

A Rhetorical analysis of Winston Churchill's speech: We Shall Fight on  
the Beaches

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide a thorough analysis of Winston Churchill's speech, *We shall fight on the beaches*, which he gave to the British House of Commons on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940, during the turmoil of the Second World War, as he was being pressured to surrender his nation to the enemy Germany's demands. Britain at that time was surrounded by an aura of imminent defeat. This paper shall consider the elements which made the speech so effective, influential and memorable that Churchill was able to channel his steadfastness to the British people, inspire his country to combat the Nazi threat and shift the course of the war in the Allies' favour. The analysis is conducted on the original version of the speech provided by the Chartwell Trust to the International Churchill Society's website, and shall be carried out through the close examination of various rhetorical devices discussed by Farnsworth in *Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric* and Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals described by Baker in *Aristotle's three modes of persuasion*.

Keywords: rhetoric, rhetorical analysis, rhetorical appeals, rhetorical devices, wartime speeches

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## References

## 1. Introduction

In order to create an eloquent speech that will have a desirable effect on an audience, a speaker must tap into the art of rhetoric and all of its devices. Winston Churchill succeeded remarkably well in doing so, and he was able to mold his oratory into a powerful political instrument. Churchill's speech on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940 to the House of Commons, which followed the Allied troops' miraculous evacuation from the beaches of Dunkirk, is evidence of his exquisite rhetorical skill. Acknowledging and studying the various devices and methods that Churchill utilized in his speech gives insight to the art of rhetoric, seeing as according to the introduction provided by Cannadine in the book *The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, the Prime Minister possessed "the most rhetorical style of any statesman in British history" (Churchill, p.4). The purpose of this thesis is to do just so, to analyse Churchill's speech *We shall fight on the beaches* and illuminate the various rhetorical devices mentioned by Farnsworth in *Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric*. In addition, the analysis will use Churchill's speech to consider examples of Aristotle's three key rhetorical appeals – logos, ethos and pathos – discussed by Baker (*Aristotle's three modes of persuasion*).

## 2. Winston Churchill

To appreciate the passion and intention behind the memorable wartime speech, it is advisable to understand the background and character of the person who created it. Historian Max Hastings described Winston Churchill (1874–1965) as one of the most significant people in all of history (Hastings, 2009/2011, p.11). Whether this is due to Churchill's magniloquent speeches at the time of crises, or his unyielding determination against Hitler and the Nazi threat during the Second World War, is up to one's own deduction. Perhaps it the combination of these two aspects that ensured the Churchill's memorable role in history, that at a time when Britain was on the defensive, when invasion seemed to be imminent, and when victory for the Allied nations was utterly unthinkable, the fighting spirit of Churchill's speeches served as Britain's greatest weaponry. This sentiment is supported by the statements of Josiah Wedgwood, the Labour MP in 1940, and Edward R. Murrow, a broadcast journalist and war correspondent during the war. Following Churchill's June 4<sup>th</sup> speech, Wedgwood stated that the speech was "worth a thousand guns, and the speeches of a thousand years" (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 155). Murrow remarked on one occasion that Churchill "mobilized the English language and sent it into battle" (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p.11).

As Cannadine remarks, it seemed unlikely during Churchill's youth that he would ever excel as a public speaker, given his speech impediment, lisp and stammer (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 2). Cannadine describes how Churchill was set on overcoming these difficulties, as he laboured hard to hone his speech, choosing to use unusual words and phrases (p.2). Churchill studied the orations of Cromwell, Chatham, Burke, Pitt, Macaulay, Bright, Disraeli and Gladstone, and memorized his father Lord Randolph Churchill's speeches by heart (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 2). As a result of the intense labour of exercising his speech, Churchill's oratory eventually took its distinctive, particular form (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 2). Cannadine illustrates how Churchill's speeches were "formal literary compositions, dictated in full beforehand, lovingly revised and polished, and delivered from a complete text" (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 3). An example of this is the first major speech given by Churchill to the House of Commons, as the oration took six weeks to put together. The reason for this meticulous attention was Churchill's fear of letting slip any unpremeditated or inappropriate remarks, and due to this he always remained uneasy before giving any important speeches (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p.2).

Churchill received education and training at the Royal Military College of Sandhurst, graduating in 1894 (Severance, *Winston Churchill: Soldier, Statesman, Artist*, p. 17). Later on, he gained first-hand war experience in Cuba, India, Egypt, Sudan, the front lines of World War I, and engaged in some of the last British cavalry charges in history (Severance, p. 18). Regarding his career as a statesman, Churchill served as First Lord of the Admiralty, Minister of Munitions, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Prime Minister (*Churchill: Leader and Statesman*, 2017). In addition to his political career and military service, Churchill published numerous literary pieces. It was his "life-long commitment to, as well as the mastery of, the written and spoken word" that earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953 (*The Nobel Prize for Literature*, 2017).

Cannadine describes how Churchill's oratory began to find its place only under the "perilous circumstances which he had been waiting his whole life to command" (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p.11). The dangers facing Britain and its allies seemed to match the Prime Minister's style perfectly, for it was the time of many Churchillian opposites: victory versus defeat, survival or annihilation, freedom facing tyranny, and civilization fighting barbarism (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 11). Soviet scholar VG Trukhanovsky once remarked that Churchill's speeches "impressed the masses, who had, at long last, found a dynamic

wartime leader who gave voice to their own feelings” (*Winston Churchill*, p. 257). One particular aspect which set Churchill apart from a large number of leaders in British history is the fact that he had first-hand experience of fighting on the battlefields. This is clear in historian AG Gardiner’s sharp but admiring statement regarding Churchill in 1914, in which he remarked that Churchill must be kept an eye on, as he is after all, ultimately a soldier (Hastings, 2009/2011, p. 26). It is impossible to describe all of Churchill’s qualities in the space of the present thesis, but the analysis should provide more insight to the intricacies of the man’s character.

### **3. The Second World War**

The time and setting for Churchill’s speech is the British House of Commons on June 4<sup>th</sup> 1940, during the aftermath of the unexpected Dunkirk deliverance (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 155). It is vital to have a sufficient understanding of those perilous times in order to fully comprehend the meaning behind the speech.

When the war began in September 1939, the British believed that it would end before reaching the western parts of Europe (Hastings, 2009/2011, p.19). Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister at that time, lost the confidence of the nation and Parliament following the disastrous results of the British troops as they had attempted to prevent the German occupation of Norway (Hastings, 2009/2011, p. 19). The past eight months had proven that the present government did not have the required determination to challenge Hitler. Chamberlain, Churchill, foreign secretary Halifax and the chief whip Margesson held a meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 1940, discussing who should replace Chamberlain as Prime Minister (Hastings, 2009/2011, p. 20).

Churchill was issued the position, as the demand for his determination and fierceness was recognized. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May he wrote in his memoirs of the deep relief he felt; as if his whole life had been preparation for this moment and the task at hand (Hastings, 2009/2011, p. 22). Five years earlier, in 1935, the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin had explained the reasoning for his reluctance to add Churchill to his government. He stated that if a war were to break out, Churchill’s freshness must be preserved so that he could act as a Prime Minister during wartime (Hastings, 2009/2011, p. 20). It was not thanks to his political achievements that Churchill was named Prime Minister, as he was generally remembered for the humiliating defeat of the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign, in addition to his switching of parties twice in the House of Commons and his support for Edward VIII during the abdication scandal (Hastings,

2009/2011, p. 25). Rather, his rise to Prime Minister was based on his reputation as an oppositionist of reassurance policing and the nation's recognition of a need for Churchill's warrior-like leadership (Hastings, 2009/2011, p. 20, 26). Leo Amery wrote in March 1940 that he believed Churchill to be the only man with true will and fighting spirit (Hastings, 2009/2011, p.27). As Gardiner remarked earlier, Churchill was a soldier at heart who rose to his best on the battlefield, although his new role required the use of his weapon in a rather rhetorical manner.

Of course, there were reservations amongst the British regarding their nation's victory and Churchill's policy, as he was vehemently against negotiations with the enemy (*Summer of 1940*, 2017). The War Cabinet did consider the offer of peace negotiations through Italy, but Churchill opposed this vigorously as well. He was certain that Hitler would fail to honour any agreements, as he had done in 1938 (*Summer of 1940*, 2017). On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1940, news magazine *Time* described how Churchill, "the shrew, bold, stocky, small man", had changed the course of the Allied powers' warfare (Hastings, 2009/2011, p.29). This sentiment is reflected in the comments from Hastings that under a different prime minister, a group of politicians favouring peace negotiations with Germany would have risen to power, and this would have had disastrous consequences for Britain (2009/2011, p.47).

#### **4. Evacuation of Dunkirk**

One of the main reasons for his speech, the Dunkirk evacuation, began on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 1940. The task of the rescue mission *Operation Dynamo* was to evacuate the British Expeditionary Forces from the beaches of Dunkirk. Even before the operation had successfully been brought to an end, Churchill had assured the Ministers of Cabinet of Britain's resilience: "Of course, whatever happens at Dunkirk, we shall fight on" (Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, p.88). He sent the order for all vessels – civilian as well – to embark on the operation, and he describes the events in the following passage:

Everyone who had a boat of any kind, steam or sail, put out for Dunkirk, and the preparations, fortunately begun a week earlier, were now aided by the brilliant improvisation of volunteers on an amazing scale. (*Their Finest Hour*, p. 89)

At 2.23 p.m. on June 4<sup>th</sup> the Admiralty announced that Operation Dynamo had been completed. Churchill went on to address Parliament in public, and later in secret session, of the full story regarding the Dunkirk evacuation. He felt that it was vital to explain not only to the nation, but the world as well, that Britain's resolve to fight on was based on serious grounds. "It was also right to lay bare my own reasons for confidence" stated Churchill (*Their Finest Hour*, p.103). He also viewed the Dunkirk operation as a crucial reminder that a passive stance against Germany would have only disastrous consequences for Britain.

## 5. Rhetoric

Churchill's speech is a work of rhetoric, and the term *rhetoric* refers to the art of using language to influence the thought or action of others. (Connolly, *The Art of Rhetoric*, p. 3) Its usual synonym is persuasion, addressing others with the intention of getting them to think, to feel, to believe or to act in agreement with the speaker's cause. The cause in Churchill's speech is the belief that Britain must never surrender to Germany, or even enter peace negotiations, and to persuade the United States to join the war as Britain's ally. Connolly states that rhetoric unites men through the exchange of thought and language (*The Art of Rhetoric*, p.3). This proves to be true in Churchill's case, as he indeed brought Britain and the leaders of the United States together in a united cause. The speaker must also convince his audience that the proposed action is reasonable, and Churchill is particularly aware of this in his statement "It was also right to lay bare my own reasons for confidence" (*Their Finest Hour*, p.103). Connolly states that the speaker must appeal to will and reason, but also to delight, by presenting his thoughts in a style as pleasing as it is clear, and in a tone appropriate to his subject and audience (*The Art of Rhetoric*, p.5).

## 6. Theory and methodology

The analysis will concentrate on Churchill's speech as a rhetorically organised communication, which includes the inspection of the various methods he used to affect his audience. The analysis shall also examine descriptive vocabulary and observe sources of vividness, imaginativeness, and vitality, as urged by Bryant and Wallace (*Fundamentals of Public Speaking*, p. 420). Bryant and Wallace state that the lengths, kinds, and qualities of characteristic sentences in a speech should be noted (p.420). The critic must analyse the imagery and figures of speech to uncover what meanings, flavor, or atmosphere they create (Bryant & Wallace, p.420). Another aspect the analysis shall focus on is Churchill's use of



power words, or high emotion words, which are generally defined as words that evoke emotional response in a listener. Examples of these words are “disastrous”, “freedom”, “seize”, “threaten” and “tyranny”.

The analysis will identify examples of some of the various rhetorical devices mentioned by Farnsworth in *Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric*. He states that while everyone speaks and writes in patterns, which usually arise from unconscious custom, it is possible to study these patterns deliberately and learn more about how to use the ones that make the words more emphatic, memorable, or otherwise effective (vii). It is only fair to acknowledge the origins of the devices employed by Churchill as well. Rhetorical figures were first recognized in ancient Greece and Rome; most of them involve the repetition of words, putting them into an unexpected order, leaving out expected words, and so on (Farnsworth, vii). As Farnsworth comments, these devices aid the larger, more aesthetic principles – repetition and variety, suspense and relief, concealment and surprise (vii). Farnsworth states that the best writers and speakers, the ones whose work has stood up the longest, have made important use of rhetorical figures (vii). It should be mentioned that it is unfeasible to detect every kind of device in Churchill's speech, but this thesis should provide an adequate understanding of them. Farnsworth admits the difficulty of attempting to discuss every known rhetorical figure (ix).

According to Aristotle, any spoken or written communication that aims to persuade an audience, which is the case in Churchill's speech as well, should include three key rhetorical elements: logos – the logic and reasoning in the message; ethos – the character, credibility and trustworthiness of the communicator; and pathos – the emotional dimension (Baker, p.1). Logos includes fact-based, logical argumentation, pathos involves feelings, stories and vivid imagery, and ethos refers to the speaker's credibility and trustworthiness (Baker, p.1). The amount of each element demanded depends on the situation and tone of the occasion. Baker illustrates this: “a technical manual, a highly informational message, will focus on logos – the message needs to be clear, logical, precise and unambiguous” (p.1). In comparison, a speech such as Churchill's, which is meant to persuade an audience, would require the right mix of all three elements, perhaps relying more on emotional appeal than a technical manual would.

Logos is needed where facts or processes are important, and this element involves presenting clear claims substantiated by evidence: process descriptions, facts, statistics, examples, expert opinion and analogies (Baker, p.1). On the other hand, an audience will not be swayed if it does not consider the speaker to be convincing or trustworthy, and this is where ethos is needed. The

ethical appeal involves the speaker showing his personal belief, commitment to a cause, his competence, passion, sincerity and authority (Baker, p.2). It is particularly vital for speeches designed to establish a relationship or collaboration with another party. In Churchill's case, this other party is the United States, as he is attempting to urge the country to join the war on Britain's side. As Baker mentions, a speaker's credibility is evident in three ways: the quality of the message, the audience's perception of the speaker as a communicator, and in the speaker's reputation as a communicator independent from his message. The first recognizes the audience's needs and motivations, contains all necessary facts, and is meaningful, clear, logical, avoiding careless mistakes, and is honest and ethical (Baker, p.2). The second way requires the speaker to project confidence, be well prepared and build rapport with the audience.

Churchill indeed had been privately messaging the US President Roosevelt before the Dunkirk speech, thus building a rapport of sorts. This is shown in a passage in Churchill's book *Their Finest Hour*:

My relations with the President gradually became so close that the chief business between our two countries was virtually conducted by these personal interchanges between him and me. In this way our perfect understanding was gained ... In all I sent him nine hundred and fifty messages, and received about eight hundred in reply.  
(p.22)

An ethical appeal is evident as Churchill sought to build integrity and reliability through a close relationship with President Roosevelt.

The third way that a speaker's credibility can be shown is by referring to rank, goodwill, expertise, or common ground (Baker, p.2). "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible" states Connolly (*The Art of Rhetoric*, p.398). Lastly, the emotional appeal pathos involves appeals to an audience's beliefs, feelings, emotions, desires, and fears (Baker, p.2). Connolly describes how persuasion comes through the hearers when the speech stirs their emotions, and that our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile (*The Art of*

*Rhetoric*, p.398). As Baker mentioned, in the instance that logical arguments fail, emotional appeals have the power to motivate an audience (p.2).

## 7. Analysis

The analysis in this thesis is conducted on the original, text version of the speech provided by the Chartwell Trust to the website of The International Churchill Society. Churchill himself has written the speech, which he gave behind the closed doors of the House of Commons on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1940. Each passage mentioned as part of the speech in this analysis is provided by the website of The International Churchill Society. It should be mentioned that Churchill gave the same speech, only slightly edited, years later during a radio broadcast.

### 7.1 Aim of the speech

The purpose of Churchill's June 4<sup>th</sup> speech was to report on the Dunkirk Deliverance, to rally and reassure his nation, and to convince the world – the United States in particular – that Britain was determined to continue the war until Germany was defeated. The reason for this was to get the neutral United States to join Britain and its allies in the war. Churchill wanted to inform the leaders of the United States of the risks towards their country if Germany were to gain victory over Britain, and he confirms these risks in his book: “An invasion of England, if took place, would have a still more profound effect on the United States.” (*Their Finest Hour*, p. 99) However, Churchill applied consideration so as to not alienate the potential ally by being too frank. In fact, the speech contains no direct reference to the United States at all, even though one of its main goals was to win over the nation. Churchill succeeded in doing so, which is evident in the memoirs of Cordell Hull, the U.S. Secretary of State at the time, who wrote after the speech:

Churchill had made his magnificent speech in the House of Commons ... The President and I believed Mr. Churchill meant what he said. Had we any doubt of Britain's determination to keep on fighting, we would not have taken the steps we did to get material to her. (*The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol.1 pp. 774–775)

One can be certain that Churchill succeeded in delivering his message with great assertiveness, and the tasteful manner of appealing indirectly to the United States appears to have achieved a desired effect, based merely on Hull's comments.

## 7.2 Paragraphs 1–3 Belgium's despair and heroics at Calais

Churchill begins his speech by reviewing the military developments that led up to Dunkirk, before diving into the evacuation itself. He had to skillfully balance between presenting facts in an encouraging way while not overlooking Britain's losses. He succeeded in doing so by emphasizing the fact that although the situation was unsatisfactory, it was more preferable than first predicted. The situation was encouraging in the sense that when Churchill had addressed the House of Commons a week before his speech and the Dunkirk evacuation, he had stated that only 20 000 or 30 000 men might be re-embarked from Dunkirk, but the total number of rescued troops amounted to 338 226 (Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, p. 102).

In the first paragraph of his speech, Churchill gives a detailed report of the British and French troops' progression, and his attention to detail is clear in how he describes the exact time of the events (*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*, 2017). The accuracy in his statement "from the moment that the French defenses at Sedan and on the Meuse were broken at the end of the second week of May" adds to his fact-based argumentation and logical appeal. Churchill continues on, describing the risk of Belgium's destruction. He lays emphasis on the impending doom with the phrases "the destruction of the fine Belgian Army" and "the abandonment of the whole of Belgium". These phrases are an example of *isocolon*, which is a rhetorical device involving the use of successive sentences, clauses, or phrases similar in elements such as structure (*Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric*, p.74). In addition, the use of isocolon includes mentioning various things about the same subject, which is shown in the earlier phrases, as they both refer to the gruesome fate risking Belgium.

Churchill addresses the change in French command – General Weygand has taken over in place of General Gamelin. It could be speculated that by referring to General Weygand as *Generalissimo* (meaning the highest-ranking of all generals), but not bestowing the same title to Gamelin, Churchill approves of the change in command. This speculation is supported by the fact that Churchill speaks of this change in his book *Their Finest Hour*, remarking that he

had admired Weygand's "masterly intervention" in the Battle of Warsaw, and that he thought Weygand to be "efficient and vigorous in a very high degree" (p. 51).

The urgency and havoc of the war is reflected in Churchill's use of several power words, such as "abandonment", "appeal", "destruction", "force", "grasp", "rapid", "scope" and "strength". Near the end of the paragraph Churchill mentions:

An effort was made by the French and British Armies in Belgium to keep holding the right hand of the Belgians and to give their own right hand to a newly-created French Army which was to have advanced across the Somme in great strength to grasp it.

One can notice the figures of speech "to keep holding the right hand of the Belgians" and "give their own right hand to a newly-created French Army". Since the armies could not literally hold onto each others' hands, it is clear that Churchill uses this phrase to convey the support and effort shown from the British and French Armies in Belgium. The two phrases could be considered to refer to the Bible, in which Isaiah 41:13 reads:

For I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, The One saying to you, Do not be afraid. I will help you. (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, 1981)

There is a similarity between this verse and the phrase in Churchill's speech, since both mention holding on, or "grasping", to the right hand of someone. Churchill is not remembered as a particularly religious figure, having stated that "I could hardly be called a pillar of the Church" (*Churchill Proceedings – Winston Churchill and Religion*, 2013), so he may have knowingly used this phrase in relation to the Bible verse in order to appeal to a possibly religious audience. Andrew Roberts states that during the war Churchill often drew on religious vernacular and imagery, despite not being a believer himself (*Churchill Proceedings – Winston Churchill and Religion*, 2013). So, although Churchill frequently used words with religious overtones, they were more often applied in common parlance and in the political idiom of the day than they are today (*Churchill Proceedings – Winston Churchill and Religion*, 2013). This method of appeal to the audience's beliefs demonstrates the rhetorical element pathos.

It is in the second paragraph that Churchill mentions the Germans for the first time. He employs generous alliteration and power words, stating: "the German eruption swept like a sharp scythe

around the right and rear of the Armies of the north”. The word “eruption”, which is quite descriptive in itself, reflects the abruptness of the German attack. Churchill refers to the German Army as one object, “the German eruption”, which dehumanizes the enemy by dismissing the soldiers as individuals. Churchill’s vocabulary gives his retelling of the events a dramatic hue, painting vivid imagery in the audience’s mind. This is another example of the rhetorical appeal pathos. As mentioned, Churchill applied generous alliteration, a method where each word in a string of words begins with the same consonant. The phrases “swept like a sharp scythe” and “around the right and rear” demonstrate this method, through which the speaker is able to apply emphasis on particular words. In this case, the /s/ sound mimics a sense of urgency and quickness in movement, whereas the /r/ sound similarly reflects the encircling manner of the Germans’ attack. Alliteration gives the phrases a stylish and oratorical quality, as well as a pleasing rhythm.

Churchill goes on to describe the armored divisions of the German Army as “each of about four hundred vehicles of different kinds, but carefully assorted to be complementary and divisible into small self-contained units”. His report of the German’s divisions appeals to logos, which involves presenting accurate facts. Churchill speaks of the severed communications between the British and French, due to Germany “shoring” its way up the coast to Boulogne and Calais. The verb “shore” refers to the act of cutting something with or as if with a sharp device, or to be deprived of something as if by cutting. This type of illustrative vocabulary adds to the imagery of the speech.

The second paragraph of the speech continues with the following passage:

Behind this armored and mechanized onslaught came a number of German divisions in lorries, and behind them again there plodded comparatively slowly the dull brute mass of the ordinary German Army and German people, always so ready to be led to the trampling down in other lands of liberties and comforts which they have never known in their own.

The phrase “armored and mechanized” describes the ruthless, almost robotic pace of the German Army. The Germans indeed boasted a high degree of institutional experience, adept leadership and training down to the unit level, as well as a combination of well-integrated

doctrine and first-class equipment (Tillman, 2019, *German Army During WW2*). Churchill describes the Germans as a single entity – a “dull brute mass” that “plodded comparatively slowly”. This description does not give the German soldiers any human characteristics, but rather suggests them to be similar to machines. Churchill’s reference to the Germans as “ordinary” strips them of any admirable or respectable traits, implying that they do not deserve any sort of recognition, for they are simply unexceptional. The last part of the passage, which mentions the trampling down of other nations’ freedom, gives insight to the brutality and injustice of the Nazi agenda.

Churchill begins his third paragraph by describing how the German attack, the “armored scythe-stroke”, almost reached Dunkirk. He uses *anaphora*, the repetition of words at the start of successive sentences or clauses (*Farnsworth’s Classical English Rhetoric*, p.16), to emphasize the Germans’ failure to do so: “this armored scythe-stroke almost reached Dunkirk – almost but not quite”. Anaphoric devices are often used to appeal to an audience’s emotions, and in this case the British audience would perhaps feel a sense of pride and success upon hearing Churchill’s words describing how their nation was able to keep the enemy away. Churchill describes the fighting at Boulogne and Calais as “desperate”. This is an example of emotional appeal, as the word generally indicates desperation or distress. This would certainly invoke fear in the British audience. Churchill continues:

The Guards defended Boulogne for a while and were then withdrawn by orders from this country. The Rifle Brigade, the 60th Rifles, and the Queen Victoria’s Rifles, with a battalion of British tanks and 1 000 Frenchmen, in all about four thousand strong, defended Calais to the last.

Churchill first refers to the 20th Independent Infantry Brigade, an infantry brigade of the British Army which defended Boulogne against the Germans before being successfully evacuated. He continues by listing the infantry regiments and additional French troops who “defended Calais to the last”. Churchill’s wording here emphasizes the sacrifice of the Calais garrison, who indeed fought to the last, until the 26<sup>th</sup> of May when the Germans had them surrounded. Churchill wrote of his feelings following the command sent on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May to the Brigadier Claude Nicholson at Calais:

One has to eat and drink in war, but I could not help feeling physically sick as we afterwards sat silent at the table. (*Their Finest Hour*, pg.73).

It can be presumed that the audience would feel that same sympathy towards the heroic sacrifices of the soldiers at Calais. Churchill's mention of the situation at Calais appeals to the audience's emotions, which may, in addition to evoking sympathy, ignite a sense of pride and patriotism in the audience to keep on fighting.

Churchill continues: "The British Brigadier was given an hour to surrender. He spurned the offer, and four days of intense street fighting passed before silence reigned over Calais, which marked the end of a memorable resistance". He describes how Nicholson "spurned" the offer, which means to reject with disdain or contempt, and this emphasizes perseverance. Upon hearing this, the British audience may wish to imitate Nicholson's determination to never surrender. Churchill gives more vividness to his description of the events with power words such as "intense".

The speech continues with the aftermath of the battle at Calais:

Only 30 unwounded survivors were brought off by the Navy, and we do not know the fate of their comrades.

Churchill provides fact-based statistics regarding the survivors, which demonstrates logos, the logical appeal. The audience's emotions are appealed to as Churchill says that "we" do not know the fate of the other soldiers – this word choice involves the audience and unites them with Churchill. He continues with an uplifting statement, "their sacrifice, however, was not in vain", which gives tribute to the fallen and solace to those who lost someone in the battle. It also provides hope to the British, reminding them that all of their travail is indispensable, and this directly reflects the motive of Churchill's speech.

The Prime Minister commends the fallen soldiers, stating admiringly that they have "added another page to the glories of the light divisions". This figure of speech gives praise to their heroic actions. Churchill continues by explaining how the time gained by the Calais defence enabled the Graveline water lines to be held by the French troops, ultimately aiding to keep the port of Dunkirk open. Churchill's use of the words "gained" and "enabled" have an



encouraging undertone given their context. He continues to describe the situation leading up to the Dunkirk evacuation:

When it was found impossible for the Armies of the north to reopen their communications to Amiens with the main French Armies, only one choice remained. It seemed, indeed, forlorn. The Belgian, British and French Armies were almost surrounded. Their sole line of retreat was to a single port and to its neighboring beaches. They were pressed on every side by heavy attacks and far outnumbered in the air.

This extract is another example of isocolon, as its sentences are similar in length and structure. Perhaps most prominently the rhythm of this passage is pleasing, due to the use of this rhetorical device. Churchill adds a dramatic effect to his speech with words such as “forlorn”, “impossible”, “outnumbered”, “retreat” and “surrounded”. These words give a sense of despair and hopelessness, and Churchill seems to be building up anticipation. Particularly the short phrase “it seemed, indeed, forlorn” has a suspenseful tone. This phrase is an example of *anastrophe*, which occurs when words appear in unexpected order (*Farnsworth’s Classical English Rhetoric*, p.115). In this case, the word “indeed” is somewhat early, and might be more commonly placed after the word “forlorn”. This unexpected placement of words calls attention to them, creating emphasis (*Farnsworth’s Classical English Rhetoric*, p.115).

### **7.3 Paragraphs 4–6 Hard and heavy tidings**

Churchill begins his fourth paragraph by addressing the Speaker of the House of Commons, Edward FitzRoy, as “Mr Speaker”. By doing this, he is acknowledging the presence of other people of standing, which shows Churchill’s aptitude as a democratic leader. This can be linked to ethos – the credibility and trustworthiness established by a speaker. Baker states that one’s credibility is evident through building a rapport with the audience. Churchill recalls the week before, when he had asked the House of Commons to arrange the afternoon of that day for his statement: “I feared it would be my hard lot to announce the greatest military disaster in our long history.” The utterance “I feared” draws the audience closer to Churchill, and the honesty and transparency reflected through the phrase appeals to ethos. As Baker mentions, ethos includes showing our personal beliefs and sincerity. Churchill emphasizes the magnitude of

the possible disaster with the adjectives “greatest” and “long”, and this ties into the speech’s emotional dimension as it appeals to the audience’s fears.

Churchill continues his narration with building suspense, not immediately confirming whether or not the feared catastrophe has taken place:

I thought – and some good judges agreed with me – that perhaps 20 000 or 30 000 men might be re-embarked. But it certainly seemed that the whole of the French First Army and the whole of the British Expeditionary Force north of the Amiens-Abbeville gap would be broken up in the open field or else would have to capitulate for lack of food and ammunition.

Churchill boosts his credibility by stating that “some good judges” had agreed with his earlier belief. This shows ethos, which includes persuasion through elements such as expertise and image. By reminding the audience of the original estimated number of troops, Churchill makes the actual number seem even greater. This may serve to effectively boost the morale and spirits of the audience. The passage displays use of anaphora in Churchill’s references to the British and French soldiers. The repetition of the word “whole” in “the whole of the French First Army and the whole of the British Expeditionary Force” has a hammering effect and stresses the fact that the entire French First Army and British Expeditionary Force were at risk. Farnsworth regards these anaphoric devices as a staple of high style (*Farnsworth’s Classical English Rhetoric*, p.16). The passage also contains several phrases and words that would raise concern in the audience, such as “broken up”, “capitulate”, and “lack of”. All these phrases relate to defeat or deprivation, particularly given the context in which they are set.

Churchill continues: “These were the hard and heavy tidings for which I called upon the House and the nation to prepare themselves a week ago”. The alliteration in “hard and heavy” adds rhythm and emphasizes the statement. This simple repetition of sounds can be merely for the sake of emphasis, drama, or style. By including “the nation” in addition to the House, Churchill involves the whole of Britain to his cause. This shows that the events which were at the risk of taking place would have affected the entire nation, not only the people in the room at the time of the speech. Churchill continues:

The whole root and core and brain of the British Army, on which and around which we were to build, and are to build, the great British Armies in the later years of the war, seemed about to perish upon the field or to be led into an ignominious and starving captivity.

This passage contains various rhetoric devices, such as *conduplicatio*, *epistrophe*, and *polysyndeton*, as well as personification. Churchill personifies the British Army by speaking of its “root and core and brain”, which adds variety to his narration. This phrase includes polysyndeton as well, described by Farnsworth as the repeated use of conjunctions (*Farnsworth’s Classical English Rhetoric*, p. 128). By repeating the word “and” between the words “root”, “core” and “brain”, emphasis is applied to each noun, indicating that all three aspects deserve the same amount of force (Farnsworth, p.129). *Conduplicatio* refers to the use of the same word repeatedly, with other words between each repetition, and this method often strengthens a statement (Farnsworth, p. 6). This method is demonstrated in Churchill’s repetition of the words “which” and “build”. Farnsworth states that coming back to the same word makes it a theme of the utterance and leaves it strongly in the listener’s ear. Farnsworth comments in his book that Churchill often made frequent and good use of *conduplicatio* (p.9). The earlier passage also shows examples of *epistrophe*, or repetition at the end of a series of clauses or sentences (Farnsworth, p.32), as Churchill repeats the word “build” at the ends of two clauses. This method is more subtle, but still effective, and in this case the repetition certainly brings more emphasis to Churchill’s statement.

Churchill appeals to pathos in the fourth paragraph as he gives a vivid description of the possible fate facing the British soldiers, who “seemed about to perish upon the field” or “be led into a ignominious and starving captivity”. The audience’s fears are appealed to, as they must be concerned for the safety of the British troops.

In the fifth paragraph of the speech, Churchill describes the actions of the King of Belgium. He simultaneously critiques Belgium’s actions, as King Leopold and his government “severed themselves from the Allies”, and praises Britain and its allies, who rescued Belgium “from extinction in the late war” and “even at the last moment” leapt to King Leopold’s aid. Churchill laments the “fatal neutrality” of Belgium, and this example serves to show how Britain must avoid making the same mistakes, which would be entering peace negotiations with Germany.

Churchill uses *polyptoton*, the repetition of the root of a word (Farnsworth, p.63), as he repeats the words “without” and “with” various times in the following sentence: “Suddenly, without prior consultation, with the least possible notice, without the advice of his Ministers and upon his own personal act, he sent a plenipotentiary to the German Command, surrendered his Army, and exposed our whole flank and means of retreat”. This utterance condemns the acts of King Leopold, which seem to be piling on top of each other as Churchill lists them. Churchill stresses the consequences of the King Leopold’s disastrous acts through the repetition of the phrase “had not” in the following statement:

Had not this Ruler and his Government severed themselves from the Allies, who rescued their country from extinction in the late war, and had they not sought refuge in what was proved to be a fatal neutrality, the French and British Armies might well at the outset have saved not only Belgium but perhaps even Poland.

In the sixth paragraph Churchill urges all to form their own opinions regarding the “pitiful episode” of the surrender of Belgium. Churchill’s trustworthiness and competence as a wartime leader is reflected throughout the paragraph as he gives detailed description of the war events, in particular regarding the difficulties facing the British and First French Army troops following Belgium’s surrender. This shows the audience that Churchill is actively following the progress of Britain’s troops and of his military background, which demonstrates ethical appeal.

Logical appeal is clear in Churchill’s use of Belgium as an example to show why Britain must not surrender to Germany. This is shown in his following statement:

Otherwise all would have been cut off, and all would have shared the fate to which King Leopold had condemned the finest Army his country had ever formed.

The word “condemn”, relating to punishment and suffering, implies that the fate was horrific. Therefore, to avoid that same fate, Britain must continue on with the war against Germany. Churchill’s flair for drama shows in the suspenseful last sentence of the paragraph, in which he states that it seemed impossible for any large number of Allied troops to reach the coast.

#### 7.4 Paragraphs 7–9 Heroics at Dunkirk

In the seventh paragraph of the speech, Churchill begins to describe the manner of Germany's attack. He states: "The enemy attacked us on all sides with great strength and fierceness, and their main power, the power of their far more numerous Air Force, was thrown into the battle or else concentrated upon Dunkirk and the beaches". The phrase "thrown into the battle" implies that the German air attack was brisk and dynamic. Churchill uses the phrase "both from the east and from the west" to describe the broad range of the German fire. The remark has a similarity to Psalms 107:3 in the Bible, which reads: "Whom he gathered together from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south" (*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, 1981). As mentioned earlier, the use of these Bible-inspired phrases was to appeal to the beliefs of the audience.

Churchill continues with a pleasant rhythm through the use of *isocolon* in the following descriptions:

They sowed magnetic mines in the channels and seas; they sent repeated waves of hostile aircraft, sometimes more than a hundred strong in one formation, to cast their bombs upon the single pier that remained, and upon the sand dunes upon which the troops had their only shelter.

Isocolon is often used when stating various things about the same subject (Farnsworth, p. 74). This is evident in the passage as Churchill describes how the Germans "sowed magnetic mines" and "sent repeated waves of hostile aircraft", as well as "cast their bombs upon the single pier that remained" and "upon the sand dunes upon which the troops had their only shelter".

Churchill describes how for "four or five days an intense struggle reigned". One may observe his vocabulary choices for statements such as these, as he opts for descriptive and vibrant words such as "intense", "struggle" and "reign". Cannadine remarks that Churchill "relished evocative, assertive and often bookish adjectives: 'silent, mournful, abandoned, broken'" (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p.4). It may be useful to illustrate the importance of colourful language through an example of an alternative phrase, such as "they fought for five days". This substitute is much staler and does not have the same oratorical effect as Churchill's utterance.

Cannadine also comments that Churchill's language vividly reflected the kind of person he himself actually was (*The Speeches of Winston Churchill*, p. 4).

Next, Churchill dedicates the a part of his speech to the precise description of the events at Dunkirk, for instance stating how the Germans "together with great masses of infantry and artillery, hurled themselves in vain upon the ever-narrowing, ever-contracting appendix within which the British and French Armies fought". Churchill succeeds in reflecting the urgency and hecticness of the war with anaphora, repeating the word "ever" in the phrase "ever-narrowing, ever-contracting" as he describes the battlefield upon which the troops fought. He uses imagery when referring to that battleground as an "appendix". The description in its entirety reflects the energy of the events.

Onto the eighth paragraph, where Churchill describes the efforts of the Royal Navy and civilians to bring back the troops from Dunkirk during Operation Dynamo. He describes: "Meanwhile, the Royal navy, with the willing help of countless merchant seamen, strained every nerve to embark the British and Allied troops; 220 light warships and 650 other vessels were engaged". He uses the idiom "strain every nerve" to emphasize the fact that the rescuers were making every possible effort. Churchill appeals to logos with his comments and accurate and statistical evidence of the events, but also to pathos, as his retelling of such heroic efforts is surely meant to evoke the emotions of the audience.

Further appeal to pathos is clear as Churchill describes the difficulties of the civilian rescue teams, who had to work "upon the difficult coast, often in adverse weather, under an almost ceaseless hail of bombs and an increasing concentration of artillery fire". He employs imagery as he compares the German bombs to a hailstorm. This part of Churchill's speech shows expressive illustration of the Dunkirk operation, giving the audience a meticulous account. Similar to how polysyndetic phrases include frequent use of conjunctions to lay emphasis on specific ideas, Churchill employs three prepositions – "it", "with" and "for" – to achieve a comparable effect in the following passage:

It was in conditions such as these that our men carried on, with little or no rest, for days and nights on end, making trip after trip across the dangerous waters, bringing with them always men whom they had rescued.

This style regulates the pace of the statement and reflects energy and urgency. Churchill gives further praise to the British civilians in the statement: “The numbers they have brought back are the measure of their devotion and their courage”. He emphasizes his statement with an anaphora in the repetition of the word “their”. He commends both men and women as he describes: “but the men and women on board them never faltered in their duty”. This shows that Churchill did not dismiss the efforts of women, but rather showed both genders the same amount of appreciation. Churchill includes various high emotion words in this paragraph, such as “strain”, “embark”, “adverse”, “engage”, “ceaseless”, “devotion”, “courage”, “duty”, “dangerous” and “rescue”. Cannadine comments on Churchill’s word choices: “He loved short, strong, robust nouns: ‘blood, toil, tears and sweat’ (*The speeches of Winston Churchill*, p.4).

Churchill begins his ninth paragraph by describing the crucial interventions of the Royal Air Force in a long and detailed sentence, and then captures the audience’s attention with a more suspenseful statement: “This struggle was protracted and fierce. Suddenly the scene has cleared, the crash and thunder has for the moment – but only for the moment – died away”. His figurative language illustrates a vivid image of the war, as he refers to the sounds of battle as “crash and thunder”. Churchill uses epistrophe in the repetition of the phrase “for the moment” as he emphasizes that the war was not yet over. He continues admiringly: “A miracle of deliverance, achieved by valor, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity, is manifest to us all”. Churchill uses anaphora as he repeats the word “by”, stressing each individual quality that played a part in the success of the rescue operation.

Churchill describes the losses inflicted upon the German Air Force and how the Navy carried more than 335 000 men out of “the jaws of death and shame”. This figure of speech adds a vivid effect to his narration while implying that a failed operation would have been fatal and shameful. The phrase also has a zoomorphic element, as animal characteristics are assigned to the concepts of death and shame in order to provide comparison and description to them (*Zoomorphism – Definition and Examples*, 2017).

Churchill gives a cautionary statement:

We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory.

Wars are not won by evacuations.

These words suggests that even though the Dunkirk evacuation was a success, Britain would not win the war by merely retreating. Churchill's statement implies that Britain must throw its soldiers back into the battle in order to win the war. He admits that there was a certain victory inside the rescue operation, and he commends the Air Force for it by stating: "But there was a victory inside this deliverance, which should be noted. It was gained by the Air Force". This ninth paragraph of the speech appeals to logos, as it contains sound reasoning for the crucial resilience that Churchill is demanding of his country.

### **7.5 Paragraphs 10–12 A great trial of strength**

In the tenth paragraph Churchill refers to the battle between the British and German Air Forces as "a great trial of strength". His choice of concise nouns expresses the intensity of the battle. He poses a hypothetical question, or *erotema* (Farnsworth, p.212), as he asks:

Can you conceive a greater objective for the Germans in the air than to make evacuation from these beaches impossible, and to sink all these ships which were displayed, almost to the extent of thousands?

This rhetorical device creates involvement between the speaker and audience (Farnsworth, p.212). The question also adds emphasis to the claim presented by the speaker, which in Churchill's case is that the Germans' top priority was to prevent the evacuation of Dunkirk. He poses another question:

Could there have been an objective of greater military significance for the whole purpose of the war than this?

One could presume that by highlighting the magnitude and importance of the Dunkirk battle, as he does with the second question, Churchill is attempting to build up the nation's confidence to continue the war.

In his next utterances, Churchill repeats the word "they" several times, in order to emphasize his comment: "They tried hard, and they were beaten back; they were frustrated in their task". This repetition creates a stylish rhythm. He continues: "We got the Army away; and they have paid fourfold for any losses which they have inflicted". Churchill creates an opposition between



the Germans, referring to them as “they”, and the British, referring to them as “we”. He gives the Germans’ efforts an unsuccessful tone with phrases such as “tried”, “beaten back”, “frustrated” and “paid” which all imply failure. Comparatively, Churchill gives the British efforts a successful undertone with the verb “got”, which suggests advantageous gain. This part of the speech appeals to the audience’s emotions, as the narration of the British success is certain to evoke admiration in the audience.

Churchill describes how a German aeroplane was “cast away by the mere charge of a British aeroplane, which had no more ammunition”; this statement gives praise to the British pilots, who – with no ammunition – were able to turn away the enemy by merely charging at them. Churchill comments that all the British pilots have been “vindicated as superior to what they have at present to face”, which suggests British superiority over the Germans. The phrase “what they have at present to face” implies that the Germans are a momentary resistance which the British shall overcome.

In the eleventh paragraph, Churchill states his certainty and faith in Britain’s ability to defend itself against an air attack. This appeals to pathos in the sense that Churchill is attempting to reassure his audience of Britain’s capabilities. He praises the skill and devotion of the young airmen, who shall “defend the cause of civilization”. Churchill continues:

There never has been, I suppose, in all the world, in all the history of war, such an opportunity for youth.

This is an urging call to the young men of Britain to do their duty. His use of anaphora in the phrase “in all the world, in all the history of war” adds emphasis and importance to his claim. Churchill implies that a chance to defend one’s native country is an opportunity of the utmost importance. He compares the soldiers to the Knights of the Round Table – the best knights in the Arthurian legend – as well as to the Crusaders. This comparison gives Churchill’s words a theatrical flair in addition to showing praise to the British soldiers.

Churchill quotes a passage from Alfred Tennyson’s 19<sup>th</sup> century poem “Morte d’Arthur”:

Every morn brought forth a noble chance,

And every chance brought forth a noble knight. (*We Shall Fight on the Beaches*)

Churchill may have chosen this passage to quote as Tennyson is one of the leading poets in British history (Robson, 2019). The passage appeals to the British audience's feelings of patriotism. Churchill states that the soldiers deserve the nation's gratitude, as they risk their "life and all" for their country. The term "life and all" packs a lot of emotion, as it implies that the young men are giving their homeland everything they have to offer – more than life itself. This entire paragraph appeals to pathos and the audience's emotions.

Churchill returns to describing the battles of the war in the twelfth paragraph. He uses anaphora and polyptoton to highlight the fighting, as he repeats the word "fight" or variations of it several times in the following passage:

In the long series of very fierce battles, now on this front, now on that, fighting on three fronts at once, battles fought by two or three divisions against an equal or somewhat larger number of the enemy, and fought fiercely on some of the old grounds that so many of us knew so well – in these battles our losses in men have exceeded 30,000 killed, wounded and missing.

Churchill creates a pleasant, almost poetic, rhythm to his words with the phrases "now on this front, now on that", which also includes anaphora. His repetition of the word "fierce" in this passage emphasizes the ferocity of the war. Churchill appeals to his audience as he refers to "some of the old grounds that so many of us knew so well", which would remind some in the audience of their own military experiences, or it may appeal to people who have lost their homes to war. Churchill expresses his sympathy and gratitude towards the lost soldiers and their loved ones multiple times. This shows an emotional appeal and adds to the empathic element of the speech. As Baker mentions, one of the best ways to determine an effective emotional appeal is to analyse the needs and concerns of one's audience. Churchill must have recognized that his countrymen were in need of consolation. He shows awareness towards the sensitive state of his audience, stating: "many in the House have felt the pangs of affliction in the sharpest form". This is shown in Churchill's mention of the death of the President of the Board of Trade's son.

## 7.6 Paragraphs 13–15 We must not be blinded

In the thirteenth paragraph, Churchill contrasts the British losses to those of Germany's, stating: "we can set a far heavier loss certainly inflicted upon the enemy" and discusses the material losses of Britain: "we have lost nearly as many guns ... and all our transport, all the armored vehicles that were with the Army in the north". Churchill's repetition of the word "all" emphasizes the significance of the losses in transportation and vehicles. He continues the speech by assuring his listeners of the efforts being made to overtake those losses – "an effort the like of which has never been seen in our records". He employs anaphora to stress the importance of the labour, commenting: "How long it will be, how long it will last, depends upon the exertions which we make in this Island". This style of repetition has a dramatic effect. Churchill emphasizes the hard labour being done around the clock: "Work is proceeding everywhere, night and day, Sundays and week days". The phrases "night and day" and "Sundays and week days" both imply the same sentiment.

Churchill enhances his credibility as a speaker and leader by not glossing over any of Britain's troubles. As Baker mentions, the speaker's reputation as a communicator independent from their message is a crucial part of ethical appeal. Churchill admits that the expansion of Britain's military strength "had not been proceeding as far as we had hoped". By revealing the gravity of the situation, but also assuring the world of the hard work being made to fight forward, Churchill presents Britain in a commendable light to any future Allies, such as the United States. He further appeals to the United States as he comments how everyone must make sacrifices during the war, using the following statement to demonstrate this: "Capital and Labor have cast aside their interests, rights, and customs and put them into the common stock". Churchill ends the paragraph by stating that the flow of munitions has "leaped forward" and that "there is no reason why we should not in a few months overtake the sudden and serious loss that has come upon us". This claim reassures the audience of Britain's ability to bounce back from a setback.

The fourteenth paragraph of Churchill's speech centers around his reminder that "what has happened in France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster". With this reminder Churchill conveys his request to the nation – Britain must not be satisfied with a passive stance in the war, or even entertain the thought of peace negotiations. Churchill finds an exquisite balance between stating facts – however depressing they may be – and inspiring the British nation to

continue on. He does this by expressing thankfulness at the survival of so many troops, but then following with a description of various troubles:

The French Army has been weakened, the Belgian Army has been lost, a large part of those fortified lines upon which so much faith had been reposed is gone, many valuable mining districts and factories have passed into the enemy's possession, the whole of the Channel ports are in his hands, with all the tragic consequences that follow from that, and we must expect another blow to be struck almost immediately at us or at France.

This passage serves as an appeal to the United States, informing the country of Britain's need for their aid. Churchill continues by commenting that "Herr Hitler has a plan for invading the British Isles". As Hitler preferred to be addressed as *Führer*, Churchill's use of "Herr Hitler" takes away some of the grandeur that Hitler had built up for himself. Churchill's words imply that he does not think of Hitler as anyone special.

Churchill continues by referencing to Napoleon in the following comment:

When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone, "there are bitter weeds in England". There are certainly a great many more of them since the British Expeditionary Force returned.

During Napoleon's time, he was informed of "bitter weeds in England" which was a reference to the irrepressible and enduring manner of the British people under the threat of his invasion. Accordingly, Churchill reminds his people of that time to instill morale in them and to warn Germany that the enemy's attack shall be met with a hardy attitude. Churchill's reference to Napoleon also serves as a reminder that Britain has survived threats before. This part of the speech appeals to the audience's emotions, perhaps evoking feelings of pride in the British towards their country.

Onto the fifteenth paragraph, where Churchill once again highlights the certitude of Britain continuing the war. Churchill launches into a string of anaphoric utterances:

We shall not be content with a defensive war. We have our duty to our Ally. We have to reconstitute and build up the British Expeditionary Force once again, under its gallant Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gort.

As seen in earlier examples as well, the repetition of the phrase “we shall” adds a hammering effect to the statements and conveys the orders of Churchill quite purposefully. The imploration for everyone to perform their duty appeals to their consciences.

### **7.7 Paragraphs 16–18 Riding out the storm of war**

The sixteenth paragraph of the speech focuses on the measures being taken by the British government to eradicate “enemy aliens and suspicious characters” as well as British citizens who may have malignant motives towards Britain. He speaks of “fifth column activities”, referring to groups of agents who strive to undermine a nation’s solidarity – sympathizers of the enemy. This term was brought about by Emilio Mola Vidal, a Nationalist general during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 (The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018). Churchill states next:

Parliament has given us the powers to put down Fifth Column activities with a strong hand, and we shall use those powers subject to the supervision and correction of the House, without the slightest hesitation until we are satisfied, and more than satisfied, that this malignancy in our midst has been effectively stamped out.

The phrase “has given us” has an agreeing tone, as it implies the acquirement or gain of something necessary. To add vibrance, Churchill employs personification with the phrase “with a strong hand”. In addition, he uses epistrophe in the repetition of the word “satisfied” at the ends of two consecutive clauses. This emphasis signals that Churchill and his government shall not settle for anything less than the elimination of possible dangers to the country.

In his seventeenth paragraph, Churchill turns once more to the question of invasion. He states that in Britain’s history there has never been acclaimed a total guarantee against invasion. He illustrates how the allure of invading Britain has “excited and befooled the imaginations of many Continental tyrants” such as Napoleon. Churchill’s comments imply that Hitler and his

Nazi threat shall be warded off, just as the other “excited and befooled” invaders before him. He continues:

Many are the tales that are told. We are assured that novel methods will be adopted, and when we see the originality of malice, the ingenuity of aggression, which our enemy displays, we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel stratagem and every kind of brutal and treacherous maneuver.

Churchill’s refers to the actions of Germany with the phrases “originality of malice”, “ingenuity of aggression” and “brutal and treacherous maneuver”, all of which serve as detailed and lively descriptions while adding vividness to the speech. He reminds the audience of the capabilities of Britain’s powers at sea and in the air, and this reassurance appeals to logos as it involves an example behind Churchill’s argument but also instills confidence in the nation, affecting the citizens’ emotions.

The final paragraph of Churchill’s speech is generally the best remembered and most referred to part of the speech, for example discussed by Halbert and Whitaker in their book *Advocacy and Public Speaking: A Student’s Introduction* as well as by Farnsworth in *Farnsworth’s Classical English Rhetoric*. This is with good reason, as the paragraph contains some of the most momentous phrases and powerful rhetorical devices in the history of political speeches.

As Halbert and Whitaker mention, Churchill utilizes the “rule of three”, a technique in which the speaker describes three related elements to emphasize a statement and increase its memorability (p.245). This is shown in the following passage (emphasized parts in bold):

I have, myself, full confidence that **if** all do their duty, **if** nothing is neglected, and **if** the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able **to** defend our Island home, **to** ride out the storm of war, and **to** outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, **that** is what we are going to try to do. **That** is the resolve of His Majesty’s Government—every man of them. **That** is the will of Parliament and the nation.

The passage packs further emphasis with Churchill's descriptions of Britain "riding out the storm of war" and "outliving the menace of tyranny". In addition to imagery, these phrases contain high-emotion words, such as "storm", "war", "menace" and "tyranny", which evoke strong feelings.

Anaphora is used throughout the paragraph, for example in the phrase "if necessary, for years, if necessary, alone", in which Churchill stresses the idea of Britain surviving no matter what. Farnsworth describes the effect of anaphora as similar to blowing up a balloon with short breaths and then letting go – the repetition of words and structure accustoms the reader to regularity and compression, and the energy of that expectation is released into the last part of the sentence (*Farnsworth's Classical English Rhetoric*, p.30). This effect is shown in Churchill's words towards the end of the paragraph:

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender ...

Farnsworth mentions how the full form of the anaphora "we shall fight" is present in obvious ways, such as "we shall defend our island; we shall never surrender", but also in discreet ways, as in the phrase "in the fields and in the streets" (p. 30). He comments that these variations create a greater sense of passion, improvisation and spontaneous outburst than if the anaphora had appeared in identical structures (p.30). The anaphora establishes a foundation onto which Churchill is able to add variety with imagery, such as mentions of seas and oceans, but also with more abstract language, as seen in the phrase "we shall go on to the end" (Farnsworth, p.30).

Churchill utilizes the subtle effects of epistrophe in the phrase "if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made" which highlights the fact that preparations are indeed in the works. This assurance of arrangements increases Churchill's reliability and shows his commitment, which persuades the audience of his credibility. This is a crucial part of the speech's ethical appeal.

Churchill includes an abundance of descriptive and vigorous phrases, such as “defend to the death”, which emphasizes the lengths to which Britain shall go in order to defeat Germany. These lengths are described in another phrase as well – “to the utmost of their strength”. Churchill describes how the majority of Europe has fallen into “the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule”. This utterance contains strong, high emotion words as well as alliteration in the phrase “grip of the Gestapo”. Churchill chose descriptive words, such as “odious apparatus”, to reflect the deplorable actions of the Nazis. The phrase “we shall not flag or fail” contains alliteration as well, and this method creates a relieving rhythm in the long line of clauses. Churchill applies emphasis to the abilities of the British Army, stating that Britain shall fight with “growing confidence and growing strength”. This statement has more impact than, for example, “growing confidence and strength”.

Churchill indirectly, but effectively, appeals to the United States in the end of the paragraph:

Even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God’s good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

He refers to the United States as “the New World” and he acknowledges the country’s power and strength, using those qualities to justify why the United States should come to the aid of Britain. As seen in earlier paragraphs, Churchill appeals to the audience’s beliefs with a mention of God in the phrase “in God’s good time”.

## **8. Conclusion**

As shown in the analysis of all eighteen paragraphs of “We Shall Fight on the Beaches”, Churchill utilised various rhetorical devices, but most profusely anaphora, which Farnsworth mentioned to be a method of the utmost importance. The analysis shows how Churchill employed other devices as well – anastrophe, conduplicatio, epistrophe, eroteme, isocolon and polysyndeton. Churchill brought his speech to life with vivid vocabulary and extremely descriptive phrases, for instance when describing the German invasion. The phrases “swept like a sharp scythe” and “hard and heavy tidings”, amongst others, exemplified the effectiveness of alliteration. Churchill employed figures of speech to compare and further



describe certain sentiments, as was noticed in the phrase “jaws of death and shame”. He reflected the violence and fierceness of the war with power words, for instance “rapid”, “force” and “destruction”. Churchill recognized the benefit of employing biblical phrases as well, even though he was not devout himself. Demonstrations of all three rhetorical appeals are clear throughout the speech, but Churchill appealed to pathos most often, which shows the vitality of emotional appeal in a wartime speech. He acknowledged his audience from beginning to end, appealing to both his country and the United States. Churchill showed sympathy towards those mourning the loss of loved ones and made known his contempt towards Hitler’s Germany. Above all, he applied great vigour to express the importance of never surrendering to the enemy. This vigour reaches its peak in the last paragraph, with numerous repetitions of the phrase “we shall fight”.

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