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### STRATEGIES OF ARGUMENTATION IN ARTISTIC DISCOURSE

Practical Rhetoric, alongside with the main types of social and political discourse, considers fiction for authors' rhetoric as a means of revealing the message. The rhetorical analysis of a literary text differs from classical text interpretation in that it is aimed at the explication of three kinds of persuasive appeals historically known as the Rhetorical Triangle: logos, ethos, and pathos. Logos is seen as the logical consistency of a message; ethos, as the author's / characters' credibility; and pathos, as an appeal to the emotional in the reader. A careful rhetorical analysis allows to elucidate the diversity of rhetorical devices in fiction and assess their impact on the reader.

Discussion of fiction within the course of Practical Rhetoric generally includes an exposition of the plots' historical and social context, analysis of problem issues in the "intensive reading" mode and a final presentation of the students' findings. Discussions have shown that the history play *Stuff Happens* by David Hare as a unique sample of fictionalized argumentative discourse can be effectively used for analysis of various problem issues of rhetoric and argumentation beyond the literary perspective, such as:

- The place of argument in contemporary life;
- Strategies for reading arguments (reading as a believer and as a doubter);
- Basic concepts of rhetoric (the rhetorical triangle, the enthymeme, the warrant, a genuine argument and a pseudo-argument, etc.);
- Means of creating effective pathos and ethos in argumentative discourse;
- Audience-based reasoning (appealing to supportive, neutral or resistant audiences);
- Logical fallacies in argumentation.

The study of fallacies in argumentation, "the murkiest of all logical endeavors" [1, p. 422], may present a special interest for a number of reasons. Fallacies are conventionally split into three categories derived from classical rhetoric: pathos, ethos, and logos. Depending on the type of appeal, "fallacies of pathos rest on a flawed relationship between what is argued and the audience for the argument; fallacies of ethos rest on a flawed relationship between the argument and the character of those involved in the argument; fallacies of logos rest on flaws in the relationship among statements of an argument." [Ibid, p. 421] Thus, analysis of the fallacy as the flipside of rhetoric's basic concepts and devices may contribute to their thorough revision, strong memorization, and effective application.

Furthermore, a proper study of the issue presupposes more than mastering avoidance of incorrect tools of argumentation which may weaken an argument's validity and logical consistency. Often, fallacies are deliberately used to convince or manipulate unsuspecting people, when the correctness of the logic is more or less obscurely discarded for the sake of winning the argument or brainwashing the audience. Specifically, fallacies are classified into formal (e.g., *non sequitur*) and informal (e.g., the "broken window" fallacy). Unlike the former breaking the laws of formal logic, the latter are unsystematic and contain no direct logical flaws that make their suppositions obviously invalid and therefore they may be challenging to recognize and disprove: "when we run across arguments that we 'know' are wrong, but we can't quite say why. They just don't 'sound right.' They look reasonable enough, but they remain unacceptable to us." [Ibid, p. 423] To a very substantial degree, "in evaluating arguments with informal fallacies, determining fallaciousness is a matter of judgment" [Ibid], which only amplifies their argumentation potential. So learning to identify and refute all kinds of fallacious appeals is an essential skill of a debater.

To illustrate the utmost variety of fallacious appeals in the play *Stuff Happens* and their crucial role in the argument, there have been chosen 45 instances of the text's most representative and impressive fallacies either generated by the characters or deduced by them in their opponents' arguments.

### FALLACIES OF PATHOS

**Appeal to Ignorance** (*argumentum ad ignorantiam*) – assuming that a claim is true because it has not been or cannot be proven false.

1. BUSH: *God told me to strike Al Qaeda and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did* [2, p. 118].

**Two Wrongs Make a Right** (form of *tu quoque*) – a fallacy in which a claim of wrongdoing is countered with a similar claim.

2. BUSH: *I want you all to understand that we are at war, and we will stay at war until this is done. Nothing else matters. **Everything is available for the pursuit of this war.** Any barriers in your way, they're gone. Any money you need, you have it. This is our only agenda* [Ibid, p. 17].

3. POLITICIAN: *We know the world. We know how the world is. Something is decided. Something has to be done. **If we all waited for the perfect circumstances, nothing would ever be achieved*** [Ibid, p. 31].

**Argument to Stirring Symbols** (*argumentum ad populum*) – appeal to the fundamental beliefs, biases, and prejudices of the audience in order to sway opinion through a feeling of solidarity.

4. RUMSFELD: [...] *Read **the Declaration of Independence**. It was written by **Thomas Jefferson** and he said – and I'll remind you of his words – that what makes governments legitimate is the consent of the people.* [Ibid, p. 99].

5. BUSH: *All of you, all in this generation of our military, have taken up the highest calling of history. And wherever you go, you carry a message of hope, a message that is ancient and ever new. In the words of **the prophet Isaiah, "To the captives, come out; and to those in darkness, be free"*** [Ibid, p. 114].

**Appeal to Traditional Wisdom** (*argumentum ad antiquitatem*) – an assumption supported solely because it has long been held to be true.

6. DE VILLEPIN: *France has **never** ceased to stand up right **in the face of history** and before mankind. In this temple of the United Nations, we are the guardians of an idea, the guardians of a conscience. This message comes to you today **from an old country**, France, from a continent like mine, Europe, that **has known wars, occupation and barbarity*** [Ibid, p. 107].

**Appeal to Popularity** (*argumentum ad populum*) – a proposition claimed to be true or good solely because many people believe it to be so.

7. POLITICIAN: *But **people of good will** also agree: The question of why we went in is no longer relevant. Is there a person – is there one serious person in this room – who proposes that having gone in to liberate our friends, we should now abandon them to the violence and uncertainty unleashed by that very liberation? [...] But now **everyone** knows: For Iraq's sake, for our sake, surely, we have to finish the job* [Ibid, p. 32].

8. RUMSFELD: *That's what it's about. In this new world, in this new post-9/11 world [...] And that is something which **all grown-up people** understand* [2, p. 100].

**Appeal to Pity** (*argumentum ad misericordiam*) – appealing to the audience's sympathetic feelings instead of giving objective grounds to support a claim.

9. RICE: *Like most Americans, I listened with some scepticism to the Cold War claim that America was a "beacon of democracy." My ancestors were property – a fraction of a man. Women were not included in those immortal constitutional phrases concerning the right of the people "in the course of human events" to choose who would rule* [Ibid, p. 6].

**Provincialism** – an assumption that the beliefs and practices of one's group are more common or more correct than they really are. A common variation is nationalism, or **Flag-Waving**: expecting others to agree on the basis of national identity.

10. BRIT IN NY: *"America changed." That's what we're told. "On September 11th everything changed." "If you're not American, you can't understand." The infantile psycho-babble of popular culture is grafted opportunistically onto America's politics. The language of childish entitlement becomes the lethal rhetoric of global wealth and privilege. Oh, a question, then. If "You're not American. You don't understand" is the new dispensation, then why not "You're not Chechen?" Are the Chechens now also licensed? Are Basques? "You don't understand. We're Palestinian, we're Chechen, we're Irish, we're Basque?" If the principle of international conduct is now to be that you may go against anybody you like on the grounds that you've been hurt by somebody else, does that apply to everyone? Or just to America? On September 11th, America changed. Yes. It got much stupider* [Ibid, p. 92–93].

**Red Herring** (*ignoratio elenchi*) – shifting the audience's attention from a crucial issue to an irrelevant one.

11. RUMSFELD: *I've seen the pictures. I've seen those pictures. I could take pictures in any city in America. Think what's happened in our cities when we've had riots, and problems, and looting. Stuff happens! But in terms of what's going on in that country, it is a fundamental misunderstanding to see those images over and over and over again of some boy walking out with a vase and say, "Oh, my goodness, you didn't have a plan." That's nonsense. They know what they're doing, and they're doing a terrific job. And it's untidy, and freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that's what's going to happen here* [Ibid, p. 3].

12. AN ACTOR: *Asked in the same year whether the Americans are winning the war in Iraq, Donald Rumsfeld replies:*

RUMSFELD: ***Winning or losing is not the issue for "we," in my view, in the traditional, conventional context of using the words "winning" and "losing" in a war*** [Ibid, p. 116].

## FALLACIES OF ETHOS

**Appeal to the Person** (*ad hominem*) – attacking the personality of the opponent rather than their arguments by name calling, appealing to prejudice (ethnic, racial, gender, religious) or to guilt by association (linking to extremely unpopular groups or causes).

13. BLAIR: *How can I work through the UN if Saddam won't admit he's got anything? I mean, really! This was Saddam's chance. Why didn't he take it?*

CAMPBELL: *Because he's got the IQ of parsley* [2, p. 87].

14. RUMSFELD: *I know why we're going to war. Because the man is a lunatic and we can't afford the risk that one day he might team up with terrorists* [Ibid, p. 100].

**Strawperson** (*argumentum ad logicam*) – substituting a person's actual position with a distorted, exaggerated, or oversimplified version of the argument.

15. CHENEY: *Saddam Hussein has violated 17 UN agreements. The UN has 173 pages of concerns about weapons of mass destruction. Therefore. The only question is: "Does the UN still have a role?" That's the question. Is the UN an East River chattering factory? Is it an expensive irrelevance? Is this or is this not an organization which still has the authority to enforce its own resolutions? Does it have the chops?* [Ibid, p. 59].

**Moral High Ground** – a reference to the status of being respected for remaining moral, and upholding a universally recognized standard of justice or goodness.

16. BUSH: *Make no mistake. The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts. Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward. And freedom will be defended* [Ibid, p. 16].

17. MCCAIN: *We are a great nation, united in freedom's defense, and called once again to make the world safe for freedom's blessings to flourish. The quality of our greatness will determine the character of our response* [Ibid, p. 77].

## FALLACIES OF LOGOS

**Loaded Question** (*plurium interrogationum*) – asking the opponent a question that will put them in a bad light no matter what they answer.

18. DINNER GUEST: *How do you feel about the 100,000 innocent Iraqis who have died as a result of this invasion?*

BLAIR: *I don't accept that figure. I've seen that figure and it's wrong. I couldn't sleep at night if 100,000 people had died.*

DINNER GUEST: *But you can sleep if 50,000 have died?*

AN ACTOR: *Blair does not reply* [Ibid, p. 119].

**False Dilemma** – oversimplifying a complex issue so that only two choices appear possible.

19. BUSH: *Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists* [Ibid, p. 26].

**Correlation without Causation** (*post hoc*) – assuming that event *x* causes event *y* because event *x* preceded event *y*.

20. POWELL: [...] *If anyone's stupid enough to think this is payback time for whatever grudge they happen to be nursing against the US – be it Kyoto or the criminal court or [...] how they hate McDonalds – then what they'll be doing in effect is condemning Iraqi women and children to the sort of bombardment which is going to make them wish they'd never been born. And possibly civil chaos after* [2, p. 75].

**Slippery Slope** (form of *reductio ad absurdum*) – an assertion that a relatively small first step leads to a chain of related events culminating in some significant (usually negative) effect.

21. RICE: *There will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud* [Ibid, p. 61].

**Hasty Generalization** (*secundum quid*) – making a too broad or a hasty conclusion without considering all of the variables.

22. BLAIR: *The state of Africa is a scar on the conscience of the world. But if the world as a community focused on it, we could heal it. And if we don't, it will become deeper and angrier. This is the moment to tackle the problems from the slums of Gaza to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan* [Ibid, p. 27].

**Faulty Analogy** – an analogy too dissimilar to be effective.

23. POWELL: *The Roman Empire. I'm familiar with the analogy. The Romans would always go out of their way to make an announcement: "You are now dealing with the Roman Empire." Yeah. So if you pricked a senator in Rome, if you just pricked him through his toga with a pin, then Roman soldiers would seek out the village you came from – wherever it was – anywhere in the empire – however far-flung – and they would kill all your family and burn down your house, they'd slaughter everyone in sight and rape all your daughters, just to make the point, just to put a message across: Don't prick senators. But, sir, we're not Romans. And last time I looked at the constitution, we were still a republic, not an empire* [Ibid, p. 51].

**Propositional Fallacy** (*non sequitur*) – an inference that does not follow logically from the premises; a statement that is not clearly related to anything previously said.

24. BUSH: *My faith frees me. Frees me to put the problem of the moment in proper perspective. Frees me to make decisions which others might not like. Frees me to enjoy life and not worry about what comes next. You know I had a drinking problem. Right now I should be in a bar in Texas, not in the Oval Office, and not a bar. I found God. I am here because of the power of prayer* [Ibid, p. 9].

25. CHENEY: *A return of inspectors would provide no assurance whatsoever of Saddam's compliance with UN resolutions. On the contrary, there is a great danger that it would provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow "back in the box." Simply stated there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction* [Ibid, p. 61].

**Circular reasoning** (*circulus in demonstrando*) – a type of reasoning in which the proposition is supported by the premises, which is supported by the proposition, creating a circle in reasoning where no useful information is being shared.

26. TENET: *There is no confirming intelligence, no, that they are definitely producing chemical or biological weapons. I am not claiming that. I'm saying: "Look at the photo – look at it – and what you will see is a factory clearly consistent." And if they were producing such weapons – if – if they were, if such weapons were being produced, then this – seen here – would be the kind of factory, this looks just like the factory from which such weapons would come* [2, p. 14].

**Contradiction in Terms** – a statement that seems to contradict itself because of a logical incompatibility between two or more propositions.

27. CHIRAC: *My position is that **whatever the circumstances** France will vote "no", because she considers **tonight** that there are no grounds for waging war* [Ibid, p. 110].

**Begging the Question** (*petitio principii*) – a faulty syllogism providing what is essentially the conclusion of the argument as a premise, or passing unreliable provisions (rumors, stereotypes) for arguments supposedly proving the thesis.

28. LT GENERAL: *Why is this man in the White House? The majority of Americans did not vote for him. Why is he here? And I tell you that he's in the White House because God put him there for a time such as this* [Ibid, p. 9].

29. JOURNALIST: *What is the word, then, for those of us in the West who apply one standard to ourselves, and another to others? What is the word for those **who claim to love democracy and yet who will not fight to extend democracy to Arabs as well?*** [Ibid, p. 15].

30. BUSH: *The history, the logic and the facts lead to one conclusion: Saddam Hussein's regime is a grave and gathering danger. [...] Saddam Hussein [...] continues to develop weapons of mass destruction. **The first time we may be completely certain he has a nuclear weapon is when, God forbids, he uses one*** [Ibid, p. 65].

31. DE VILLEPIN: *I'm looking at this contradiction and trying to make some sense of it. My point is this: You can't come to the UN, then announce that the UN has failed if it gives you any result but the one you want. You can't do that. Put it another way: **You can't play football and be the referee as well.** That isn't playing fair* [Ibid, p. 72].

32. BLAIR: *They're all going to say "Oh great – look – this is great, he's not serious, Saddam can't be serious because – look at this – he's pretending to have no weapons. **So now we've a perfect excuse to go to war without the UN!**"* [Ibid, p. 87].

33. RUMSFELD: *I'll tell you what's legitimate. What we do is legitimate* [Ibid, p. 99].

As can be seen, actual "textbook" errors in reasoning or sloppily worded expressions which the speaker would gladly take back are few – such are examples ## 25, 35, and of course 13, the one lending the play its title (the phrase that strikes a minor character as "the most racist remark" he has "ever heard" [Ibid, p. 119]).

In the majority of the cases, the inconsistency of reasoning is not so easy to deduce and expose – it is intricate, hidden, and used as a deliberate rhetoric

strategy of influence and manipulation. Often, the fallacious appeals combine for an ever-greater impact on the audience who thus are much likely to be misled and fail to spot the flawed reasoning, e.g.:

- Extract #30 combines a hasty generalization with an appeal to pity and an appeal to fear;

- In #12, the speaker spots cherry picking (suppressing evidence, giving incomplete evidence) together with an overdose of provincialism in the counterargument and also notes the weight of a loaded question;

- The effect of the loaded question in quote #23 is enhanced by an appeal to pity and oversimplification and additionally sustained through emphatic syntax – a string of rhetorical questions;

- The speaker's oversimplified two-wrongs-make-a-right manipulative endeavour in example #5 is commented upon by other characters as "simplistic", using "the jejune language", "straight out of *Lord of the Rings*", "stupid", "best understood by the fact there are mid-term Congressional elections coming up in November" [Ibid, p. 33] later in the text;

- Instance #11, probably the trickiest and best veiled of all, deserves a brief description. The speaker's retrospective thunders on race and gender discrimination in the USA may seem compelling as an argument firmly based on ethos, but on second thoughts, they turn out a pathetic blend of a double appeal to pity, flag-waving and a contextual fallacy. The speaker herself could not have been a sufferer under those sad conditions far back in history, rather, she is an epitome of what gender and race minorities can achieve in America today. Moreover, how the oppression of the abovementioned classes of Americans or a presumably disadvantaged status of any one of them connect to the present-day issues of the US's foreign policy, or whether they justify and entitle any course of action chosen by its government as inherently moral and correct remains beyond a watchful reader's comprehension.

In literature as an art, emotional appeal is unquestionably a primary tool of communicating messages to the reader. That is why the principal element of the rhetorical structure of a literary work is pathos, ethos and logos synergizing and supporting it.

In teaching reading and rhetoric as practical foreign language disciplines, the play *Stuff Happens* may provide experimental study material to stimulate a heuristic appreciation of postmodern fiction, introduce a range of complex literary concepts (such as intertextuality, intermediality, the history play, verbatim theatre), and develop students' linguistic competencies.

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