

RETORIKA

Bara Kolenc

Dramatis personae:

Person A. /performer - man, woman or transgender/

Person B. /performer - man, woman or transgender/

Person c. /stage technician - man, woman or transgender/

Person D. /stage technician - man, woman or transgender/

SCENE 1: THE IMPOSSIBLE SPEECH

Person A stands by the microphone. Each time she/he intends to begin with her/his speech, a disturbing sound (coming from a pile of speakers) overrules her/his voice. After a few attempts, she/he gives up - her/his speech remains unheard. The scene exposes the rhetorical mechanism by dismantling its elements.

SCENE 2: THE WHISPER INTRUDER

Two persons whisper intimate poetic thoughts in each other's ears. A physical obstacle that steadily expands (e.g. a wall of mattresses) gnaws at the intimacy of their speech and turns it into a pure formality - it turns poetry into an analysis of rhetorical devices. The impossibility of an intimate dialogue gradually establishes a public monologue. At the same time, the whispered dialogue which the audience cannot hear silently questions the rhetorical nature of theatrical dialogue as such. The growing impossibility of whispered dialogue is emphasized by the language channel being increasingly more often verified by both persons involved.

PERSON A AND PERSON B /improvised exchange of sentences/:

I hear your words before you utter them.

I have you at the tip of my tongue.

I have you at the tip of my thought.

I know what you are thinking.

I am waiting for your lips to move.
I am waiting for your answer.
We are talking about everything else not to say whereof we
must keep silent.
You never say what I want to hear.
You never say what you want me to hear.
I know what you are thinking.
I have you at the tip of my thought.

*PERSON A AND PERSON B /verification of the language channel
(like on Skype), which happens during the dialogue,
improvised/:*

What? I can't hear.
Speak louder.
Repeat that.
Can you hear me?
I can't hear you. What?
I don't understand. Say it again.

PERSON A /fixed monologue/:

Your words roll like stones.
I bear your voice like a heavy rock. Simile.
We are talking about everything else not to say whereof we
must keep silent about. Antithesis.
Silence is gold. Gold is manure. Metaphor.
God is a microphone. A word is a microphone. Epiphora.
A word is a wall. Oxymoron.
We don't even agree to disagree.
Epanalepsis. Varoufakis.

Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for
this planet never take away the joy of our hope. Pontifex.
Paradox. Personalisation. Paraprosochian. Paronomasia.
Polysyndeton. Exaggeration.
Reducing excessive inequality is not just morally and
politically correct, but it is good economics. Lagarde.
Litote. Hyperbole. Hyperbaton.
All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is
profaned and man is at last compelled to face with sober

senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

Marx. Marx. Mother.

Mother or companion?

Man or machine?

God or devil?

Blood or gold?

Folk song or jazz?

National Socialism or bolshevism?

Gemination of a disjunction.

Alliteration. Anacoluthon. Anadiplosis.

Anaphora.

Catachresis. Chiasmus. Climax.

You will find men who want to be carried on the shoulders of others, who think that the world owes them a living. They don't seem to see that we must all lift together and pull together.

Henry. Ford.

Language is wine upon the lips.

Woolf. Woolf. Virginia.

SCENE 3: THE DOUBLE MONOLOGUE

Two simultaneous monologues spoken by person A and person B address the structural impossibility of understanding and hearing the other within the rhetorical mechanism of a monologue. The scene functions as a contest of two overlapping speeches, which produces violence and functions within the register of nonsense. At the same time, the scene exposes the rhetorical mechanism of monologue as a theatrical tool.

PERSON A /fixed monologue/:

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

I can't tell you how you have warmed my heart with your welcome. I'm delighted to be here today.

I, Dr Love Prenner, am standing here to tell you the truth about ISIS and Raqqa. And the truth about guns. I will hunt the truth, the truth behind. I will speak the truth, the truth and nothing but the truth.

Here I stand with my heart open like the nuclear bomb craters on Google maps.

Here I stand, neither man nor woman.

Here I stand, as honest as Obama and Lagarde, as goodhearted as Gandhi and Gadafi, as straightforward as Francois Hollande and Hillary Clinton and as beautiful as Angela Merkel and Winston Churchill.

Here I stand, a lawyer, a socialist, a person of dignity, a person from the past, looking into the future. After numerous enthusiastic speeches I gave in court, fighting for justice, after the war and the revolution, which filled me with a modicum of hope, after thousands of forged letters I wrote to liberate the innocent prisoners, after several close encounters with my death sentence, today, 40 years after my death, I will calm my rebellious spirit, fighting for good, and stop talking once and for all. I will rest in peace, mute, wordless, senseless.

So hear my words, my last words: "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." Albert Einstein

PERSON B /fixed monologue/:

"Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe." Albert Einstein

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free '?"...

"Freedom is fundamentally the possibility of standing on a street corner and shouting 'There is no freedom here!'" Yoani Sánchez

"Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth." Oscar Wilde

"What is truth?" Pontius Pilate

"A lie told often enough becomes the truth." Vladimir Lenin

"All fixed set patterns are incapable of adaptability or pliability. The truth is outside of all fixed patterns." Bruce Lee

"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident." Arthur Schopenhauer

"Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth." Buddha

"If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."
Mark Twain

"In a time of universal deceit - telling the truth is a revolutionary act." George Orwell

"A thing is not necessarily true because a man dies for it."
Oscar Wilde

Humor is diplomatic. And this is not a quote.

The freedom of speech is nothing but the freedom of nonsense.

"Political language... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." George Orwell

"I only believe in statistics that I doctored myself." Winston S. Churchill

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Ludwig Wittgenstein

"Those who know don't talk. Those who talk don't know." Lao Tzu

"Language is wine upon the lips." Virginia Woolf

SCENE 4: THE ECHO

Fixed monologue spoken by person A. The sound system emancipates the speaker's voice, thereby producing an alienation effect: person A is trying to overrule the echo of her own voice. The unsolvable situation can only be stopped from the outside, since the alienated voice turns into a snake that eats its own tail.

PERSON A /fixed monologue/:

Who is Love Prenner? Icon, iron, Indiegogo. Mouse, hashtag, no reply. Prenner, Marshall, Brenner. Empty room. Mattress on the floor. Hanger next to the wall. Political party. Birthday party. Law is not apolitical, hashtag, The Lawyer Journal. Filter 57. Law binds us all. We can't get to the end with this. Done. Ljuba, you're done. A good defence is a bad defence. The freedom of silence.

A spectre is haunting Europe. Joy, hashtag, Deutsche Gramophon. Von Karajan. And all is nothing. Finances = 0. Energy = infinite. Debts = incomplete number. Critique, panic, silence. Act, thought, voice. And end. And end. And I'll scream, and everything around me will remain silent. Will remain silent! /Screams./

SCENE 5: THE DECISION

Person A is giving a speech while person B (who can later be multiplied by persons C and D) simultaneously whispers another text in her/his ear. Person A repeats the whispered text aloud and thereby incorporates it into her/his original speech. While the whispered text expands and accelerates, it gnaws at the original speech and gradually overrules it. This scene questions the mechanisms of political propaganda, using a political speech as the original monologue and the recognised tricks of political rhetoric as the text-intruder.

PERSON A /fixed monologue/:

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
Committee for the Assessment of the Right to Practise Law
No. 1/100, 31 March 1947
Based on the Decision of the Government of the People's Republic of Slovenia dated 10 January 1947 and the authorisation provided by the Attorneys Act, the appointed three-member committee, having examined the ex officio reports and inquiries, adopted at its recent session on 20 March 1947, within the legal deadline of three months, the following decision regarding Dr P r e n n e r Love, attorney in Ljubljana:

According to the Attorneys Act, Dr P r e n n e r Love, an attorney in Ljubljana, hereby loses her right to practice law.

With her conduct, especially as a defence attorney in criminal cases and also in general in her law practice after the liberation, the heretofore attorney Dr Love Prener has clearly shown her hostile attitude towards the people's authorities, to our new judiciary and also all the

legislative measures in our people's state. Her defence is so narrowly related to the interests of the accused that Dr Prenner is becoming unreasonable and incapable of any objective view of the criminal case, which can lead her to personal attacks on individual employees of the public prosecutor's office or the court.

This is evidenced by the data in the criminal case KO 871/46 of the District Court in Ljubljana and the disciplinary report no. 636/46 submitted by a delegate of the Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of Slovenia to the Bar Association in Ljubljana which shows that Dr Prenner Ljuba is incapable of continuing with her law practice. It is impossible to think that an attorney who actually attacks a state employee because they have a different view and opinion of the criminal proceedings than the defence could be of help to our judiciary and other bodies of our people's government. In her numerous petitions and appearances before the court, Dr Ljuba Prenner has shown her hostile attitude towards the people's government. In her appeal, she attacked the legislation and compared it to the lawless plans of Hitler's justice.

On the basis of a detailed consideration of all the above, the committee came to the conclusion that Dr Love Prenner in no respect meets the conditions set in the new Attorneys Act which means that the above decision is therefore justified.

PERSON B /fixed whispered text, repeated aloud by person A/:

Lie!

Flatter!

Exaggerate!

Hide the Truth!

Play on Emotions!

Reverse the Reality

I Didn't See It Happen,

So It Didn't Happen

Use Association

The Glittering Generality

Humor and Ridicule

Projection

Observational Selection

Unsupported Claims

Make a Virtue out of a Fault
Non Sequitur.
The Enemy Of My Enemy Is My Friend
The Statistics of Small Numbers
The Language Trap
False Dichotomy
Faulty Syllogism
Delegitimize the Opponent
Demonize the Enemy
Blame Somebody Else
Ad hominem.
Are You Afraid?
Oversimplify
Use Slogans
Compare Apples to Oranges
It Ought to Be True, So It Is.

PERSON C /fixed whispered text, repeated aloud by person A/:

Pomp, Ceremony, and Ritual
Double-Talk
Straw man.
Hidden Assumptions
Antirationalism
Vague Adjectives
Fluffy Phrases
Self-Referential Definitions.
Misuse Words
The *Either/Or* Technique
Apply Time Pressure
The Perfect Solution Fallacy
Substitute Beliefs for Facts
Reverse a Cause-and-Effect Relationship
Everybody Knows, and Everybody Says
Everybody's Doing It.

PERSON D /fixed whispered text, repeated aloud by person A/:

Bad Math
Fake Philosophy
Play the Victim
Take Out of Context

Cite Credentials
Self-sell
Substitute Feelings for Facts
Apply Labels
Appeal to Authorities
Argue Inevitability
Circular Reasoning
Repetition for Emphasis
It's Free!

SCENE 6: THE LOST OTHER

An echo-scene to SCENE 2: from the original scene where two people are involved in an intimate dialogue, only one person is left. She/he addresses the other who remains silent. Since saying something doesn't make sense if the other can't (or resists to) hear it, the only thing that remains of the original dialogue is a hopeless unilateral attempt to restore it by establishing the function of the language channel.

PERSON B /verification of the language channel (like on Skype), improvised/:

What? I can't hear.
Speak louder.
Repeat that.
Can you hear me?
I can't hear you. What?
I don't understand. Say it again.

SCENE 7: THE FORGED LETTERS

The text is spoken by Person A. The speaker is hidden so that the audience only hears the voice coming out of the sound system. The dramatis personae have finally lost their voices - both the monologues and the dialogues have regressed to their pure impossibility. The emancipated voice is the last remainder of speech, until it alone disintegrates into deep silence. At the end, only silent bodies are left on stage.

The text is a rewriting of the original letters by Dr Ljuba Prenner, which she wrote during WWII. Seemingly in the name

of the Gestapo, she, as a lawyer, had sent off more than a thousand letters to the Italian prisons, and, consequently, set free a great number of Slovene civilians. The re-writing mixes history with the present - historical anachronism is used as a tool to point at the eternal power of language, encouraged by sincere intentions and a good will of the speaker.

PERSON A /fixed monologue/:

To the Provincial Commandant in Venice

The undersigned Dr Love Prenner, attorney from Ljubljana, and
S E D E J Gertrud, civilian from Vrhnika 28,
plead

for the release of the daughter of the second petitioner, G A
B R O V E C Ana, born on 2 September 1999 in Ljubljana, who
was sentenced on 20 April 1942 to four years of detention by
the former Italian military court in Ljubljana and is serving
the sentence in Casa penale fem. in Venice.

In the meanwhile, this conviction was revoked by a legal
committee appointed by one of the German offices here so
there is no legal basis for further detaining the mentioned
person.

Ljubljana, 11 November 1943.

To the Provincial Command of the German Defence Forces in
Venice

The undersigned Dr Love Prenner, attorney from Ljubljana, and
August Durjava, railway employee in Ljubljana, request the
release of her daughter Avgust Antonija, born on 28 August
2013 in Ljubljana.

In the meanwhile, this conviction was revoked by the legal
committee appointed by the competent German authorities here
to abolish the acts of the former Italian military court so
there is no legal basis for further detaining the above
mentioned person, her release is legally justified.

Ljubljana, 27 October 1943.

To the Provincial Command of the German Defence Forces in
Florence

The undersigned Dr Love Prenner, attorney from Ljubljana, and
Ahčin Frančiška, civilian from Ljubljana,
plead

for the release of her daughter Ahčin Isabela, born on 20 March 2013 in Ljubljana.

She is confined in Institutio St. Eufemia Giudezza.

This sentence was passed by the former Italian military court in Ljubljana on 8 March 1943 and has in the meanwhile been revoked by the legal committee authorised to do so by the German competent authorities here so there is no legal basis or justification for further detaining my daughter.

SCENE 8: THE RUMOUR SONG

The song. A free adaptation of Ovid's passage on The House of Rumour, Metamorphoses, Book XII, 39-63.

Picture a space at the heart of the world
binding all - the earth, the sea and the sky
on the frontiers of the universe.

Here, there are eyes for whatever goes on
no matter how distant and far.

Here, there are ears for every noise.

Picture a space at the heart of the world.

This is the kingdom of the Rumour,

The palace on a mountain,

Her home full of entrances is open nights and days.

The whole place is made of sounding brass

Repeating what it hears.

This is the kingdom of the Rumour,

The mountain of a gossip

Where, wandering far and wide, the voices come and go,

The fiction grows and new details are added on its way.

A flimsy throng of thousand words eavesdropping while it
speaks,

Its panic is waste and full of steam,

And joy is made of fear.

A tangle of a language,

A noise full of dreams,

The line of what's real is fading.

This is the kingdom of the Rumour,

The palace on a mountain,

The babble behind the doors

Will never get too loud

Like the waves of the distant sea

which you hear from afar
Like the last fainting thunderstorm
as storm 's (is) leaving the sky.

Copyright © 2015 Bara Kolenc & Atej Tutta. All rights reserved.