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### Satire: Bowe Bergdahl's Happy Ending?

In June 2009, Bowe Bergdahl endangered fellow soldiers when he decided to "... [walk] away from his base in Afghanistan...". Because he was missing from his assigned base, Bergdahl was held responsible for the injuries few soldiers endured while specifically searching for him. According to *The Washington Post*, Bergdahl was found "...after spending five years in militant captivity" in May 2014. In exchange for his return to U.S soil, Bergdahl was released on the pretenses of releasing five Taliban prisoners from military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; this exchange was noted to be very controversial because his careless actions put others' lives in danger. Because the overall situation was so disputed, it made it very difficult for Bergdahl to receive a pardon from President Obama. Eugene Fidell, Bergdahl's attorney, "...had hoped that [Obama] would grant a pardon. He didn't"(Lamothe n.p).

Fake news websites deliberately publish misinformation in order to inform the general public about contemporary issues and popular opinion. Comparing "fake news" and real news, the rhetorical triangle is implied by ethos, pathos, and logos. The segments of the rhetorical triangle: ethos, pathos, and logos, identify the apparent differences between a fake news source and real news. *The Washington Post* is a credible newspaper source written with an emphasis on national politics, while *Article 107 News* is an online

fake news source but intended to draw attention real life issues through the use of satire. Although both news sources address the story of Bowe Bergdahl's desertion case, *Article 107 News* illustrates a satire to make obvious the candor of the news story. *Article 107 News* intends the article to be perceived in a satirical context, while the article in *The Washington Post* is strictly informative. Both genres of both articles provide a different context and method of understanding. Bowe Bergdahl's desertion case can be interpreted by two different viewpoints, and the articles provide rhetorical analysis to interpret both perspectives.

The purpose of both news sources is to inform, while satire intends to inform by poking fun at the contemporary issues in society. Through satirical device, the fake news article by *Article 107 News* intends for the reader to understand the reasons why Bowe Bergdahl was not pardoned. Although the purpose of the article is to implicitly defend the reasons why Bergdahl was not pardoned, the reader must be able to acknowledge the article as a satire. On the other hand, the article published in *The Washington Post* informs the reader on the unbiased results of the desertion case and allows the reader to reflect on his/her own opinion of the news story.

Exigency is the urgent need or demand for a writer to share his/her biased or unbiased point of view of a news story, event, controversial belief etc. The exigent circumstances for the *Article 107 News* article was the need to address the readers who believed Bergdahl should have been pardoned. Because Bergdahl is introduced as someone who was "traded for five terrorist leaders who were not at all a threat to the US....", it is intended for the reader to believe that the five terrorist leaders were a threat to the U.S (Jashol n.p). The satire should be fairly obvious to the reader but not explicitly

stated. On the other hand, the exigent circumstance that convinced Don Lamothe to create the article in *The Washington Post* was the purpose of informing the reader why President Obama didn't grant a pardon for Bergdahl's desertion case. Informing the reader with unbiased information allows for his/her own judgment and inferences. Both news articles fulfill the exigency of the analysis of Bergdahl's desertion case news story.

Ethos is a significant component in rhetorical analysis, which contemplates the credibility of a literary source. The credibility of each news source must be considered in order to identify "fake news" from real news, or in this case satire from real news. *The Washington Post* is a highly credible news source that provides facts and unbiased news, focusing on both liberal and conservative political views. Don Lamothe, a winning military journalist, has won various Pulitzer prizes for his excellence in journalism. His accomplishments and recognitions further the credibility of *The Washington Post* as well as his own credibility as writer. On the contrary, *Article 107 News* wouldn't be a reputable news source if it were to be taken literally. Hugh Jashol does not further the credibility of the article because he has never been significantly recognized as an accomplished writer (in comparison to Dan Lamothe). Not only is the prestige of the writer to be taken into consideration in terms of credibility, but also the fact that both news sources interpret direct quotes from authoritative figures. In Lamothe's article in *The Washington Post*, "Bergdahl's legal team said Trump's comments deny their client 'the due process right to a fair trial'" (Lamothe n.p). Because Trump is an authoritative figure, his opinion was said to influence Bergdahl's right to a fair trial; quotations provide the reader with a different perspective and increases the source's credibility. In Jashol's article in *Article 107 News*, he quotes President Obama saying, "...it is only right that [Bergdahl] receives both the

Purple Heart and the Prisoner of War medal””(Jashol n.p). Because President Obama is an authoritative figure, the reader is inclined to believe the context of the quote, while it is meant for satire.

Logos is another rhetorical device that provides the reader with the overall message and topic of the news source; it is the appeal to logic or reasoning. The news articles in both *The Washington Post* and *Article 107 News* appeal to logos in different ways. *The Washington Post* states the cold hard facts of the context of Bergdahl’s desertion case; the Obama Administration ultimately decided not to act on Bowe Bergdahl’s pardon request. Bergdahl’s attorney and legal team contributed to the reasoning behind the pardon request having been declined; Bergdahl was declined “... right to fair consideration by the top officer overseeing the case...”(Lamothe n.p) due to Trump’s continued attacks threatening any chance he had at a fair trial. *Article 107 News* implicitly states the facts behind a satirical use of derision. Different from “fake news”, *Article 107 News* provides facts beneath the satire; a satirical technique dispenses a biased opinion of the reality of the news story. Satire is the use of humor or irony intended to maintain a biased opinion; Jashol disorientates the context of Bergdahl’s desertion case in order to insert his own thoughts and opinions in the article.

Pathos is a component of rhetorical analysis in which it appeals to emotion. In most instances, pathos is used to evoke feelings of pity or sorrow. Both articles attempt to evoke feelings of pity for Berghard’s situation. In *The Washington Post*, Lamothe creates the informative article in order to allow the reader to reflect on President Obama’s decision to refuse to act on Bergdahl’s pardon request. Lamothe arouses a sense of pity for Bergdahl; he “...[spent] five years in military captivity...”, and it was “... determined

Bergdahl suffered from a mental disorder that causes psychotic episodes”(Lamothe n.p). The reader can't help but feel sympathy and pity for Bergdahl and his inevitable situation. On the other hand, Jashol evokes different feelings due to his method in satire and the implicitly stated truth. He falsely quotes the President saying “.... that ....a lot of soldiers have a bunch of those ‘combat stripes’ as well, but they were earned in much easier conditions...”(Jashol n.p). Jashol wants the reader to easily identify the use of satire and understand that Bergdahl wasn't any more special than the rest of the troops in the armed forces; he didn't deserve to be pardoned for not fulfilling the duty that so many other troops are expected to do so.

Therefore, the rhetorical triangle sets the standards for an exceptionally written analysis. The exigency prompts the reader to address a conflicting topic or contemporary issue, while integrating the context of Bergdahl's desertion case. Although the purpose of both articles was slightly different, each was achieved through a different rhetorical device. The news article in *The Washington Post* informed the reader of Bergdahl's conflicting situation and convictions. On the other hand, the article in *Article 107 News* achieved the purpose of using satire to allow the reader to judge Bergdahl for himself. Although not fake news, satire is different because it is obvious enough to decipher the truth. The rhetorical analysis was achieved through ethos, pathos, and logos; all three aspects of the rhetorical triangle further the credibility and efficiency of both articles. It is interesting to be able to perceive the same news story with two different perspectives.

## Works Cited

Jashol, Hugh. "Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl Archives » Article 107 News." *Article 107 News*. N.p., 8 Jan. 2017. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.

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