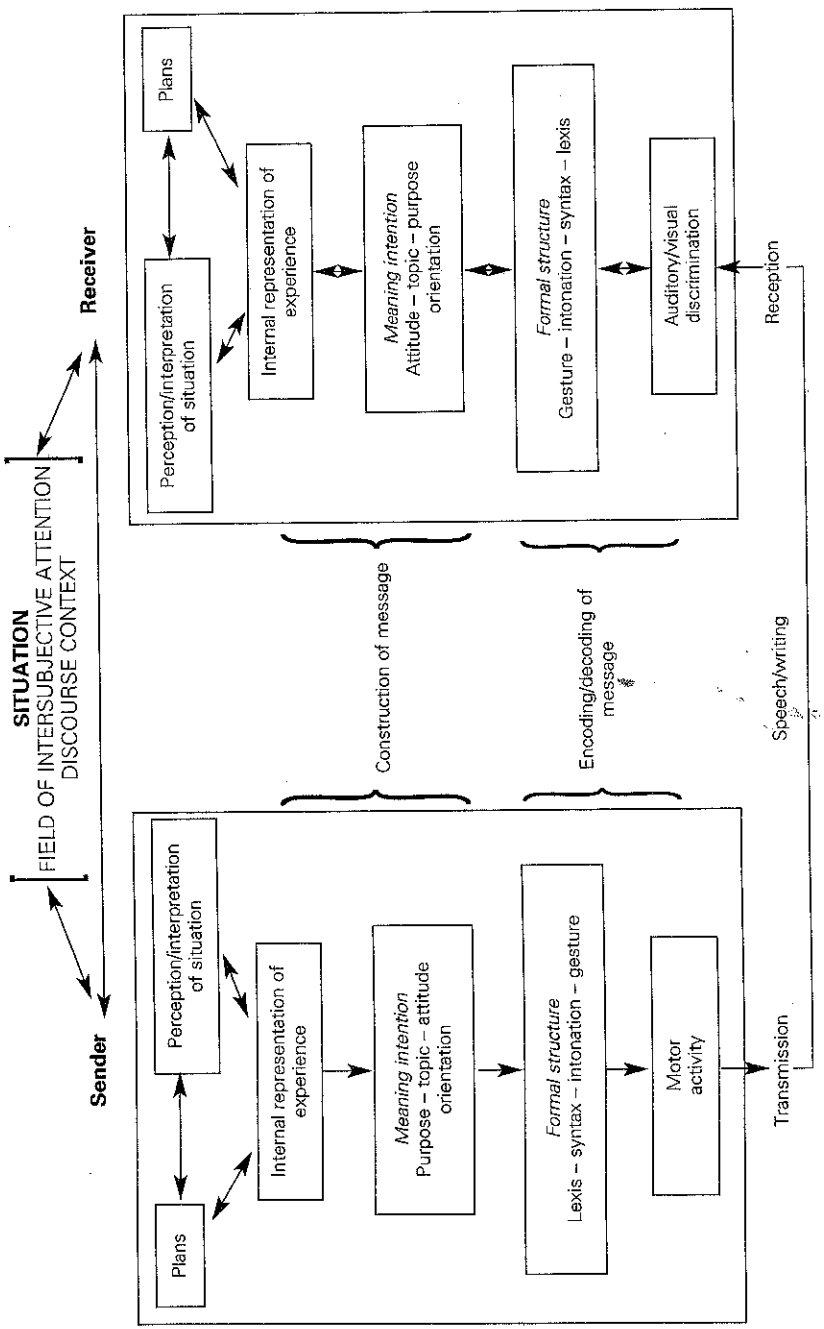

Figure 1 A model of the communication situation

Personality and Stance in Practice

(a) Functional persuasion

All four extracts below focus specifically on the *ethos* of the persuader, though the audiences differ, and we use them to show how the two-way process of persuasion works.

(i) Demosthenes

These extended extracts (necessary to demonstrate the complex presentation of *ethos*) are from a speech by the famous Greek orator Demosthenes to the Athenians, who are being threatened by Macedonian imperialism (1970: 188–9, 198). (Differences between the original Greek and the translator's English are unlikely to distort our impression of Demosthenes' persuasive techniques.) An Athenian himself, Demosthenes wants to arouse the people to action; his patriotism and loyalty to the state (ideology) shine through; later in the speech he will propose the financing of an expeditionary force against Philip of Macedon, in which he intends to be a volunteer.

> First, then, we must not be downhearted at the present situation, however regrettable it seems. . . . The fact is that it is plain dereliction of duty on our part which has brought us to this position. . . . Why mention this? To set this fact firmly before your minds, gentlemen, that if you are awake, you have nothing to fear, if you close your eyes, nothing to hope for. . . . [*He goes on to point out their enemy, Philip, has learned far more from the exemplary political wisdom and courage shown by Athens in the past, than they have themselves.*] If then, this country is prepared to adopt a similar outlook and to break with the past, if every man is ready to take the post which his duty and his abilities demand in service to the state, and set pretences aside, if financial contribution is forthcoming from the well-to-do, and personal service from the appropriate group, in a word, if we are prepared to be ourselves, to abandon the hope to evade our duty and get it done by our neighbours, we shall recover what is our own with God's will, we shall regain what inertia has lost us, and we shall inflict retribution upon Philip. You must not imagine that he is a super-human being whose success is unalterably fixed. He has enemies to hate, fear and envy him, even in places very friendly to him. But now all this is beneath the surface. It has nowhere to turn because of the slowness, the inactivity of Athens. . . . When are we to act? What is to be the signal? When compulsion drives, I suppose. Then what are we to say of the present? In my view the greatest compulsion that can be laid on free men is their shame at the circumstances in which they find themselves. . . .
>
> I have never elected to seek public favour by policies which I did not believe expedient. On this occasion too I have spoken simply and bluntly without reservation. . . . May the decision be one which will prove best for us all.

The presentation of the orator's *personality* is that of a patriotic, loyal and rational citizen, who wishes to take action to benefit his fellow Athenians. Demosthenes is careful to identify with them, even when attacking their inertia, and describes himself as speaking 'simply and bluntly', a man who is risking unpopularity for his plain speaking. How does Demosthenes' choice of language communicate this? An obvious way of seeing how a persuasive text presents the self is to examine the use of first, second and third person forms, whether in verbal inflexions or in pronouns. Just prior to the first extract 'I' was used frequently, as he modestly justifies speaking first. (He implies nevertheless that if they had listened to him earlier, this speech would not have been necessary!) The sub-text is 'listen to me and take my advice, and the outcome will be favourable for you'. More significant for the ultimate purpose of the speech (and reflective of his *stance*) is Demosthenes' use of the first person plural pronouns and adjectives. He immediately identifies himself ideologically with his audience: '*we* must not be downhearted . . . *our* part . . . if *we* are prepared to be *ourselves* . . . *our* neighbours . . . *we* shall regain what inertia has lost *us*.' This pattern continues till the final words of the whole speech: 'May the decision be one which will prove best for *us all*.' Demosthenes' persuasion depends on standing alongside his audience, recognising common problems and thereby urging common action. His stance expresses the patriotism they all share, as he tests the depths and intensity of their commitment. Interestingly, he makes careful use of the second person when he wishes to make a point strongly: 'if *you* are awake, *you* have nothing to fear: if *you* close *your* eyes. . . . *You* must not imagine that [Philip] is a super-human being . . .'. And only when confronting his audience with the ultimate demands of their citizenship and of their situation and showing the penalty of failure, does Demosthenes use the fully detached, objective third person pronoun: '*his* duty and *his* abilities . . . *their* shame at the circumstances in which *they* find *themselves*'. At this moment of critical choice he identifies himself with his hearers by using the pronoun 'we', and by inviting them to think about what this

implies. If they take the honourable rather than the shameful course of action, he assures them that they will win. Demosthenes' repeated 'big If' pressures each hearer not to exclude himself from an enterprise to which each individual is impelled both by reason and emotion. Paradoxically the very confidence voiced by Demosthenes is based on his citation of Philip of Macedon's political astuteness (which Philip had learned from Athens, as it was in the past). Now Athens must learn from him, says Demosthenes. The cool logic of his stance becomes far more impressive as a consequence, and adds further force to the emotion.

Not only pronominal usage but also lexical choice can be used to convey the orator's personality and stance, and although this is a translation from Greek, we assume a reasonable semantic equivalence. Demosthenes often chooses the typical hedges of casual conversation: 'I suppose . . .', 'In my view . . .' etc. By using modal verbs and subjunctives to suggest potential action, Demosthenes presents himself to his audience in a friendly and positive way. Negative vocabulary reflects the sorry state of affairs in Athens ('downhearted . . . regrettable . . . dereliction of duty . . . inactivity . . . shame') but is not damning since he so wholeheartedly identifies with his fellow Athenians. Stirring words then appear to counteract the negative tone and promise hope: 'best hope for the future . . . awake . . . nothing to fear . . . recover again . . . inflict retribution . . .'.

In this oration Demosthenes needs to present his personality – and arguments – in a highly positive light. He must also convey to the Athenians a willingness to assume a stance alongside them. Even so, he retains the option of ironic or authoritative detachment, as he sees fit. With remarkable skill, the great Athenian orator manipulates *ethos* to change the attitude and behaviour of his audience.

(ii) Toshiba advertisement

The *visual* impact of this advertisement, closely associated with the *printed* text (which we reproduce here by permission) is of major importance in accounting for its effectiveness. Current in the summer of 1989, it was targeted at a business and finance-oriented audience, its freshness and relevance remain undiminished. The picture is of five men and three women who appear to be satisfied customers, by implication endorsing the product. Three men are in business suits (one in late middle age, one in his late thirties, and the other in his early twenties); two are in casual dress (ages about twenty-five and thirty-five).

The women are all young; one wears an executive business suit, one jeans, one a neat sweater and skirt. All are holding variants of the Toshiba portable computer. The photograph parodies a family group, with the three seated figures relatively static: two standing figures with arms extended, displaying the computer; and the other three (respectively standing, perched, and lying down) all making the thumbs-up sign. The picture conveys activity, liveliness and good humour, balancing youthful enthusiasm and mature commitment. Everyone is smiling! This 'family' seems to represent 'you' in the text below, part of the 'First Family' of computers which 'we' (Toshiba) produce:

A typical Toshiba user needs power, speed, portability, and looks like this . . .

We created the world's first, full line-up of powerful, portable computers. Because we know from experience that every user has different uses and needs. So we've designed models ranging from notebook-sized laptops offering the maximum in portability to powerful office portables that are a match for any desktop. Our super-integrated technology makes it possible – giving you less weight, more power, more speed and more choice. We call them the First Family of Portables. And every one is as individual as you are. Call in at your local Toshiba dealer and see which portable computer we've designed for you.

Can a computer firm acquire personality and stance, and, if so, how and why? Toshiba is choosing to present itself as a firm which takes a personal interest in the individual needs of the computer user, and will provide an appropriate range for all needs. By calling the range 'First Family of Portables', Toshiba jokily recalls the American Presidential family; it also personifies the computers, linking each with an individual 'member' in the 'family group' photograph. Hence the company acquires an image of good humour, status and personalised service, which is enhanced by the text. The very first word is the personal pronoun 'We', occurring four times; 'you' also appears nearer to the end, when all the necessary information about the versatility of the range has been conveyed. 'You' is actually the last word of the advertisement, because it is 'you' (the persuadee) who will be initiating the purchase! Skilful pronominal management is used to create the desired effect, together with strongly positive lexis: *'world's first, full* line-up of *powerful, portable* computers . . . we know from *experience . . . maximum in portability . . . powerful* office portables . . . *super-integrated technology . . . less weight, more power, more speed, and more choice . . . as*

individual as you are ... we've *designed for* you'. The final phrase expresses the relationship between consumer and producer, and the orientation of the persuasion. All this (implies the advertisement) is what we at Toshiba, your super-efficient, state-of-the-art, friendly, good-humoured computer company has produced for *you*, our interestingly individualised, perceptive and selective audience. This overall strategy has been described by Fairclough (2001) as 'synthetic personalisation'.

Note that in contrast to the Demosthenes extract, there is relatively little blurring of the 'we'/'you' distinction between persuader and persuadee. Using a time-honoured technique of advertising, potential customers see themselves reflected and prefigured by their peers in the picture. The stance is familiar, attentive, complimentary to the intelligence and vitality of the customer, as well as claiming equal merit and reciprocal respect for the company itself. Everyone feels happy – and the computers are sold.

The sentence structure is uncomplicated: the verb tense mostly simple present, the verbs predominantly active and transitive and the imperative (with tactful restraint) appears only twice in the last sentence. All the Hallidayan functions (ideational, interpersonal and textual) are working very nicely together in this piece of persuasive rhetoric, and so are some other devices from the persuasive repertoire, such as figurative imagery (computers personified as a 'Family'), and the schematic devices of repetition and accumulation (all discussed in Chapter 6). However, the vast majority of persuasive devices functioning in this text are focused on personality and stance.

(iii) Parliamentary language ('unscripted')

We decided to retain this example (printed in *Hansard*, 31 October 1989) from the first edition of this book, because it features Margaret (now Lady)Thatcher, one of the most distinctive voices in British and international politics over the last twenty-five years, in an exchange with a fellow Conservative at Prime Minister's Question Time.

> **Mr Latham**: While continuing to implement the policies which have been approved by the electorate on three occasions, will my Right Honourable Friend confirm that successful governments must always be responding and listening to the real aspirations of the people?
>
> **The Prime Minister**: Yes. That is why under the ten-year-old policies of Conservative governments we have created more wealth than ever before, have spread it more widely than ever before, have a higher standard of living than ever before, have higher standards of social services than ever before, and have a higher reputation than ever before. Yes, we have indeed been listening. I believe that these are the real aspirations of the British people.

Although we might expect this oral answer to be unscripted, it plainly isn't. The question has been set up in advance, to allow Mrs Thatcher to list, in a highly structured way, the achievements of her government. Although the pronoun 'we' appears only twice, it nevertheless exists as the concealed subject of four other finite verbs ('have spread', 'have', 'have', 'have'). The Prime Minister identifies with her government by using 'we' rather than 'I', conveying a corporate identity (rather different from her well-remembered usage in 'we are a grandmother'). She is addressing the House of Commons where the majority was at that time heavily in favour of the Conservative Party: it seems likely that she is encouraging her supporters and defying the Labour Opposition by alleging substantial success in a number of areas. The *personality* of the Government is, it appears, caring and public spirited, wealth-creating and sharing, and worthy of international respect. Its *stance* of confident pride and implicit defiance (communicated to the House via the Prime Minister) also reflects its stance towards the nation and the world. Mrs Thatcher anticipates both support and hostility from her audience. As a consequence this is a particularly interesting example of a speaker identifying positively *and* negatively with her audience. (Although we have a female persuader here, her gender identity is of little significance in establishing her stance, partly because of her forceful personality, and partly because in the context of Parliament, the office of Prime Minister has, by definition, authority and power.)

This polarisation between potential support and hostility in the party-divided audience is reflected in the language. The Prime Minister associates strongly positive lexis with her personality (implied) and stance (and with her party): 'created ... wealth ... standard of living ... standards of social services ... reputation ... real aspirations'. Significantly, she uses comparative forms five times ('more' twice, 'higher' three times). These are intended to deflate the Opposition's potential arguments, and at the end of every comparative clause, the phrase 'than ever before' is repeated four times (*antistrophe* in traditional rhetoric). One imagines the rising note of the Prime Minister's voice, pitched against the hubbub of the Opposition benches.

Employing a technique that we shall discuss further in Chapter 2, she progressively builds up emotion through this repeated phrase. Her language seems designed simultaneously to goad and to overbear her opponents, and is powerfully interpersonal in function.

(iv) Political campaigning (USA 2004)

Readers may like to reflect on the differences between the passage above and a recent piece of American political rhetoric. John Kerry was speaking on his adoption as Democratic candidate (29 July 2004) for the forthcoming presidential election. The repetitive structure of this extract is based on *initial* rather than *terminal repetition.* Kerry implicitly criticises and shames the existing administration by reminding his dual audience (Democrat convention delegates and nationwide television viewers) of the current administration's conduct in office. His authoritative stance reconstructs and reaffirms lost values:

> . . . I will have a vice president who will not conduct secret meetings with polluters to rewrite our environmental laws. I will have a Secretary of Defense who will listen to . . . our military leaders. And I will appoint an Attorney General who actually upholds the Constitution of the United States.

Whatever the outcome of the 2004 election, these words will still reflect the time/audience specificity of Senator Kerry's engagement with his audience (i.e. its *kairos* – see, especially, p. 118 below) and his 'take' on the national mood in the summer of that year. In all these different examples of functional persuasion we have made substantial use of Halliday's theories of language function to demonstrate the communication of personality and stance, and in particular the interpersonal function. In the next set of examples of *literary persuasion,* we shall encounter some different ways in which the author accommodates the idea of personality, stance and audience/reader response within literary texts.

(b) Literary persuasion

The role of personality and stance in a literary text, where persuasion can be hidden or overt, is quite complex. Kenneth Burke (1969: 50) stressed that the persuader's stance communicates attitude ('attitude [is]