

Stylistics and Persuasion

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1. Rhetoric

In order to be able to speak about stylistics and persuasion, we should first mention their common origin, namely the rhetoric. It appeared in Greece around 465 B.C. as the art of creating a discourse for persuasion, its origin being judicial and not literary. Corax gives the first definition of rhetoric: a “persuasive creator” (Reboul 1991: 14). Corax is also the one who suggests the parts of *oratio* that will form along the centuries the “plan” of the oratorical discourse (Barthes 1970: 176):

- a) exordium – catching the audience’s attention;
- b) narratio – presenting the facts and narrating the events in the temporal order which best fits the orator’s purpose. A good narration is clear, short, verisimilar;
- c) divisio – the sequence of discourse that announces its composition, duration and order of presenting its parts;
- d) propositio – the clause or sequence of discourse that clearly and precisely states the purpose of the discourse, its theme and subject. It contains the essence of what the entire discourse will say;
- e) confirmatio – the presentation of arguments and proofs;
- f) refutatio – the rejection of the opponent’s arguments;
- g) peroratio – the end of the discourse;
- h) digressio – a short story or joke placed anywhere in the discourse, whose purpose is to relax, to cheer up or, on the contrary, to make the auditory indignant.

Together with Gorgias there appears a new source of rhetoric, the literary one. Before him, literature was considered by the Greeks as enclosing only poetry (tra-

gic, epic etc.). Insisting on the use of figures (which he divides into figures of words – assonances, rhymes, rhythm of the clause – and figures of meaning – periphrases, antitheses, metaphors) Gorgias “opens” the prose to rhetoric and the rhetoric to stylistics.

The rhetoric fully developed in Athens, where the first specialists appeared, specialists who called themselves “sophists” and who “excelled in intricate argumentative stratagems, often illogical, in the disregard of truth and justice” (Prutianu 2004: 122).

Later, Plato placed the rhetoric close to philosophy, considering it as an art that produces convictions. In his opinion, the purpose of the rhetoric was neither the knowledge of what was objective, rational and moral, nor the objective transmission of information; its mission was seduction and persuasion.

Aristotle, Plato’s disciple, opened new and broad horizons to the study of human communication. He sees in rhetoric “the ability to discover speculatively what in each case can be appropriate to persuasion” or “the art to extract from any subject the degree of persuasion that it has” (Barthes 1970: 179). Together with Aristotle, the rhetoric becomes a technique of discourse composition, already established in fixed patterns. The rhetoric, out of the desire to persuade, uses an art of regulated dialogue, which reasons in a rigorous manner, starting from probable and strictly obeying the rules of logic. A discourse is persuasive if it uses both rational and affective means (Reboul 1991: 7). The rational means consist in arguments that can either lead to syllogistic reasoning or form their bases in examples. The affective means are (Tuțescu 1998: 22):

- ethos – the character, beliefs, culture, moral values that a speaker / orator must have in order to catch the attention and gain the confidence of the auditory. At this level, the discourse persuades through the appeal to moral values, beliefs, traditions and habits;
- logos – the way in which the message is organized: clearly, simply, directly. At this level, the discourse persuades through the appeal to ideas, reasoning, logic;
- pathos – the tendencies, desires, emotions of the auditory upon which the speaker / orator can act. At this level, the discourse persuades through the manipulation of emotions and feelings.

The persuasive discourse thus presents two aspects: the argumentative and the oratorical. The latter includes the orator’s gestures, his tone and the inflexions of his voice, while the figures of style (the metaphor, the antithesis, the hyperbole etc.) “are oratorical by their contribution to emotions, but they are none the less ar-

gumentative due to the fact that they express an argument, condensing it, making it more striking" (Reboul 1991: 8).

The persuasive discourse consists of four parts (or stages) through which the one who composes it passes (or has to pass). These parts were named by Aristotle (Reboul 1991: 55-56) *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *actio*.

– *inventio* – the orator's searching for all the arguments and other means of persuasion relating to the theme of his discourse. Two large branches arise from *inventio*: a logical one (*to convince*) and a psychological one (*to excite*). The end pursued by *inventio* is a collection of facts, ideas, pieces of information and persuasive techniques;

– *dispositio* – the orator's searching for the order in which these arguments must be arranged, which has as a result the internal organization of the discourse. *Dispositio* starts from the dichotomy of *inventio*: to excite / to convince. If the elements of the oratorical discourse suggested by Corax are taken into consideration, it can be said that the appeal to feelings covers the extreme parts of the discourse (*exordium* and *peroratio*) while the appeal to facts and reasoning covers the middle parts (*narratio* and *confirmatio*) (Barthes 1970: 213). The end pursued by *dispositio* is the discourse plan adequate to the theme and the auditory;

– *elocutio* – the manner of presenting these arguments or proofs. It concerns the writing of the discourse and not its oral presentation, this being the place where the figures of speech (to which many researchers in the '60's reduced the rhetoric) manifest themselves. *Elocutio* concerns the stylistics, the art of expressing ideas and of describing the facts clearly, but also charmingly and nobly).

– *actio* – the actual articulation of the discourse, with what it involves: intonation, flow of speech, gestures, mimics.

Before the realization of a discourse there must be taken into consideration its subject and the auditory to which it will be addressed, in other words, there must be established the genre of discourse in relation to the subject, the problem of genre regarding at the same time the interpretation of the discourse.

Aristotle (Reboul 1991: 57) mentioned the existence of three genres (*judiciary*, *deliberative* and *epidictic*), each of them with its specific features, that come out of the necessity to adapt to different types of auditory (*the court*, *the Senate* and *the spectators*, respectively). In time, the genres adapted, renewed themselves and thus nowadays there can be mentioned more types of persuasive discourse than those three.

Closely related to the notion of *genre* is that of *style*. Being the first literary prose and remaining for a long time the only one, the rhetoric delimited itself from po-

etry through the creation of some appropriate norms. They referred to the choice of words, the shaping of the clauses in such a manner as to render correctness and beauty to the discourse. In this first rhetoric prose any style effect is justified by the exigency to persuasion.

The best style (the most efficient) is the one that adapts to the subject, thus depending on it. As in Antiquity there were three genres distinguished according to the subject, there were thus three corresponding styles:

- noble (sublime) – to raise emotions;
- simple – to inform and confirm;
- agreeable (moderate) – to like.

Generally speaking, the styles can be defined through what are called *figures*. The Antics treated them as means of expression in a shocking manner, with charm or emotion.

The rhetoric, which finally becomes an essential discipline for the Greeks, is assimilated by the Romans, resisting along the centuries and even developing during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

But, beginning with the XVIIth century, there can be sensed a decline of the rhetoric, caused by the break produced by Descartes. He kept the persuasive purpose of rhetoric, as well as its four parts (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio* and *actio*), but he rejected dialectics because it presented only possible opinions and subjects of argument, while, in his opinion, the truth was unique, as it was evident.

After Descartes, the English empiricists come to reject the rhetoric, as it moves away from experience (which is, in their opinion, the source of any truth) through the use of verbal means.

The rhetoric does not disappear completely from the XVIIth to the XXth century, as it is maintained especially in the judiciary and political discourse.

Starting with the '60's a new rhetoric appeared in Europe, different from the one it was replacing in that it did not have the role of producing discourses anymore, but had the role of interpreting them. At the same time, it did not limit to the three oratorical genres of the Antics, but it reflected all the modern forms of the persuasive discourse.

The new rhetoric has two apparently different meanings. The first is that of *study of style*, and especially of *figures* (G. Genette, J. Cohen, the μ Group), constituting what makes of a text a literary text, and the second one is that of *art of argumentation*, which aims at *persuasion* (Ch. Perelman... 1993). But the two positions may have a common element: the articulation of the arguments and style in the same

function, the rhetoric of argumentation and the rhetoric of style thus following the same route.

The figures are “ways of speaking different than the others by a certain change that makes of each of them a different species and that makes them more animated or more elevating or more pleasant than the speech that expresses the same ideas but without any significant change” (Du Marsais 1981: 39).

But there must be made a distinction between rhetorical and non-rhetorical figures (Reboul 1991: 39). The rhetorical figures are those that have a persuasive role, while the non-rhetorical ones consist of humorous, poetic and lexical figures.

The main rhetorical figures are (see also Du Marsais; Reboul, O.; Dragomirescu, Gh.N.):

a) The figures of words

They include the figures of rhythm, of articulation and of sound. The figures of rhythm refer to intonation, intensity stress, pauses and the length of syllables. The figures of articulation refer to pronunciation and may include: the syncope, the apocope, the elision etc. The figures of sound refer to: phonemes (alliteration), syllables (paronomasia), words (synonymy, autonomy, homonymy, polysemy).

b) The figures of meaning

They are also called tropes and consist in the use of a word with a meaning that it does not usually have, thus enriching the initial meaning of the initial word. There may be mentioned two types of tropes: simple (metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor) and complex that derive from the first (hyperbole, hipalogue, oxymoron).

c) The figures of construction

They refer to syntax, the order of words in a clause and may consist of ellipsis, antithesis, gradation.

d) The figures of thought

They affect the form of ideas and may be divided into figures of utterance and figures of argumentation (Reboul 1991: 139-140).

The figures of utterance comprise: the allegory, the irony, the apostrophe. The figures of argumentation are the best to prove the tight connection between style and argumentation and they comprise the prolepsis, the apodosis, the expolition.

The argumentation is a social phenomenon, a type of influencing techniques that people use in varied forms and with numerous objectives, in order to move from dissensions to consensus. It is a way of solving a conflict of opinions through

verbal interaction (Roventă-Frumușani 2000: 45). In order to influence somebody's convictions and behaviour, the argumentation is based on reasoning and proofs.

It is always oriented towards an auditory. It cannot manifest unless there are at least two persons, as the message of argumentation has neither meaning, nor efficiency unless it is received (directly or indirectly) by its target. There are yet cases where the inner consciousness of a person may serve as auditory for an argument. The most concrete case is that of deliberation (Oleron 1983: 16): a person that has to make a choice brings arguments for and against and takes the decision by himself, without having consulted with somebody else.

At the basis of the argumentative act lays the argument which has a three-fold function (Mihai 1987: 247): it indicates facts, norms, values, principles, it expresses cognitive attitudes and determines changes in the interlocutor's psychological mood. The efficiency of the argumentation is rendered by the argumentative competence, which is the ability to organize, to arrange and to structure the arguments, so that they may serve as efficiently as possible the purpose in view. At the same time, "an argumentation will be efficient if it manages to increase the intensity of the adhesion so as to trigger the aimed action in the auditory or to create at least a disposition for action which will manifest at the right time" (Perelman ... 1993: 125).

The interlocutor may react positively or negatively to the arguments suggested by the locutor, may raise objections, may reject them, may counter-act them. Thus, it can be said that an argument triggers a series of objections and counter-arguments.

The argumentation appears in any daily discourse, which means in negotiation as well. Negotiation is a double-way communication that leads to an understanding when the two parties have some common, as well as some opposed interests. Negotiation is thus an argumentative discourse because it is one generated by the situation and which addresses a specific interlocutor, a discourse of action based on facts, values and hierarchies, on numerous argumentative actions, having as a main objective the influencing of the interlocutor, the changing of his beliefs or attitudes in order to reach his conviction / persuasion. Through its oral character, as well as through its entire plan (an introduction, a demonstrative corpus and a conclusion), the negotiation superposes on the pattern of a discourse based on persuasion, conviction, manipulation. In order to reach an agreement, the interlocutors have to resort to a multitude of techniques and strategies.

The most important argumentative strategies are cooperation, interrogation, polemic negation, rejection, metaphor (see also Moeschler, J.; Oleron, P.; Roventă-Frumușani, D.; Tuțescu, M.).

a) Cooperation

Any interaction implies the existence of cooperation. At the basis of any verbal interaction there is an effort of cooperation between the locutor and the interlocutor, effort named by Grice (Grice 1980: 33) *The Cooperative Principle*, structured into four big rules or maxims: the quantity maxim, the quality maxim, the maxim of relation and the maxim of manner.

Communication appears and can be explained in the argumentation due to the locutor's desire to influence the other, to convince him, to influence his knowledge level or behaviour in order to reach a conclusion.

Cooperation is also at the basis of the negotiation process, where the parties, between which there is interdependence, but also divergences, choose to cooperate in order to solve a mutual problem and to reach a mutually advantageous agreement.

In negotiation, seen as an argumentative discourse, both the partner's conviction and persuasion are wanted, as a result of cooperation, the final purpose being the consensus. It is important to make the distinction between conviction and persuasion. Such distinction dates even from Aristotle. According to him (Apud Tuțescu 1998: 24), the rhetorical consensus is persuasion, while the dialectical consensus is conviction.

When the ideas are arranged logically and in order and adequately sustained, they ensure the conviction of the interlocutor, who "adopts an idea, integrates it in the corpus of ideas that he promotes, sustains and arguments" (Sălăvăștru 1996: 55). Persuasion also makes the interlocutor adopt an idea, but through "other discursive means than those that strictly belong to reason, but without being convinced" (Sălăvăștru 1996: 55). The success of persuasion depends on the quality of the arguments which are used, the way in which they are presented, the language used by the speaker and the context in which communication takes place.

The arguments, inside the strategy of cooperation, can appear as assertions, through which the speaker tries to determine the auditory to believe that what is communicated is true. At the same time, the cooperative relationship can be illustrated by the pair question-answer (direct or indirect) as well as by the directive acts (of order, request, interdiction) (Tuțescu 1998: 231).

Inside the strategy of cooperation, the argumentative techniques are based on different methods/devices (Charaudeau 1992: 814), as for example, semantic methods (of truth, of aesthetics, of ethics, of hedonic, of pragmatic), discursive methods (the definition, the quotation, the accumulation) and composition methods

(linear composition, classificatory composition). It also uses different connectors (Moeschler 1985: 49) as:

- justificative and explanatory connectors (*because, as, for*)
- argumentative connectors (*otherwise*)
- concessive connectors (*although, but*)
- consecutive connectors (*so, as a consequence*)

b) Interrogation

It is a question addressed to the auditory with the purpose of indirectly transmitting an opinion that must be emphasized. The interrogation is different from the interrogative utterance. The latter formulates a question that requires for an answer, a piece of information from somebody, while the interrogation is not used to elicit an answer, as it implies the answer in the asking of the question itself, as an indisputable truth.

In negotiation, the interrogative utterance and the interrogation play an essential part. On the one hand, the interrogative utterance appears in different types of questions (exploratory, edificatory, direct, indirect) and aims at getting complete pieces of information and highlighting the negotiator's intentions. On the other hand, the interrogation, as an argumentative strategy, aims at influencing the interlocutor's thoughts and actions and appears as hypothetical questions.

c) Polemic negation

It is an argumentative strategy based on the contestation of previous utterances, being different from the descriptive negation, which implies the mere examination of a negative utterance.

The role of the polemic negation in negotiation is that of emphasizing certain ideas.

d) Rejection

The strategy of rejection, in which the polemic negation plays an important part, reflects a principle characteristic of argumentation, namely the contradiction principle.

This strategy is best pointed out in negotiation, where some arguments that do not satisfy the interlocutor's expectations can be rejected. There are two ways of rejecting the speaker's arguments (Aristotel, apud Tuțescu 1998: 30): counter-argumentation (argumentation that has the role of contradicting the interlocutor's conclusion) and objection (expressing a point of view whose role is to lead to the

absence of the argument or to the choice of a false hypothesis). Along with the proper argument there can also be rejected: the contents of the arguments, their quantity and/or quality, the manner of argumentation, the conclusion of the argumentation process.

e) Metaphor

It is an argumentative strategy based on an analogy between the compared (the term proper) and the term that compares (the metaphoric term) (Tuțescu 1998: 282).

There should be made the distinction between the poetic metaphor, that appears especially in literary texts and whose purpose is aesthetic, and the argumentative metaphor, that appears especially in oral communication (and thus in negotiation as well) and whose purpose is persuasive.

In order to persuade the auditory, to determine them to have confidence and to act in a certain way, the speaker resorts to arguments based on a series of reasonings (Larson 2003: 214-221):

- cause-effect reasoning: the speaker tries to identify certain events that determine sure effects;
- effect-cause reasoning: the speaker presents some known effects, trying to find out their cause;
- reasoning by comparison or analogy: the speaker describes and analyses an example, drawing conclusions. He then makes a comparison with another situation, showing the reasons for which the conclusion of the initial example applies to the latter;
- deductive reasoning: the speaker passes from general to particular;
- inductive reasoning: the speaker, before generalizing through conclusions, approaches the specific data.

All these techniques and strategies constitute a complex network of rules that make the connection between the locutor and the interlocutor and which develop in accordance to a certain plan that justifies the production, the alternance and the efficiency of the arguments. All these methods used make of argumentation a real art of persuasion through words.

2. Persuasion

Persuasion belongs to the domain of influence; in the XXIst century, when people permanently receive messages meant to influence them, it can be said that persua-

asion is practically everywhere, becoming one of the most efficient and more powerful human instruments in communication.

People influence and are influenced through the exchange of verbal or nonverbal messages, in other words through communication. As a result, persuasion represents a message communication to a receiver, with the purpose of influencing him through the arguments given in order to change his beliefs, opinions and behaviour. Persuasion usually combines the appeal to emotions with the appeal to intellect. It is a form of intellect that predisposes, but does not impose, which means that through the persuasive act nobody is obliged to act in a certain way, but the persuasive act offers logical, emotional and cultural arguments to support the respective action (Larson 2003: 18).

Starting from the definition, there can be distinguished four important elements of persuasion: the speaker, the message, how the message is communicated and the auditory.

The speaker must be trustworthy and reliable. Only in this case can he cause a major change when he comes with an opinion that is different from the pre-existing attitude sustained by the listener.

The contents of the message refer to information and subjects that are transmitted and have to adapt to the auditory, and they also refer to the way in which the message is transmitted: the channel of communication (whether the message is transmitted orally, in writing or through other means) and the style of communication chosen. The abilities of communication are crucial in the persuasive process.

As far as the auditory is concerned, the one who persuades must know the social standards, the education ones, as well as the auditory's socio-political creeds. The social standard of a person will determine his ability of intellectual optimization. It is easier to persuade a worker than a teacher, for example. Education also plays an important part in the persuasion process. An uneducated person is easier to persuade than an educated one. At the same time, those who live in developing countries have different (cultural, social) values than those who live in developed countries. Thus, the one who persuades must incorporate in his persuasive attempt different kinds of information depending on the geographical area and the peoples he has to deal with.

In the process of persuasion people intensify some things and minimize others. They intensify them with the help of repetition, association, composition and minimize them with the help of omission, diversion, confusion (Larson 2003: 32).

The intensification by repetition has as purpose the implementing in the receiver's mind of some patterns that he can identify, recognize and to which he may re-

spond. At the same time, people intensify by associating ideas with something already known or wanted by the auditory, the associations materializing through direct assertions or indirect methods: metaphoric language, allusions, contexts. Composition is also a strategy of intensification that implies (in the verbal communication) the choice of words, the choice of their level of abstractization, the strategy of longer messages.

The minimalization by omission implies the exclusion from communication of some elements that might render difficult or even stop the process of persuasion. The minimalization by diversion implies the diverting of attention from the essential problems or from the important things, while confusion may come from a wrong logic, contradictions, inconsistencies, jargon or anything else that might jam the clarity or understanding.

In order for a message to have persuasive efficiency, it has to fulfill four criteria (Bellenger 1985: 93-100): the criterion of credibility, of coherence, of consistency and of congruence.

Credibility – a message is credible if the speaker is trustworthy first of all through his entire behaviour and then through the proofs and facts he presents.

Coherence – the arguments that the speaker brings in favour of the idea he sustains must be compatible with each other. It is here that different reasonings (deductive, inductive, by analogy) appear.

Consistency – the speaker must show continuity in his intentions.

Congruence – the message must be adequate to the speaker, the auditory and the context.

At the same time, a speaker that wishes to create a persuasive message may choose between three persuasive ways, in order to render his message more efficient. Aristotle called them *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, or, in other words, *the ethic argument*, *the pathetic argument* and *the logical argument* (Kinneawy 1976: 238).

The ethical argument is used when the speaker wants to create for the auditory a favourable impression about his own character. Through language the speaker tries to prove that he is credible, incapable of distorting facts, open to the listeners and their interests. An influential factor in the establishing of the *ethos* is the organization of the message. Thus, a speaker well organized in his presentation is perceived as a more credible source than a disorganized one. Other three important factors of the ethical argument are the practical sense, the goodwill and a good moral character (Kinneawy 1976: 240).

The practical sense is the one that determines the speaker to choose the most appropriate means to reach his purpose. Goodwill consists in showing clearly to

the auditory that the speaker has good intentions regarding them, and a good moral character implies that the speaker verbally proves that he is sincere and reliable.

The logical argument refers to a rational approach of persuasion, the *logos* resorting to any individual's ability of reasoning.

The pathetic argument raises emotions in the auditory, emotions that hasten the action. The *pathos* is efficient especially in situations where emotions tend to overcome logic. The *pathos* includes the appeal to rewarding (that promises the auditory a certain reward if he behaves in the manner suggested by the speaker), appeals that induce fear (the auditory become more vulnerable if they are threatened), appeals to needs, wishes and values.

Voluntarily or involuntarily, persuasion is constructed in and through language. "The persuasive speech appears as a complex network of indices more or less hidden, calculated or involuntary, that aim at charging the discourse so that it may produce an effect on the interlocutors or the auditory" (Bellenger 1985: 29). The persuasive discourse must be in a language close in style to that of the auditory, so that there may be established a linguistic connection between the latter and the speaker. At the same time, the language must have its own style, which may catch the attention of the auditory on the message expressed by the speaker.

At a lexico-morphological level, the use of some words (such as the adverbs *still, never, almost* and the verbs *to pretend, to hope, to imagine*) leads the interlocutor to a certain conclusive effect expected by the speaker. At the same time, an important part is played by the connectors, which are very frequent in oral communication (the grammar calls them coordinative or subordinate conjunctions) that helps chaining the ideas.

The order of words in the clause also has an important role, alerting the auditory or diverting their attention. The use of daily, usual terms leads to clarity in persuasion, also obtained through the use of concrete terms, as opposed to the use of abstract terms. One of the basic traits of the persuasive style is the tension between concrete and abstract, between the ordinary and the extraordinary. "If the extraordinary extends too much, the style becomes literary, and persuasion can be forgotten. If the style becomes too common, the listener may lose his interest and persuasion may not be reached" (Kinneawy 1976: 286). The vocabulary of persuasion has more than a referential denotative function, as words can also refer to emotional associations, affective attitudes and elements.

At the syntactic level, the speaker may choose simple clauses, that "usually express a judgment or a complex singular aspect" (Weaver apud Larson 2003: 140), complex sentences, formed of two or more simple clauses, linked by con-

junctions, that usually express a tension, or complex sentences formed of main and subordinate components.

Speaking of persuasion in the process of negotiation there can be noticed an alternance of terms that belong to negotiation (used to make offers and counter-offers, such as *to offer, to require, to reject*) with those terms that belong to argumentation and persuasion: *to threaten, to reward* etc.

The persuasive negotiation implies an exchange of offers and counter-offers between parties in order to reach a mutually accepted argument. Proposals are supported by different arguments, the most powerful ones being the threats (if the proposals are not accepted, the consequences will be negative for the partner), the rewards (if the proposals are accepted, the consequences will be positive for the partner) and the appeals (appeal to the precedent, appeal to the self-interest, revealing of new information).

As persuasion combines the appeal to intellect with the appeal to emotions, the arguments are often accompanied in the persuasive discourse by rhetoric figures. Although they are not specific to persuasion, some figures from the traditional rhetoric (like comparison, metaphor, euphemism, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole etc.) have become a characteristic of the persuasive discourse, thus making the connection between stylistics and persuasion.

3. Stylistics and Persuasion: analysis exercise

The fragment chosen for analysis represents Jim Jones' last discourse in front of his followers. It sometimes becomes a persuasive negotiation, whose object is negotiation of people's right to living.

In the '60's Jim Jones founded in Indiana, America, the Peoples Temple, that was preaching inter-racial tolerance and was helping the poor with food or finding a workplace for them. The sect started to gather more and more followers and they finally moved to California, establishing the headquarters in San Francisco. Gradually, Jim Jones started to ask from his followers much and much devotion and obedience. He asked them to worship him and to pray to him during some sophisticated rituals. As the sect was growing, Jones started to ask people for absolute loyalty, severely punishing those who were not obedient, and in his preaches he started talking about the end of the world as the result of an imminent nuclear catastrophe, the only survivors being, in his opinion, only those who truly believed in him.

As the locals in San Francisco grew hostile towards this sect, Jim Jones left, with almost a thousand followers, for Guyana, where they built the little village of Jonestown. In November 1978, as a result of some members' attempt of escaping, together with a group of American journalists (who had come to check some pieces of information according to which people were held in Jonestown against their will), an attempt that ended with the shooting of all these people, Jim Jones told his followers that the enemies were everywhere and that it was time to proceed to the "revolutionary suicide" for which they had long prepared. They were supposed to drink a juice in which some sedatives and cyanide had been poured, the adults being advised to kill their children first, and then to take their own lives. Some people tried to interfere in Jones' persuasive discourse, negotiating their right to living.

Jones: How very much I've tried my best to give you a good life. But in spite of all my trying a handful of our people, with their lies, have made our lives impossible. [...] If we can't live in peace, then let's die in peace. (Applause) We've been so betrayed. We have been so terribly betrayed. Now what's going to happen here in a matter of a few minutes is that one of those people on that plane is going to shoot the pilot – I know that. I didn't plan it, but I know it's going to happen. There's no escape for us. So my opinion is that you be kind to children and be kind to seniors and take the potion like they used to take in ancient Greece and step over quietly because we are not committing suicide; it's a revolutionary act. We can't go back; they won't leave us alone. Our enemies will come back to tell more lies. [...]

A woman: I feel like that – as long as there's life, there's hope. That's my faith.

Jones: Well – some – everybody dies.

The crowd: He's right! He's right!

Jones: But what those people are gonna get done once they get through will make our lives worse than hell. [...] To me death is not – death is not a fearful thing. It's living that's cursed. (Applause) [...] It's just not worth living like this.

The woman: But I'm afraid to die ...

Jones: I don't think so. I don't think you are afraid.

The woman: I think that there were too few who left for twelve hundred people to give them their lives for those people that left. But, ah, I look about at the babies and I think they deserve to live, you know?

Jones: I agree. But also they deserve much more; they deserve peace. The best thing we can do is to leave this cursed world. (Applause)

A man: It's over, sister ... We've been living a wonderful day ... (Applause)

A second man: If you tell us to give our lives right now, we are ready ... (Applause) [...]

Jones: Please get us some medication. It's simple. It's very simple. There's no convulsions with it. It's just simple. Just, please get it. Before it's too late [...] Don't be afraid to die. You'll see, there'll be a few people land out here. They'll torture some of our children here. They'll torture our people. They'll torture our seniors. We cannot have this. [...]

A second woman: There's nothing to worry about. Everybody keep calm and try and keep your children calm. [...] They're not crying from pain. It's just a little bitter tasting. They're not crying out of any pain. [...]

A third woman: This is nothing to cry about. This is something we could all rejoice about. (Applause) [...]

Jones: Please. For God's sake, let's get on with it. [...] This is a revolutionary suicide. This is not a self destructive suicide.

A third man: Dad has led us so far. I choose to go with Him.

Jones: We must die with some dignity. Quickly, quickly, quickly. We must hurry. Stop this crying, all of you. Death is a thousand times better than any day of this cursed life ... If you only knew what is to come, you would be happy to die tonight ... [...]

A fourth woman: It's been a pleasure walking with all of you in this revolutionary struggle. No other way I would rather go to give my life for socialism, communism, and I thank Dad very, very much. [...]

Jones: God, take our life from us. We laid it down. We got tired. We didn't commit suicide, we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.

The next day, the troops sent by the authorities discovered in Jonestown more than 900 dead people around the platform where Jim Jones had spoken. The latter's body was among those of his followers.

In order to understand how Jim Jones managed to determine so many people to commit suicide there must be analyzed the arguments, the persuasive means and the minister's style. Although frequently interrupted by the interventions of his followers, Jones' discourse is a truly persuasive discourse. The organization of the entire process of persuasion follows, in broad lines, the stages suggested by Aristotle.

At the level of *inventio* there can be noticed that the minister tries to find all the arguments relating to the theme of his discourse, thus resorting to:

– ethical arguments, through which he tries to strengthen his credibility in front of his followers:

● *How very much I've tried my best to give you a good life. But in spite of all my trying a handful of our people, with their lies, have made our lives impossible.*

– logical arguments – the minister resorts to:

– cause-effect reasonings:

● *We've been so betrayed. We have been so terribly betrayed. Now what's going to happen here in a matter of a few minutes is that one of those people on that plane is going to shoot the pilot [...] There's no escape for us. So my opinion is that you [...] take the potion [...].*

– deductive reasonings

● *Don't be afraid to die. You'll see, there'll be a few people land out here. They'll torture some of our children here. They'll torture our people. They'll torture our seniors.*

– pathetic arguments – Jones tries to raise emotions in his followers, emotions that may rush the action. He uses:

– appeals that create fear:

● *There's no escape for us.*

● *[...] what those people are gonna get done once they get through will make our lives worse than hell.*

● *Death is a thousand times better than any day of this cursed life ...*

appeal to needs, desires:

● *It's just not worth living like this.*

[...] they deserve much more; they deserve peace. The best thing we can do is to leave this cursed world.

As far as dispositio is concerned (that is, the order in which the arguments must be arranged), there can be noticed an alternance of the three types of arguments, with a higher emphasis on the pathetic arguments.

Jones starts from weaker arguments:

● *We've been so betrayed.*

● *[...] I know it's going to happen. There's no escape for us.*

● *We can't go back.*

and then he reaches the supreme argument: *Well – some – everybody dies*, supported by other strong arguments, also gradually arranged on a scale from less powerful to very strong ones.

● *[...] death is not a fearful thing.*

● *The best thing we can do is to leave this cursed world.*

● *We must die with some dignity.*

● *Death is a thousand times better than any day of this cursed life ...*

At the same time, Jones' main argument is that he does not ask his people to commit suicide, but to commit a revolutionary act:

● *[...] we are not committing suicide; it's a revolutionary act.*

● *This is a revolutionary suicide. This is not a self destructive suicide.*

● *We didn't commit suicide, we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.*

At the level of *dispositio* there can be noticed its parts from the classical rhetoric:

- *exordium* – the introduction of the subject, the general idea of the discourse:
 - [...] *a handful of our people, with their lies, have made our lives impossible.*
 - [...] *If we can't live in peace, then let's die in peace.*
- *narratio* – the presentation of the necessary facts in order to understand the problem:
 - *We've been so betrayed. We have been so terribly betrayed. Now what's going to happen here in a matter of a few minutes is that one of those people on that plane is going to shoot the pilot – I know that. I didn't plan it, but I know it's going to happen. There's no escape for us.*
- *propositio* – the specification of the speaker's position regarding the problem:
 - *So my opinion is that you be kind to children and be kind to seniors and take the potion [...].*
- *confirmatio* – the proofs that sustain what the speaker says:
 - *But what those people are gonna get done once they get through will make our lives worse than hell. [...] It's just not worth living like this.*
- *refutatio* – the rejection of the opponent's arguments:
 - *I don't think so. I don't think you are afraid.*
 - [...] *they deserve much more; they deserve peace.*
- *peroratio* – the end of the discourse, which reformulates its main argument:
 - *God, take our life from us. We laid it down. We got tired. We didn't commit suicide, we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.*

Elocutio, that regards the art of expressing the ideas clearly, but also beautifully, is strongly connected to the four criteria of the persuasive communication.

Jones is *credible* through his confessions, emphasized by the use of the verb *know* (*I know that. I didn't plan it, but I know it's going to happen.*) and by the repetitive use of some negative constructions: *There's no escape for us; We can't go back; It's just not worth living like this.*

Jones' arguments in favour of the idea he supports – mass suicide – are compatible with each other, thus ensuring the *coherence* of the persuasive discourse. At the same time, he proves to have continuity in his intentions by repeating the idea of death in opposition to the *cursed life*:

- [...] *a handful of our people, with their lies, have made our lives impossible.*
- *So my opinion is that you [...] take the potion.*

Even when one of his followers, a woman, tries to negotiate her right to living, coming with counter-arguments:

- *I feel like that – as long as there's life, there's hope.*
- *I think that there were too few who left for twelve hundred people to give them their lives for those people that left. But, ah, I look about at the babies and I think they deserve to live, you know?*

Jones cannot be persuaded to give up his conviction, thus proving to be *consistent* and bringing the supreme argument:

- *Well – some – everybody dies.*
- *To me death is not – death is not a fearful thing. It's living that's cursed.*

pretending that he even knows how the woman feels like: *I don't think you are afraid*, and continuing with the same impulses to death:

- *The best thing we can do is to leave this cursed world.*
- *Don't be afraid to die.*
- *We must die with some dignity.*
- *Death is a thousand times better than any day of this cursed life ...*

Jones' message is *congruent*, being adequate to the speaker and to his followers, as well as to the context (there could be heard guns shooting from the place where those trying to escape had been caught).

As far as the last part of the discourse, *actio*, is concerned, because of the lack of the audio corpus, one can only guess the intonation (which probably has a descendent pitch, in order to render gravity to the message) or the flow of speech (a possible rapid tempo, in order to hasten the action).

In order to determine his followers to act in the direction he desires, Jones resorts to argumentative strategies. In the cooperation strategy, he resorts especially to direct acts:

– requests:

- *So my opinion is that you be kind to children and be kind to seniors and take the potion.*
- *Please get us some medication.*

order:

- *Please. For God's sake, let's get on with it.*
- *Quickly, quickly, quickly.*
- *Stop this crying, all of you.*

The effect is more persuasive due to the frequent use of repetition. At the same time Jones, when presenting his arguments, makes use of two semantic devices of different nature:

- pragmatic (useful/useless):
 - *If we can't live in peace, then let's die in peace.*
- ethic (good/bad):
 - [...] *and step over quietly because we are not committing suicide; it's a revolutionary act.*

Jones also uses the concessive connector *but*, through which he tries to show the difference between the world he has created and the *cursed* world that wishes to harm them:

- *But in spite of all my trying a handful of our people, with their lies, have made our lives impossible.*
- *I didn't plan it, but I know it's going to happen.*

and the justificative connector *because*, that introduces explanations:

- *step over quietly because we are not committing suicide.*

Another argumentative strategy used by Jones in his discourse is the polemic negation, through which he stresses the idea that he doesn't ask people to commit suicide, but to perform a revolutionary act. The act of suicide would have been a sin and nobody, let alone a minister, would have had the right to ask the people to do such a thing. The argumentative strategy of polemic negation illustrates the power of language over the human mind and action. Jones advises the people to commit suicide, to take their own lives, but his pieces of advice, although explicit, remain indirect. He does not tell his people: *Kill yourselves*; instead, he speaks about death in a plain language and uses concise sentences, mobilizing through suggestions symbols and myths anchored in the memory of his followers, using the power of the example: *So my opinion is that you be kind to children and be kind to seniors and take the potion like they used to take in ancient Greece*. He urges them to take the *potion*, the *medication*, replacing through polemic negation the term *suicide* with that of *revolutionary act*:

- *This is a revolutionary suicide. This is not a self destructive suicide.*
- *We didn't commit suicide, we committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world.*

The inclusive pronoun of the first person plural is meant to persuade (here there can be mentioned the power of influence given by the personal example).

Jones intensifies his arguments by repeating the idea of death in order to imprint in the mind of his followers the idea that this is the only way to get rid of the *cursed life*. As figure of argumentation Jones uses the expolition; he repeats the same arguments under different forms. At the same time, he intensifies associating the ideas through allusion and comparison with a model known by people: the Greek antiquity (*take the potion like they used to take in ancient Greece*) and through antithesis (*But what those people are gonna get done once they get through will make our lives worse than hell; To me death is not – death is not a fearful thing. It's living that's cursed*). Another intensifying tactic is the composition, Jones using adjectives at the positive degree, immediately followed by the absolute superlative (*It's simple. It's very simple*) and the hyperbole (*Death is a thousand times better than any day of this cursed life*).

Making the distinction between suicide and revolutionary suicide and insisting on it, Jones minimizes through confusion the gravity of the action he advises his people to do.

The fact that the argumentative strategies used by Jones reached their purpose, which is the persuasion of his followers, is obvious in their answers, that show a blind obedience (*If you tell us to give our lives right now, we are ready*) or that seem to paraphrase Jones' words in an attempt of self-persuasion:

- *A second woman: There's nothing to worry about. Everybody keep calm and try and keep your children calm. [...] They're not crying from pain. It's just a little bitter tasting. They're not crying out of any pain.*
- *A third woman: This is nothing to cry about. This is something we could all rejoice about.*
- *A fourth woman: It's been a pleasure walking with all of you in this revolutionary struggle.*

And yet a woman, using the argumentative strategy of rejection, comes out with objections (*I feel like that – as long as there's life, there's hope. That's my faith*) and counter-arguments (*I think that there were too few who left for twelve hundred people to give them their lives for those people that left. But, ah, I look about at the babies and I think they deserve to live, you know?*) in a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to change the imminent decision of the majority.

Jones managed to persuade and convince people regarding the necessity of a *revolutionary suicide* also due to his position among his followers: he was the fo-

under of the Peoples Temple and, at the same time, a minister, that means preacher of God's orders on earth. That is why the invoking of terms related to God and the devil is very persuasive for the auditory: the terms associated to God require obedience and sacrifice (*For God's sake, let's get on with it; God, take our life from us*), while the terms associated to the devil are at the other extreme, expressing negative values: [...] *what those people are gonna get done once they get through will make our lives worse than hell.*

The example of this minister, who managed to persuade and to convince over 900 people to commit suicide, shows the power of language and how it can become, under certain circumstances, a lethal weapon.

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Stylistics and Persuasion

The paper deals with stylistics and persuasion but, in order to be able to speak about them, we started first with the presentation of rhetoric that represents the core for both the study of style and the study of argumentation. Stylistics and persuasion represent, in fact,

the two meanings of the new rhetoric: study of style and art of argumentation, which are only apparently divergent (in reality, they are able to function together).

The figures of speech (associations of words that can embellish and render force to the discourse) are closely connected to the study of style. We insisted mainly on the rhetoric figures (figures of words, of meaning, of construction, of thought), as they are the ones that play a persuasive role.

Persuasion is linked to argumentation, both being focused on the receiver and expecting an action from him. For argumentation we identified the most important argumentative strategies (of cooperation, interrogation, polemic negation, rejection, metaphor), based on different argumentation and persuasion techniques, that have as the main objective the influencing of the interlocutor, the change of his beliefs and attitudes, techniques that can also appear in negotiation, seen as an argumentative discourse.

Persuasion, apart from the quality of the arguments presented, is also efficient if it fulfils four criteria: credibility, coherence, consistency and congruence and also if the language and style used are adequate to the auditory, to their social and educational standards etc. At the same time, because persuasion combines the appeal to intellect with the appeal to emotions, the arguments are frequently followed in the persuasive discourse by rhetoric figures.

In order to see the connection between stylistics and persuasion, the way in which the rhetoric figures and the arguments help and complete each other during the persuasive discourse, we have chosen a fragment from the last discourse of Jim Jones, the founder of the Peoples Temple, discourse held in front of his followers and which had as a result the suicide of more than 900 people. This discourse proves the power of persuasion, the (sometimes) lethal force of language.

Keywords: *style, persuasion, negotiation.*