

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I would like to draw the conclusion of the use of rhetorical figures in *Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You; Ask What You Can Do For Your Country*. There are some interesting points that I find related to the use of rhetorical figures in the speech.

I have found six dominant rhetorical figures in *Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You; Ask What You Can Do For Your Country*; namely antithesis (8 data), climax (4 data), parallelism (7 data), chiasm (2 data), anaphora (2 data), and repetition (2 data). Among them, antithesis and parallelism are the most frequently used.

Kennedy's inaugural address is short, but I think Kennedy is smart to include rich variations of rhetorical figures in the speech. There are more than two kinds of rhetorical figures which are frequently repeated. Therefore, the speech does not make the audience feel bored.

Antithesis and parallelism are the most dominant rhetorical figures in the speech. However, none of the data containing either antithesis or parallelism is more famous than the phrase *Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You; Ask What You Can Do For Your Country*, which is a kind of chiasm, which appears only twice in the speech. It shows that the most dominant figure does not necessarily mean the most famous one. In my opinion, the phrase *Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You; Ask What You Can Do For Your Country* is famous because at that time it was a brand new statement that people had never heard before. An inaugural address generally contains more or less the promises of the new leader assuring the citizens that they have made the right decision by voting for them. It seems that Kennedy does not focus on promising, but challenges the citizens of America to contribute. The phrase becomes more effective because Kennedy uses *you* as the subject, instead of *we*. It makes the phrase a direct imperative statement as well as an enlightening statement to the audience.

Furthermore, the speech is famous not only for its antithesis and parallelism but also for the whole rhetorical figures in it. The significance of the antithesis and parallelism is not in making the words or sentences memorable, but more in their effect on the audience at that time.

Antithesis, a rhetorical figure in which there is a contrasting relationship between two ideas which are joined or juxtaposed, is the most frequently used in the speech. I think that the dominant use of antithesis in the speech is effective. In half of the data containing antithesis, Kennedy emphasizes the contrast between

good and bad. He states the bad things and then he states what should be done. In the rest of the data of antithesis, Kennedy does not stress the contrast between good and bad; he gives a sense of balance from the opposite ideas. He gives hopes to Americans that there will be equality. He also motivates them to be strong in any condition. At that time, being in Cold War, Americans were in need of hope and encouragement. Americans needed someone whom they can trust to lead their future. Through the use of antithesis in his inaugural speech, Kennedy, the new young president, gives Americans hope and encouragement.

Parallelism is the rhetorical figure which is most frequently used after antithesis. Parallelism consists of several parts of a sentence or several sentences which are similar in their structures. The data on parallelism in the speech have the same structure. By using the same structure in many parts, Kennedy creates rhythm in the speech. In my opinion, it is one of the factors that keep the audience engrossed in the speech.

Two of the data on parallelism reveal that Kennedy addresses his speech not only to his country but also to other nations in the world. The first data shows that there are several groups of people and nations whom Kennedy makes promises to. The other is addressed to America and its enemies, in which Kennedy shows his desire for peace. I think it is a good point that Kennedy includes other nations in his speech. At that time, mass access to television was newly available. Since television was a new thing, people were naturally interested in it. Kennedy's inaugural address was broadcasted all over the world. In my opinion, involving other countries in the speech is a good way to raise Kennedy's popularity.

Each of the rhetorical figures has its own function. An antithesis is used both to balance contrasting ideas and to highlight them. Climax shows that the last is the most important. Parallelism shows that the ideas have equal importance. Parallelism also adds balance, rhythm and clarity to the sentence. Chiasm is often used for witty or aphoristic effect. Anaphora can be used to underline descriptive and emotional effects. Repetition gives emphasis or emotive heightening to the repeated parts. These functions can be generally categorized into two kinds. Antithesis, climax, and parallelism show the importance of the ideas. Chiasm, anaphora, and repetition, whether they are aphorisms or emotional effects, are used to affect the audience. Each of the functions is portrayed through three kinds of rhetorical figures, so that there is equal division. Kennedy does not want to bore his audience so he uses different kinds of rhetorical figures that have a similar function.

All the rhetorical figures and their functions enhance the speech; they add beauty to the form of the speech, emphasize the important points of the speech, and also give encouragement to the audience. Since the speech is a president's inaugural address, it is important for him to affect the audience. A president's inaugural address has to have something special that can grab people's attention. The rhetorical figures in Kennedy's inaugural address make the speech more appealing and convincing. Kennedy succeeds in using rhetorical figures in his inaugural address.

Since there are still many other kinds of rhetorical figures in Kennedy's speech that can be analysed, further researches on the use of rhetorical figures in it may be of great advantage.

(1019 words)