

Tatjana A. Dumitrašković¹
University of East Sarajevo
Faculty of Education in Bijeljina

RHETORIC AND POLITICS - THE POWER OF WORDS IN SHAKESPEARE'S *JULIUS CAESAR*²

Abstract: Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar emphasises the connection between rhetoric and politics. Some scholars, like Gayle Greene and Kim Ballard, point out that rhetoric in Julius Caesar is extremely important for the central political problems and character analysis. They also argue that Shakespeare implicitly criticises and condemns rhetoric that hides moral and political truth. Language is the most influential tool for seizing power in the play. Shakespeare well understands that power comes from those politicians who know how to manipulate the passions of the common people. Shakespeare's soldiers are at the same time skilful politicians who, by manipulating particular words and gestures, try to attain their own ambitious goals. Funeral speeches offer Brutus and Antony a chance to convince people of the value of their own ideology through the power of spoken words. Describing Caesar's murder as the result of the conspirators' efforts to maintain order in Rome, Brutus uses prose and parallelisms to create a sense of balance. Using blank verse, apostrophe, repetition and irony, Antony affects the feelings of the Roman people and causes them to revolt. Shakespeare emphasises that mastering rhetoric results in strong political power and control.

Key words: Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, rhetoric, politics, power, manipulation

1. Introduction

The term 'rhetoric' refers today, as it did in ancient to Elizabethan times, to the ability to persuade people through the skilful use of language. Rhetoric comes from ancient Rome and Greece, where it was an important device used in the process of governing, writing laws, and in philosophical discussions (Ballard, 2016). Rhetoric

¹ tatjana.dumitraskovic@pfb.ues.rs.ba

² The paper is based on the oral presentation given at the scientific conference "Language, Literature, Power", at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš in May 2022

is first discussed by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in his book *On Rhetoric*. It is a comprehensive treatise on the art of persuasive speech. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguishes three ways of appeal to an audience provided through speech. The speech can persuade either through the character (*êthos*) of the speaker, the emotional state (*pathos*) of the listener or the argument itself (*logos*). Aristotle also distinguishes three types of public speech: deliberative (political), forensic (legal), and epideictic (ceremonial). A deliberative speech is a speech in which the speaker advises the audience to do something or not to do something. In a judicial speech given in front of a court, the speaker either accuses or defends himself or someone else. An epideictic speech (e.g. funeral oration, eulogy) deals with praise or blame of someone trying to describe the actions of its subject as honourable or shameful (Rapp, 2022).

Mackay (2010) argues that rhetoric is a much valued skill in Renaissance England and that it is very important in the process of restoring classical learning to cultural life.

In the Renaissance, language is more used to persuade, than to prove something. Learned people admire the speeches of classical political leaders, and imitate them, mostly because of their aesthetic appeal and emotional colouring. Language is no longer exclusively connected to abstract philosophical thought. The main goal of the speaker is to convince the listener, and in order to achieve this, speakers can choose between the whole range of argumentative and stylistic resources. Many books on rhetoric were published in England in the mid 16th century, such as Wilson's *The Art of Rhetoric* (1553) and Roger Ascham's educational tract, *The Schoolmaster*. They usually deal with different aspects of rhetoric: setting up an argument, using different types of figurative language, and the teaching of Latin prose composition. These books also describe special rhetorical figures that can be used to make speaking more persuasive. The rhetorical figures are often known by their original Greek or Latin names. Some of them, for example, parallelism and repetition, are used in the speeches in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Ballard, 2016).

Different kinds of stylistic figures indicate that rhetoric throughout history shares a common basis with literary language. Literary and rhetorical theories are very much connected during the Renaissance period (Mackay, 2010).

Rivers (1994) claims that throughout the ages, poetry and rhetoric by their powerful energy have challenged people to some kind of action. In the Renaissance, this connection is understood as the connection between the poet and the speaker, so that every poet is considered the ideal speaker.

Mackay (2010) argues that the overlapping of rhetorical and literary examples is most conveniently integrated in drama, which often combines artistic aims with the oratorical purpose of a particular speech. The addresses of Brutus and Antony to the Roman people after the assassination of Caesar in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (3.2.13–34, 74–223) are a good example of this, for here, we have a dramatisation of oratory itself. The speeches of Brutus and Antony are rhetorical. Both use different techniques to influence people who listened to them: Brutus wants to influence their reason (logos) and Antony their emotions (pathos). While Brutus tries to shape his speech through figures of speech using parallelisms to create a sense of calm and balance, Antony prefers to use figures of speech such as apostrophe (addressing an individual who is not present) and repetition to stimulate the feelings of the crowd. These rhetorical differences are also expressed in literary form. Contrary to Antony who uses free verse, Brutus uses prose, trying to connect with his listeners on a conversational level rather than trying to raise his speech to a higher position. The main purpose of literary form is to create dramatic excitement.

In the Rome of *Julius Caesar*, the powerful use of rhetorical skills influence and deceive the common people. Some scholars, like Gayle Greene (1980) and Kim Ballard (2016) indicate that rhetoric in *Julius Caesar* is important for the central political problems in the play. They also argue that Shakespeare implicitly criticises rhetoric in the context of hiding political truth.

Based on these assumptions, the paper attempts to show the relations of political power and to identify the manifestations of these power struggles in the language and linguistic strategies of the characters, with special emphasis on the rhetorical contest between Brutus and Antony.

2. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

Shakespeare's tragedy *Julius Caesar* describes one of the greatest turning points in the history of Western civilisation: Rome's transition from republic to empire. It offers important insights into this major historical event. The play is a dramatisation of the conspiracy of the Roman senators against Julius Caesar and the beginning of the civil war that culminated in the defeat of the conspirators Cassius and Brutus. During the celebration of the Ides of March 44 BC, conspirators, consisting of respectable Roman aristocrats, stab Caesar to death. After the assassination, the leaders of this conspiracy shout that the tyrant is dead and the political power is returned to the Senate. The most famous among the conspirators are Brutus and Cassius. Caesar's assassination marks the end of his nearly twenty-year reign. The

story of Caesar's death and the political coup that follows is very much important for Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare is believed to have written the play in 1599. Queen Elizabeth is sixty-six years old then. Since she has no heir, many are afraid that after her death a civil war may break out. In addition, due to fear of censorship, when it comes to issues related to a political nature, the story of Caesar is for Shakespeare a safe way to make comments on many important questions of his age.

Shakespeare's main source for the play is Thomas North's *English translation of Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*. Plutarch writes biographies as a historian in the first century AD. According to his description, at least one or a few powerful men rule the Roman Republic. In his play, Shakespeare adopts the concept of the Roman republic, emphasising the activities and influences of a few notable individuals. Based on historical facts, we can assume that the conspirators are interested in the privileges of their class as much as in the high ideals of the Roman Republic. Caesar belongs to a group of patricians who support reforms that will bring a better life for the poor, such as a more just distribution of Roman wealth and land. He is an energetic and wise politician who has brought much good to the people of Rome. Caesar is so popular among the common people that he takes power in Rome without any resistance in 49 BC. During the following years, he brings a series of reforms in favour of the common people. The conspirators try to question his reforms and win back power in Rome. In *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare summarises the action, as he does in many of his historical plays, making some deviations from its source. For example, in Shakespeare's play, Caesar's triumph over Pompey's sons happens in February at the time of Lupercalia, while in Plutarch this happens in October. Shakespeare has made this change to make Caesar's murder in March look like a response to his increasing influence and arrogance. Further, in Shakespeare's play, Brutus and Cassius run away from Rome immediately after Antony's speech to the gathered crowd, while Plutarch says they left Rome a year after Caesar's funeral.

The murder of Caesar was the biggest event in the political history of Rome and of Western civilisation with enormous political consequences. However, Shakespeare is interested in showing how soldiers are, at the same time, successful politicians. Using rhetoric, they deceive and manipulate ordinary people in order to achieve their own goals. The role of Brutus, Cassius, and Antony is, for Shakespeare, of particular importance.

3. Language - the most influential tool in the struggle of persuasion

Rhetoric is connected with some of the most public and the most private aspects of the play. Sometimes it is openly framed as oratory, and sometimes it adapts the figures of public speech to the most intimate contexts. Discussing the relationship between rhetoric and power, Gailly Greene (1980) argues that rhetoric in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is essential to central political issues, characterisation, and culture. She also thinks that Shakespeare implicitly criticises both rhetoric and language that hide moral and political truth. Greene points out that Shakespeare was the perfect example of Renaissance eloquence; he uses more words in his plays than anyone before or after him, enjoying different rhetorical arrangements. Although he knows the power of language, he is also well aware of the danger that language can represent, which is reflected in its ability to corrupt, conceal and misinterpret. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare expresses an ambivalence towards language and a complete awareness of its potential from multiple perspectives (pp.72–73).

Peltonen (2017) argues that Shakespeare emphasises the social depth of politics in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, focusing on the skill of rhetoric. Two types of orators compete rhetorically in the play. One of them calms the restless crowd and the other incites them to rebellion. They use different styles of rhetoric: while Brutus' speech ignores the rule of adaptation to the crowd, Mark Antony's 'popular' rhetoric pays off. In contrast to its sources, Shakespeare's play increases the destructive potential of popular orators: Shakespeare makes Antony's speech cause civil war (p.163).

Ballard (2016) analyses some scenes of 'persuasion' in the play, showing how language works to move and motivate its listeners to actions by putting central political issues in the background. By a skilful use of words, Cassius manages to convince Brutus to agree to the conspiracy against Caesar. He is a shrewd politician whose motives are personal and not always in the interest of Rome. He uses rhetorical skills as a means of convincing others to help him achieve his goals. Cassius uses a whole series of persuasive tricks to convince Brutus to join the conspiracy. Cassius uses different tactics to persuade Brutus, one of which is emphasising his friendship with Brutus, trying to make him feel guilty because he attempts to preserve and maintain the friendship: '[Brutus,] bear too stubborn and too strange a hand / Over your friend that loves you' (1.2.36–37). Next, he cleverly uses the metaphor of himself as a mirror in which Brutus will see his true self: 'That you have no such mirrors as will turn / Your hidden worthiness into your eye, / That you might see your shadow' (1.2.56–58). Cassius also uses parallelism, playing on the equality of the names 'Brutus' and 'Caesar':

'Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that 'Caesar'?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
Weigh them, it is as heavy;
Conjure with 'em,
Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar. (1.2.140–47).

'Sound', 'weigh' and 'conjure' are the words that keep the sentence structure parallel and contribute to the intensity of the scene. His opening rhetorical move is similar to the Socratic Method: he conducts the conversation by asking a specific question and then works out the answer using his own observations.³ Cassius as a skilful politician who is able to organise quickly a military action without any fear and with great determination, but he often lacks morality. Cassius encourages Brutus' natural tendency for self-analysis and gives him a conceptual framework in which Brutus could place his disturbing feelings about Caesar's increasing political influence (Ballard, 2016).

However, Brutus has to convince himself that the conspiracy is justified. Greene analyses Brutus' soliloquy (2.1.), where he tries to understand the whole situation, to find the real reasons for Caesar's death and looks up metaphors – like the one about the snake's egg – to convince himself that Caesar is dangerous. Although he believes that Caesar did not commit any specific offense (he even refuses the crown that is offered to him), Brutus concludes that the mere possibility of him committing an offense is reason enough to kill him. Brutus here uses rhetoric in a fascinating way. He tries to find his own reasons, using strange images. He uses adder, a snake compared to the word ladder, saying that one day or another the adder will try to climb the ladder of society and show its true character: 'It is the bright day that brings forth the adder; / And that craves wary walking' (2.1.14–15). The true nature of man cannot be hidden. Brutus brilliantly organises his speech and uses it to convince himself of the correctness of his thoughts and actions. It clearly indicates that he is evidently a skilled speaker. It is notable how Brutus' monologue begins and ends with the image of a snake. These metaphors lead to the idea that all the conspirators must stop Caesar's coronation by killing him until he becomes too dangerous. 'Rome', 'honour', 'name' are words with disturbing connotations that are capable of provoking strong reactions. They are powerful because they contain

³ The **Socratic Method** is 'a form of dialogue/argument in which one participant asks strategic questions in an attempt to draw out the other's assumptions and ideas – hoping to reveal inconsistencies, gaps, and/or contradictions in support of more critical understandings' (Davis et al. 2021).

the dominant cultural values, thought and belief of the former ideals of Republican Rome. These words and concepts are also connected to Brutus' self-concept, determining the way he perceives himself and reality (Greene, 1980:pp.76–81).

Ballard (2016) thinks that Brutus is not only a skilled orator. Rhetoric defines him as a person and defines his relationship with other people. His wife Portia fully understands this. By trying to persuade Brutus to tell her his secret thoughts, she uses a logical, rhetorical style that she knows he will understand. In preparation for the assassination of Caesar, Brutus is openly against Cassius' opinion that Caesar's ally Mark Antony should also be killed. He again uses his rhetorical skills to convince the other conspirators that they are following the demand of the people ('the face of men'), their own maltreatment ('the sufferance of our souls'), and inevitability of historical events ('the time's abuse'); he insists they should be victims and not the butchers (2.1.166–180).

In funeral speeches, rhetoric gets its public use. The decisive event of the play is not the death of Caesar, but the funeral speeches after his death. Brutus and Antony address the audience in the Forum and their ability to win them over will shape the events until the end of the play. An analysis of the key scene of the funeral speeches will show how language works to 'raise' and 'fire' its listeners, all in order to 'conquer' political power by the orator, while the central political issues stay hidden in the dark (Ballard, 2016).

3.1. Funeral Speeches – a clash of words in a power struggle

Language is one of the most influential tools in the relationship between political power and society. When talking about attaining political power, the skilful use of language has a crucial role. Whenever words are used in a power struggle, those who can successfully manipulate it will definitely win. In *Julius Caesar*, the powerful ones definitely know how to use language for their benefit. This is a clash of words in the form of a speech between two powerful orators, one of whom (Brutus) uses language to justify a political coup and the other (Antony) wants to encourage the crowd in rebellion (Behnam, 2009:p.36).

Miola (2002:p.200) describes the famous scene of Brutus and Antony's address to the Roman people after the murder of Caesar in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (3.2.13–34, 74–223) as the moment when rhetoric becomes truly crucial to the development of the play. Brutus' speech is constructed of measured prose, built on repetition, balanced sentences and phrases. He is calm and uses antithesis and parallelism to show how much he is guiltless and loyal to the state of Rome, and

to construct Caesar's ambition and guilt. He addresses the sense of justice and reason of the crowd by using a style that imitates the logic of a rational argument:

Not that I loved Caesar less, but I loved Rome more. Hath you rather Caesar were living,
and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freeman? As Caesar loved me,
I weep for him; as he was valiant, I honour him; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. (3.2.19–23)

Wills (2011) argues that the rhetoric of Brutus' is so exaggerated that 'it approaches to what is comic elsewhere in Shakespeare' (p.54). He also notices that Brutus' speech is all about himself, his honour, his undoubted position. He mentions Caesar's ambition, but he gives no evidence for this. It seems that his saying is enough, and to doubt it would be to question Brutus' integrity. The response of the crowd to Brutus' speech is positive.

Miola (2002:pp.200–201) explains that while Brutus uses examples of what the theory often defines as figures of speech, employing parallelisms to provoke a sense of calm and balance, Antony prefers to use figures of speech such as the apostrophe to attract and upset the crowd. Speaking about Caesar's murder, he says: 'For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel. Judge, O you Gods, how dearly Caesar loved him' (3.2.183–84). Antony first helps the common people remember that Brutus and Caesar were friends, and then he reminds the gods of how much Caesar loved the man who killed him. This sudden change in address contributes to the intensity of the scene. Antony's speech in blank verse delivered over Caesar's wounded and bleeding corpse is far more subtle than Brutus' is. By citing a series of examples, he shows the crowd that Caesar was not ambitious and thus criticises Brutus' behaviour. He speaks with emotional rhetoric using blank verse, interrupted by the repetition of the refrain 'Brutus is an honourable man':

'He [Caesar] hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill;
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff;
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honourable man.' (3.2.80–6)

Mark Antony keeps reminding Brutus that he is honourable until his irony becomes powerful, slowly doubting the truth of Brutus' words. This hidden irony also shows that Brutus may not be so honourable in Antony's eyes. He counts more on the emotions of the crowd than on their reason, and in order to turn them against the conspirators, he uses Caesar's will. Antony completes his speech with certain gestures and actions – a pause for self-control, the display of Caesar's bloody corpse, the reading of the will. His skilful speech arouses anger and resentment among the crowd (Miola, 2002:pp.200–201).

Greene (1980) thinks that Antony's power is the result of his understanding of irony, his skill in adapting his speech to the speech of the crowd, and his superior knowledge of the importance of emotion in rhetoric. His speech is realistic in shocking detail and dramatically provokes a variety of emotions, from grief at the loss of a leader and friend, a desire to honour the dead, to anger and revenge. At the end of this first long speech, Antony pauses, seemingly to calm down, but actually to assess the effect he has achieved on the crowd. Then he begins to use the techniques and props that will follow his further presentation: the testament, the bloody mantle, and Caesar's body. In the following speech (pp.171–199), he 'descends' among the crowd and makes a circle around the corpse, lifting the bloody mantle, feigning murder. Antony's language and everything he does are focused on evoking the work, with techniques contrary to Brutus', confusing and distancing. In a few minutes, the conviction of the crowd changed. Caesar, the 'tyrant' (3.2.69) became again the 'noble' Caesar. The 'honourable' Brutus, however, became a traitor in their eyes. All this shows that Antony, Brutus, and their allies must turn to war, not to words, to settle their differences (Greene, 1980:p.75).

Although both Antony and Brutus seem to be trying to justify their position in relation to Caesar's murder, Phoon (2004) notices that their goals are more pragmatic; they desperately try to win the trust of the crowd by imposing their ideologies. Brutus tries to calm the crowd and bring them under control, convincing them that they will benefit from the brave deeds committed by the conspirators. Antony, on the other hand, encourages them to see himself as a victim of subversion in a world where trust is impossible. By emphasising contradictory views about Caesar, they are contradicting each other. This leads to a general confusion, in which Antony wins, and the crowd accepts his ideology of subversion and protest. Discussing Antony's speech, Phoon argues that describing himself as an ordinary, simple man Antony puts himself in a position to show publicly his insincerity and superficiality. This is also the effect Antony is manipulating with: he is portraying

the concept of a world where nothing is what it seems. This means that everyone, including Antony and Brutus, is subject to suspicion (Phoon, 2004:p.37).

Through a clever use of rhetoric, Antony completely deconstructs Brutus' speech and shows the crowd that language can no longer be manipulated with poor metaphors and ideas. Antony is a master of language who has the power to make words mean what he wants them to mean. He 'shows' the crowd Caesar's true nature and lack of ambition. However, what the crowd can actually see is just another interpretation of the event. As an actor and contemporary politician, Mark Antony represents at the same time a modern demagogue and politician who, in a perfectly successful way, reinterprets someone else's truth. There is no fairness in the play, and from that point of view, Caesar's body and his testament are only weapons for persuading and stirring up. The rebellion that will come as the consequence of Antony's speech is only the result of this approach and the use of rhetoric. All of this helps us understand easier the main goal of characters like Antony. They take advantage of the political crisis because they will not think of killing their enemies without exception at the beginning of the fourth act. Antony is not speaking to give evidence about his friendship with Caesar; like a real demagogue and politician, he is speaking to obtain a powerful position at a crucial moment for Rome (Domenico, 2021:p.73).

Brutus, as we hear on several occasions from him and from others, is an honourable and reasonable man, a man who gives reasons and asks for reasons; this suggests that he will join the conspiracy with intent and only if he had good enough reasons. However, if we look at the scenes where we expect to find reasons for Caesar's murder — the scene where Cassius 'deceives' (1.2.) Brutus so he joins the plot; the soliloquy in which Brutus 'finds' a good reason for himself to join the conspiracy (2.1.); the scene in the Forum, where first Brutus, then Antony, 'stir up' (3.2.) the crowd - we find no reasons, only rhetoric that hides the real issues about Caesar's ambition and the justice of his death. Brutus' language tries to give a particular shape to reality. Accepting important themes as Cassius presents them, Brutus accepts enthusiastically words like 'honour' and 'Rome', using them as substitutes for a perfect assessment of complex reality. His own techniques, including complex rhetorical speech models, are ways he uses to avoid and distance himself from reality (Greene, 1980:pp.73–89).

As for the tone of both speakers, Behnam (2009) notices that Brutus addresses the people directly using imperative verbs such as 'be silent' 'believe me', 'have respect', 'censure me' and 'awake'. In this way, he shows that he considers them responsible for the understanding of the speech. In contrast, the frequent presence

of the word 'I' in Antony's speech makes it resemble more of a soliloquy that does not consider anyone responsible. He expects the reaction of the people to his speech but tries to hide this expectation (Behnam, 2009:p.43).

Leithart (2004) emphasises the deception which plays an important political role in treating the Roman crowd, which is as important as any individual character. The play begins with a scene on the streets of Rome and a conflict between patricians and plebeians. Moreover, the crowd's response to Brutus and Anthony's funeral speeches is as important as the speeches themselves. Shakespeare well understood that those politicians who know how to manipulate the passions of the crowd gain power, and that it is very easy for some of them to control it. They shape events by influencing the crowd, and they do that with rhetoric, the way they speak, a kind of verbal deception. Long before the development of modern communications, Shakespeare becomes aware of the importance of propaganda in political life; he knows that a lot in politics depends on which term or expression is used in the name of certain activities. Debates about words may seem symbolic, but such symbols are essential in politics.

Greene (1980) concludes that in *Julius Caesar*, the negative potentials of language are very much emphasised and that they get their power from human weakness, a corrupt will and unreason. Rhetoric is an instrument of appearance that can reshape and reinterpret reality and move people to react in different ways. In the funeral speeches, Shakespeare shows the tremendous power of language to move the crowd, even when it is not in their best interest. Brutus first convinces the crowd with logical and penetrating questions, and then Antony does so with his strong appeal to emotion. Both speakers use words to formulate facts in their favour and it is through language that they can 'guide' people's thoughts and actions in the direction that suited them. Indeed, when Antony was looking for a way to evoke the image of Caesar's power in his speech, he did not refer to his sword, weapons or wealth, but to the power of his words. Shakespeare points out that power rests on language – language is what moves people to action (Greene, 1980:pp.73–92).

3.2. Manipulation of words, symbols and facts in the context of political success and historical interpretation of Caesar's assassination

As for the importance of rhetoric, Leithart (2004) points out language and symbols. Language is one means of gaining political power, and manipulation of symbols is another. Brutus is completely unaware of the wishes of the Roman crowd. He gives a speech in favour of murder and it goes well for him, since a few want to

make him Caesar. However, the speech itself is not adequate because its essence is that any Caesar is a danger to Rome. A lack of agreement between Brutus' reasons and the reaction of the crowd shows the total failure of his communication. On the other hand, Antony gains the trust of the crowd not with arguments, but with drama, symbols, memories, and exciting movements. He brings Caesar's body to the Forum and uncovers it at the crucial moment. He cries publicly. The key formula for political success in Rome will be to control the crowd, and this can be achieved through the skilful use and manipulation of words and symbols.

In the context of the use of manipulation, it would be interesting to refer to the interpretation of the historical event of Caesar's assassination, given by the American historian, lecturer and literary critic Michael Parenti. Parenti (2003) studies Caesar's assassination in the context of social history. He sees Caesar's assassination as a political murder, a dramatic consequence of a long-term struggle between a wealthy minority and reformers supported by the majority of people, and not as most historians, under the influence of the propaganda of the rich and powerful political – economic elite, he tried and is still trying to present it to us. Parenti considers Brutus' statement and the statements of the conspirators in general that Caesar was killed because of his love of power to be nonsense. He also claims that Caesar was not killed because of his ambition, but because he was a threat to the aristocratic oligarchy. Parenti offers a radical new interpretation of the context of Caesar's assassination in relation to classical interpretations. He observes Caesar's assassination in the context of the class struggle that takes place in the last period of the Roman Republic. The generally accepted view about the conspirators who want to restore republican liberties by killing a despotic usurper still prevails among historians. Parenti offers an alternative explanation: the aristocrats – senators kill Caesar because they see him as a popular leader who is a threat to their interests. Steeped in wealth and luxury, they are hostile to any form of democracy in Rome. They value the Republic as long as it supports their way of life and reject as demagogues and usurpers dedicated leaders who stand up for the interests of the people. From this point of view, the act itself is more an act of treason than the killing of a tyrant, a dramatic manifestation of a long-term struggle between wealthy conservatives and reformers supported by the common people. Parenti believes that Caesar's sin is not in undermining the Roman constitution but in trying to limit its abuse by a few. Therefore, he suffers the fate of many reformers before and after him. What is surprising is that most modern historians adopt the views of the Roman aristocracy and view the conflicts in ancient Rome from the perspective of the elite rather than the common people fighting for their interests. Parenti shows how skilful manipulation of historical facts

and favouring only one point of view can help one social class to present a historical event in a way that suits them (Parenti, 2003).

This is exactly what Shakespeare's Brutus and Mark Antony do in their speeches addressed to the Roman crowd, after Caesar's murder, and this is where we find Shakespeare's implicit criticism.

4. Conclusion

Manipulating words and gestures is a sure way to win power. In addition to being soldiers, Brutus and Antony are also very skilled and experienced politicians who try to manipulate the crowd with the political use of language in order to achieve their own goals and ambitions. This is exactly where Shakespeare's criticism lies. In funeral speeches, Antony is more successful than Brutus is. He better knows the psychology of the crowd and manages to 'put it under control' with his skilful rhetoric and win it over to achieve his goal.

However, Antony wins not only because he shows good rhetorical skills but also because he moves around and gets closer to the gathered Romans. Antony is also able to show the reasons why Brutus killed Caesar and how he committed the murder by showing Caesar's wounded body and his will. These gestures help him to persuade and stir up the Romans to a rebellion.

Shakespeare shows how much power is achieved by politicians who manage to gain the trust of the crowd by using various verbal deceptions and expressions that support them, without convincing arguments. The funeral speeches of both Brutus and Antony are not just words spoken in order to show their inner feelings. They are distinct 'discussions' that are planned in a clever and deceitful way to manipulate and control the logic (in the case of Brutus) and the emotions (in the case of Antony) of the people who are only tools in their political game.

Sources

1. Shakespeare, W. (1992) Julius Caesar. In: *The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare*. London, Chancellor Press, pp. 752–776.

References

1. Ballard, K. (2016) *Rhetoric, Power and Persuasion in Julius Caesar*. <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/rhetoric-power-and-persuasion-in-julius-caesar> [Accessed 15th August 2022].

2. Behnam, A. (2009) Verbal Power Duel: Verbal Combat Strategies in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: Brutus Versus Antony. *Kemanusiaan: The Asian Journal of Humanities*. 16, 35–57.
3. Davis, B. & Francis, K. (2021) Discourses on Learning in Education: Making Sense of a Landscape of Difference. *Frontiers in Education*. 6:760867. DOI: 10.3389/educ.2021.760867
4. Domenico, M. (2021) Shakespeare's Julius Caesar Wounds, Reasons, Persuasion. *Tesi di Laurea in Letteratura Ingles*. Universita Del Salento. https://www.academia.edu/59464092/Shakespeares_Julius_Caesar_Wounds_Reasons_Persuasion [Accessed 27th August 2022].
5. Greene, G. (1980) The Power of Speech/To Stir Men's Blood: The Language of Tragedy in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. *Renaissance Drama*. 11, 67–93.
6. Leithart, J.P. (2004) Introduction to Julius Caesar. https://theopolisinstitute.com/leithart_post/essay-introduction-to-julius-caesar/ [Accessed 12th August 2022].
7. Mackay, H. (2010) *Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*. Edinburgh Gate, Pearson Education Limited.
8. Miola, S. R. (2002) Shakespeare's Ancient Rome: Difference and Identity. In: Hattaway M. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakesperare's History Plays*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 193–214.
9. Parenti, M. (2003) *The Assassination of Julius Caesar: A People's History Of Ancient Rome*. New York, The New Press.
10. Peltonen, M. (2017) Popularity and the art of rhetoric: Julius Caesar in context. In: Fitter C. (ed.) *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners Digesting New Social History*. Oxford University Press, pp. 163–179.
11. Phoon, A. (2004) A Vision Fair and Fortunate: Ideology, Politics and Selfhood in Julius Caesar. *Sydney Studies in English*. 30, 21–40.
12. Rivers, I. (1994) *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry*. 2nd edn. London, Routledge.
13. Rapp, C. (2022) Aristotle's Rhetoric. In: Zalta N. E. (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/aristotle-rhetoric> [Accessed 10th December 2022].
14. Wills, G. (2011) *Rome and Rhetoric: Shakespere's Julius Caesar*. Yale University Press.

Татјана Думитрашковић
Универзитет у Источном Сарајеву
Педагошки факултет у Бијељини

РЕТОРИКА И ПОЛИТИКА - МОЋ РЕЧИ У ШЕКСПИРОВОМ *ЈУЛИЈУ ЦЕЗАРУ*

Резиме

Шекспирова драма Јулије Цезар наглашава везу између реторике и политике. Неки критичари, попут Гејли Грин и Ким Балард, тврде да је реторика у Шекспировој драми *Јулије Цезар* од суштинског значаја за централне политичке проблеме и анализу ликова. Они такође мисле да Шекспир имплицитно критикује реторику која крије моралну и политичку истину. Коришћење специфичног језика и манипулација значењем речи сигурна су средства за стицање политичке моћи у драми. Шекспир добро разуме да моћ долази од оних политичара који знају да манипулишу страстима обичног народа. Шекспирови војници су истовремено и вешти политичари који манипулисањем одређеним речима и гестовима покушавају да остваре сопствене амбициозне циљеве. Погребни говори нуде Бруту и Антонију прилику да убеду људе у вредност сопствене идеологије снагом изговорених речи. Описујући Цезарово убиство као резултат напора завереника да одрже ред у Риму, Брут користи прозу и паралелизме да створи осећај равнотеже. Користећи слободни стих, апострофу, понављање и иронију, Антоније утиче на осећања римског народа и изазива његову побуну. Шекспир наглашава да успешно коришћење реторичке вештине доноси снажну политичку моћ и контролу.

► **Кључне речи:** Шекспир, Јулије Цезар, реторика, моћ, политика, манипулација.

Preuzeto: 2. 2. 2023.
Korekcije: 4. 3. 2023.
Prihvaćeno: 21. 4. 2023.