

ENGLISH ADVANCED: *SPEECHES*

Atwood and Keating

‘An effective speech challenges the thoughts of its audience’. Evaluate how TWO speeches you have studied in this module have challenged the thoughts of its audience.

The audience and their reaction to a speech is what makes a speech. The way their thoughts and ideas are shaped by the speaker makes for an effective speech. Although it can be beneficial to challenge the thoughts of the audience, their opinions may already be formed in the direction which the speaker intends them to be there, therefore the thoughts only need to be reinforced not necessarily challenged. In *Funeral Service for an Unknown Soldier* by Paul Keating and *Spotty-Handed Villainesses* by Margaret Atwood, the speakers use rhetoric devices to induce value in what is being said and hence for textual integrity. There are many contrasts between these two speeches including their target audience and situation of delivery but one major difference is the speaker's intention. Keating has an Australian audience which is already full of patriotism his speech simply makes use of these emotions; hence he is not actually challenging the thoughts of the audience. Atwood instead is going against the ideas in society, neither agreeing with the views of radical feminists nor dismissing them altogether as a result she is challenging the thoughts of the audience in an attempt to find a balance between the two.

Funeral Service for the Unknown Soldier is delivered to an audience of Australians. This included many who would have agreed with Keating's views in politics, many who had lived through the many major wars which Australia had participated in, including Vietnam, Korea, WWI and WWII. It would have also included those - mainly in a TV audience as the speech was telecast live and had snippets replayed in the evening news – who may have gone against his ideals and for this reason he had to work harder to influence the thoughts of the audience. Not all, but many in the audience, would have felt a deep sense of patriotism to Australia and were therefore able to identify with the values with the Prime Minister put forward. As their ideals were similar to those which Keating was presenting there weren't challenged, just amplified.

First and foremost Keating sets a national identity by making various allusions to the ANZAC legend. This encompasses values such as mateship, courage, hardship, honour. This unity acts to arouse the patriotism of the audience. Keating states, “we do not know this Australian's name and we never will,” which makes use of inclusive language to make the audience, both present on the day and those in the TV audience, feel like they were a major part of the ideals which he was presenting. To continue this trend there were a number of dramatic pauses throughout the speech.

The speech was given in the style of a eulogy, it was delivered in a way which gave time for the audience to reflect on and hopefully agree with the ideas which were being put forward to them. There was a spike in visits to the Australian War Memorial – where the speech was delivered - following the speech, demonstrating the immense effect which the speech had on the audience. As a final point the speech aims to honour the Australian soldiers and extend this honour to those who are in the audience. With the simple declarative quote, “He is all of them. And he is one of us” the PM is able to associate the idea of being Australian with the ideal of being honourable like the late soldiers. In closing he has manipulated the crowd to heighten their feelings of patriotism and support of the soldiers but has not really challenged the thoughts of the audience. The various rhetoric techniques mean the audience is able to effectively reflect on what ideas are being presented to them as well as their thoughts on these issues.

This speech by Keating was delivered at the opening of the Unknown Soldier's grave at the Australian war memorial. It was designed to honour the soldiers who fought in the various wars by highlighting the patriotism which they and all Australian's have. Keating is simply feeding the desires of all Australian's therefore not actually challenging the ideals of his audience.

The above speech has detailed an identity – the Australian identity. This is very similar to the way that Atwood attempts to create an identity in *Spotty Handed Villainesses* albeit a female identity. She attempts to challenge the ideals which are presented in literature and society. Moreover, she is challenging the thoughts of her audience; a great contrast to Keating's speech. She constructs textual integrity by suiting her rhetorical devices to the more casual nature of her speech. As Atwood's speech was given to small groups of women, it allows her to use a more informal tone and go on a number of tangents of different topics and how some ideas in society should be challenged hence challenging the ideas of the audience.

The main theme throughout Atwood's speech is the role which fiction plays in society. To demonstrate this role she uses the anecdote of her nephew's play where all they did was eat breakfast when she says, "The play progressed. The two characters had more breakfast. Then they had more. They passed each other the jam, the cornflakes, the toast". This serves as a motif for our desires in fiction – for all complications to happen, whereas in life we would be simply content with eternally "eating breakfast". In terms of challenging the thoughts of the audience, this theme is in no way ground breaking, a stark disparity to the themes of feminism and the representation of female characters in literature. Her views on feminism are not radical by the common standard; in fact, she mocks the feminist view that overalls were the only acceptable dress for women, commenting simply that women should be treated with the same equality as men. As she has written various books which had major female characters, many in the audience would have gone in thinking she was a radical feminist, and by choosing a less radical ideal she is actually challenging the thoughts of those in the audience. Instead she simply details how literature should be more realistic in its portrayal of women. By making a number of allusions to 'bad' female characters, such as Lady Macbeth – whom the speech is named after - it demonstrates how they are the ones who are remembered. Her aim in having more 'bad' female character is to make them be seen as equal with men.

In the informal style of the speech, she then attempts to demonstrate how just because there would be an increase of the number of bad women in books, this doesn't necessarily filter out into society; this is done via intertextual reference to a common archetype in literature when she comments, "the mere seduction of a man no longer rates very high on the sin scale. But try asking a number of women what the worst thing is that a woman friend could possibly do to them". This quote highlights the fact that life is infinitely different to literature. As Atwood is detailing ideas which have not been readily presented in literature she is in fact challenging the thoughts of her audience, who – due to the book club nature of the speech – are strongly influenced by fiction.

Atwood's speech is designed to go against the stereotypical thought of those in society in relation to feminism and the portrayal of women. She especially challenges the view of the audience as they would have gone to the speech having read her books and believing her to be a radical feminist. By saying that literature should not be curving towards the radical misogynist or feminist ideas, but instead should be tending towards what is considered 'normal', she is ironically challenging the thoughts of the women in the audience by saying literature should be able 'normal' society, and not radical feminist views.

The two speeches studied were delivered in completely different contexts. "Funeral Service of the Unknown Soldier" was telecast to the whole of Australia, whereas "Spotty-handed Villainesses" was delivered in small groups of around eight to ten people. It is for this reason that the rhetoric devices used, which shape our understanding of the various themes, differs. Keating's speech is more formal due to the fact it is effectively a eulogy for the soldiers of war whereas Atwood is able to go on various tangents and use more humorous devices due to the informal nature of her speech. Both make effective use of different strategies moulded to the medium of the speeches to construct textual integrity. In addition to this the audience's thoughts are only challenged in the speech as she is speaking against the status quo whereas in the first speech he is simply evoking an Australian ideal to an audience of Australians.