

Michael Zhao

Mary Hays

Rhet 105

2/12/2017

Word Count: 1274

Prejudice and Perspective

Satire news and real news are often considered two sides of the same coin because they write about the same events but often through different lenses. Real news is composed of what happened and all the details regarding the events whereas satire news is about the same events but uses irony, humor, and exaggeration to expose and ridicule the events that have happened. In the September of 2016, Elon Musk had announced his plan to colonize Mars and potentially save humanity. In *The Onion*, an article was written about Elon Musk's plan and summarized his method in thirteen straightforward and simple steps.

Inexperienced users of the world-wide web might misunderstand the purpose of *the Onion* and mistake the satirical news for fake news or even real news. Satirical news is meant to poke fun at the events that have happened, but fake news intentionally misinforms the public with lies. All news employ techniques to appeal to the audience, one example is the rhetorical triangle, which contains logos, ethos, and pathos. Logos appeals to the reason and logic. Ethos appeals to the credibility of the writer. Pathos appeals to the values, beliefs, and emotions of the audience. Both satirical and real news writers employ these three techniques to gather views for their articles.

Wired is an American magazine that talks about “how emerging technologies affect culture, the economy, and politics” (“Wired (magazine)”). Nick Stockton, a science reporter who primarily affiliates with *Wired*, writes a report on Elon Musk’s speech at the 67th annual International Astronautical Congress in Guadalajara, Mexico. Stockton has a degree in geography from Portland State University and has traveled mostly in the western states (“Nick Stockton”). In Stockton’s report, he says that Musk talks about how humanity will get to Mars to build a civilization using “a slew of new technology” (Stockton) and details and expenses involving the technology. By having *Wired* publish his report, Stockton gains ethos through the reputation of *Wired* who is reputed to have credible articles about technology. This builds trust with his readers and allows the audience to easily accept the facts presented in Stockton’s article. Stockton is also confirmed to be a credible reporter and writer of the scientific subjects by websites such as *Linkedin*, *Wired*, and *Muckrack*.

Stockton uses logos by telling his audience how exactly they will get to Mars. He steps through the process, talking about what kind of rockets will be propelled into the air, how exactly it will reach Mars, how long it will take, and how it will stop on Mars (Stockton). Stockton steps through this process to have the audience know that it is certainly possible to go to Mars. Stockton even goes through the costs of the materials, the type of rockets, the speed of the rockets, the number of passengers and the height of the rockets (Stockton). By adding in this data and numbers, his audience with a great sense of logic is more readily able to accept this new information.

The article uses pathos by appealing to the audience’s emotions, feelings, values, beliefs, and interests. Stockton writes that Musk says that humans can either stay on Earth

and be wiped out by an extinction event or become spacefaring and venture out into space and create more civilizations. This connects to the audience's interests since no one wants to die. The obvious choice here would be to not stay on Earth but to become "a spacefaring and multi-planetary species (Stockton)." By asking a life-and-death question, Stockton easily appeals to his readers' fear of death and gathers their attention. Telling the audience that they'll possibly die if a plan isn't accomplished is a great way to get their attention since people usually wouldn't ignore information that would otherwise place them in great danger.

Many people know of *The Onion* as a fake news source but they publish satire and not fake news. *The Onion* knows that what they're publishing is not completely correct and do it on purpose to make fun of the event that they're writing about. Many satirical pieces report the information in a biased way for you to look at the news in a different perspective. Even though the piece isn't completely truthful, it can raise some compelling questions about the event. "*The Onion* is an American digital media company and news satire organization that publishes articles on international, national, and local news ("The Onion")." *The Onion* has a reputation of reporting events with a comedic twist and they have done so with Musk's plan to move to Mars. This establishes the article's ethos since the author's credibility is well known for satirical pieces.

Even though *The Onion* has done a satirical article on Musk's plan to colonize Mars, it brings up some interesting questions. The article lists 13 elementary and straightforward steps that makes fun of Musk's plan to go to Mars. "Step 2: \$10 billion appears ("SpaceX's Plan")." This brings up an interesting point that differs from Stockton's report. While Stockton reports on how the plan would work, he doesn't necessarily go

into detail the one factor that the plan requires to work: money. *The Onion* questions this important point by listing it as a simple point. This appeals to the audience's logos and intelligence. The audience would ask, "Where did the \$10 billion come from? How would they get this money?"

The satirical piece constantly appeals to the audience's sense of pathos and emotions since every step that it lists is funny and hilarious as it simply lists a hard to accomplish objective as a straight-out step. The article says that we would need to invent two thousand three hundred forty-eight more technologies, easily acquire a huge sum of money, ditching all the people with no money and only allowing the rich to come, run away from all of Earth's problems (global warming, natural resources crises, etc), murdering happens on the ship, set up utilities and internet connections, taking a group photo, build a completely new civilization, and "Future Mars population considers colonizing barren wasteland of Earth in last-ditch effort to save species (SpaceX's Plan)."

Knowing the rhetorical triangle and how it works is key to analyzing any news source whether they're fake, satirical, or real. Rhetorical devices mainly work the same way in every piece of writing. The writer tries to argue their point by either using their authority, appealing to your interests and feelings, and appeals to your sense of logic. By knowing the author's purpose and how they want to appeal to the reader, the audience can dissect the text and can look at the piece objectively; instead of being swayed to look at the news through the author's point of view. Writers can use rhetorical devices to change how their audience look at their news sources.

Works Cited

- "Elon Musk Announces His Plan to Colonize Mars and Save Humanity." *Wired*. Conde Nast, n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.
- "Nick Stockton, Author at Scienceline." Scienceline, n.d. Web. 12 Feb. 2017.
- "SpaceX's Plan To Colonize Mars." *The Onion - America's Finest News Source*. N.p., 28 Sept. 2016. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.
- "The Onion." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 12 Feb. 2017.
- "Wired (magazine)." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 03 Feb. 2017.