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Ethos and voice. A rhetorical analysis of self-help books advice for women

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Abstract: The paper proposes a rhetorical analysis of folk-rhetoric advice formulated by the authors of self-help books addressed explicitly to women. The advice analyzed suggests how women should behave in order to persuade their superiors and colleagues of their credibility and in this way to achieve a certain status and power in their workplace. Within the rhetorical framework, such self-presentation roughly corresponds to ethos, thereby evoking theoretical distinctions between argumentative and poetic ethos. The corpus examined shows that within folk rhetoric only the poetic ethos which mobilizes the resources of *actio*, and especially voice, is taken into account. In the self-help books analyzed, the term "voice" is used with a double meaning: at the symbolic level, as the right to speak, and in the technical sense, as the ability of using one's own vocal attributes when speaking.

Key words: self-help books, advice, ethos, voice, *actio*, rhetoric, pragmatics.

1. Introduction

"The act of inventio for women […] begins in a different place from Aristotle's conception of *inventio*: Women must first invent a way to speak in the context of being silenced and rendered invisible as persons" (Ritchie and Ronald 2001: xvii). As shown by etymology (Gr. *rhesis* 'speech', from PIE **wre-tor-*, from root **were-* 'to speak'[2]), rhetoric manifests itself through speaking. The very possibility of speaking is thus the basic condition of rhetorical persuasion. Indeed, it is the presence of voice that allows to develop any other persuasive resource, including argumentation.

For women, gaining voice – i.e., in its broad sense, the possibility of speaking and being listened to in the public settings – is a great

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[2] http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=rhetoric.

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cultural achievement. Madeleine K. Albright's testimony, a woman who eventually became one of the most powerful female politicians of her time, is quite eloquent: "It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent". The patterns of voice and silence use reveal to be a gendered practice.

Scholarly research focuses on gendered communication within areas of major importance in public life, such as politics or education (Miller Gearhart 1979; Spender 1980; Kerber 1988; Di Mare 1992; Lunsford 1995; Glenn 1997; Foss *et al.* 1999; Ritchie and Ronald 2001; Bischoff and Wagner-Egelhaaf 2003; Mral *et al.* 2009; Załęska 2017). Such an approach is coherent with the original interest of communication rhetoric in public settings: discourse of justice (*genus iudiciale*), politics (*genus deliberativum*), and public evaluation (*genus demonstrativum*).

However, communication of minor importance is equally interesting, since it permits observation of other pervasive phenomena of persuasion: those negotiated locally on a daily basis that produce and perpetuate the participants' sense of normality (Goffman 1967). The workplace is where opinions, priorities and hierarchies are negotiated, in the overarching weight of success. Anything that helps to succeed – such as "effective speaking" – is therefore an object of attention, seen as best practice that may be considered a model. Activities meant to develop such abilities, or skills, including workshops, mentoring, coaching or self-help books, target women eager to reach professional success.

Self-help books, as a part of the modern pop-cultural industry of advice, offer interesting insights into popular views on persuasion. Although such accounts usually do not even mention the word "rhetoric", they still fit the Aristotelian definition: "[r]hetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355). By analogy to *linguistics* and *folk* (or *popular*) *linguistics*, or *psychology* and *folk* (or *popular*) *psychology*, the differences between the established body of the discipline and the popular comments on its object will be accounted for in terms of *rhetoric* and *folk* (or *popular*) *rhetoric*.

The scholarly approach towards rhetoric privileges the epistemic values and aims to understand speech events and phenomena. The phenomenon of persuasion, examined from different scholarly perspectives, reveals an extremely complex state: it involves body (e.g., the theory of rhetorical *actio*), emotions, intellect (e.g., the concepts of ethos, pathos and logos), as well as overarching ideological, cultural, and sociological constraints. In an Aristotelian account, the persuaders and the persuadees are conceived of as essentially rational beings. Such a model of persuasion is based on intellect, accompanied by rational use of emotions (in the *inventio* phase), only subsequently completed

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with bodily performance (in the *actio* phase). The basic ingredient of the speaker's ethos – the prudence or practical wisdom (besides the shared values and the goodwill) – accounts for the qualification of *argumentative* ethos, distinguished from other constructions of ethos (see below). *Folk rhetoric* is a cover term that subsumes a heterogeneous body of "knowledge": fragmented observations and insights concerning "what might be persuasive" (to use the Aristotelian formulation). It is constituted partly by popular wisdom accepted uncritically, partly by pieces of advice stemming from individuals who claim originality, such as the authors of self-help books.

As any folk approach, folk rhetoric adopts the perspective of ordinary practical life. It privileges the utilitarian values, promising knowledge useful to solve concrete problems. Self-help books are conceived of as ready-for-use practical tips on how to cope with life. According to features of the genre, self-help books promote the individualistic, ego-centric perspective: each female reader is advised on how to *self*-present in order to *self*-promote.

Within folk rhetoric, the phenomenon of persuasion is perceived as essentially simple, made unnecessarily complicated by specialists. Self-help books present persuasion mainly in terms of observable behavior. The description of a speaker's actions largely concerns the performances (e.g., external look, voice, gestures) and the language (a newspeak?) of success. The audience's reaction to such persuasive practices is described in terms of emotions that, apparently, should grant the speaker the desired outcome. In self-help books, the intellectual dimension of persuasion, as well as ideological, cultural or sociological constraints that shape it, are hardly taken into account.

Voice as a resource is obviously not the only persuasive device presented in self-help books for women. The interest in voice / silence issues results from the convergence of several factors. First, when addressing the effective *speaking* issue, the most obvious resource to be exploited is *voice*. Such an easily available resource permits the individual to self-help by modifying the way it is used. Voice thus lends itself perfectly to the *self*-help approach which promises quick, easy, and effective solutions available to the individual. Second, the lack of any definitions and of analytical clarity extends the area of the phenomena addressed. Actually, in the analyzed self-help books several meanings overlap: 'voice' as the right or habit to speak in public settings, which is essentially a socio-cultural problem; 'voice' as a paralinguistic resource (e.g., as intonation) able to rhetorically enhance the effectiveness of speech and impression management; finally, voice-related issues involving pragmatic dimension, like the way of pronouncing a certain speech. Finally, the aforementioned direct link between persuasive *speaking*, its manifestation – *voice* – and the *self*-presentation aimed at *self*-promotion seems to be a folk-

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rhetoric rough counterpart of the rhetorical ethos (though not the argumentative ethos, see below).

The preliminary task consists of identifying a set of text excerpts from self-help books with descriptions, diagnoses, and advice concerning the use of voice as an ethos-enhancing device. The collected excerpts are categorized in a principled way, in order to show how the authors of the texts suggest to women that they should profit from the power of voice, and practice the voice of power. The analyses provide a contribution to the theory of ethos, viewed from a peculiar perspective of folk-rhetoric. The corpus and data presentation (section 2) are followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework that informs the research (section 3). Next, a typology of advice on the persuasive use of voice is proposed (section 4). The analyses allow to draw conclusions on the relation between ethos and voice conveyed within folk-rhetoric (section 5).

2. Corpus and data

This study is a part of an ongoing research project regarding popular self-help books on "persuasive" or "efficient speaking." It involves a sub-corpus of texts written by women for women. The majority of the self-help books taken into account originate from the USA, where the self-help movement emerged (Starker 2007). The genre of self-help books in Europe is an import from American popular culture. The diffusion of the self-help approach in Europe is observable through: (a) translations from English into other national languages of Europe; (b) the production of texts, inspired by American originals, by local authors who write in some "central" languages (e.g., German, French, Spanish, Italian); (c) the translation of American originals as well as that of texts written in "central" languages into other "central" languages and "non-central" languages (such as Polish, Czech, etc.); (d) the production of texts, inspired by the aforementioned sources, by local authors who write in some "non-central" languages (e.g., Polish).

The interpretation of such a diffusion may focus on differences or similarities. In the first case, one could test hypotheses concerning the Americanization of the European values or the Europeanization of the American ones. It would also be interesting to study culture-specific accommodations of advice to the environment of a particular country.

Within the alternative approach, focused on similarities, shared features of the self-help advice are examined. This paper adopts the latter approach. The pieces of advice proposed in the self-help literature reflect indeed the same folk approach and essentially are very stereotyped, constituting a kind of commonplace.

This research study dwells on a corpus of self-help books. The ones selected for this study belong to group (c), i.e. the texts that are available to me only as translations into Polish from "central"

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languages (for the concept of English as a global language or "hyper-central language", see De Swaan 2001). The culture of self-help, self-improvement and self-made individual that originated within the American culture's Protestant work ethics, pragmatism and efficiency, has permeated other countries thanks to, among others, cheap editions of translated American texts. In Poland, the translations from English and German introduced the genre of the self-help manuals, adopted and adapted subsequently by some Polish authors.

As other products of pop-culture – e.g. love stories – the self-help books are rather schematic and repetitive in terms of form and content. Therefore, the examples stem from several books only, randomly selected from the studied group:

1) Text 1 – Enkelmann, C. E. (2003), *Strategia Wenus. Kobieta w świecie biznesu* [2001: *Die Venus-Strategie*], Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Emka.
2) Text 2 – Evans, G. (2009), *Rozgrywaj jak mężczyzna, zwyciężaj jak kobieta* [2000: *Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman. What Men Know About Success that Women Need to Learn*], Gliwice, One Press.
3) Text 3 – Hof-Glatz, M. (2007), *Jak pokonać rekina, czyli jak skutecznie współpracować i konkurować z mężczyznami* [2003: *Wie küsse ich einen Haifisch, wenn er bellt? Was Frauen wissen müssen, um Erfolg zu haben*], Warszawa, CeDeWu.

For the purposes of this research study, the translations of excerpts serve to present only the content of advice. However, such a back-translation could also lend itself to a study of lexical and stylistic choices characteristic of different "linguacultures" (Agar 1994).

The translated self-help books permit the readers to get acquainted with some of the new patterns of *elocutio*. The schematic lexical choices – peculiar semantic fields, characteristic buzzwords, preferred denotations, specific connotations and collocations – are attention-guiding devices able to change minds and attitudes. At the *inventio* level, the translations familiarize the readership with the typical patterns of cause and consequence, or of motivation, and the expected result, which are manifest in the advice given in the self-help books. Such changes in semantics and in reasoning patterns are visible if confronted with the alternative idiom: the vocabulary of political and social commitment, expected to provoke systematic redress of systematic injustice. Within such an approach, the issue of women's voice is conceived of as their right and authority to speak and to expect that the issues spoken about be taken seriously into account, actually changing the situation of all women.

Self-help books witness an individualistic turn: the passage from the collective to the individual, from the social to the psychological

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categories and the corresponding vocabulary. Discussing such persuasive practices, Cloud (1998) distinguishes between "the therapy", i.e. a clinical practice, and "the therapeutic" that refers to:

> […] a set of political and cultural discourses that have adopted psychotherapy's lexicon – the conservative language of healing, coping, adaptation […] – but in contexts of sociopolitical conflict. The rhetorical function of therapeutic discourses in such contexts is to encourage audiences to focus on themselves and the elaboration of their private lives rather than to address and attempt to reform systems of social power in which they are embedded. […] In Foucaultian terms, the therapeutic is an episteme, a discourse formation elaborated at many sites and spoken in diverse voices. (Cloud 1998: xvi)

Within the practice of the *therapy*, gaining *voice* is regarded as reaching one's authenticity: being able to speak truth to oneself which is the basis for the individual's responsibility, credibility, self-confidence and well-being. The *therapeutic* borrows some terms from the vocabulary of therapy – e.g. *individual responsibility, coping, adapting, solving problems* etc. – and trivializes them as buzzwords. These apparently positive and potentially liberating concepts are used instrumentally in contexts different from the original one.

For the issue of the female voice and credibility illustrated by the examples from the corpus, two aspects of the above-mentioned episteme are relevant. The therapeutic may be used in political and managerial contexts "[…] as a political strategy of contemporary capitalism, by which potential dissent is contained within a discourse of individual […] responsibility" (Cloud 1998: xv). However, the therapeutic has been adopted also by some feminists who opt for "[…] a politics of self-expression, consciousness-raising, and social fragmentation as the new avenue for change" (*ibid.*: xiv). In the self-help books dedicated to women in career, both perspectives converge. The examples below show that *voice* is treated as a woman's individual resource and its skillful rhetorical use is likely to construct an appropriate image of her authoritativeness and in this way to enhance her professional career.

3. Theoretical framework

The authors of self-help books are self-declared experts in persuasive speaking[3]. The self-help literature is written in plain language, without any technical term, like other publications aiming to reach a wide audience, including "dummy readers". The knowledge transmission techniques include narrative forms, such as short stories, anecdotes and rhetorical examples, expected to justify overt and

[3] Only rarely such texts are written by authors who declare professional rhetorical preparation. No such cases are addressed in this paper.

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covert counsels being presented. The authors do not show awareness of disciplinary models – elaborated within the framework of phonology, phonetics, linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, pragmatics or rhetoric – of persuasion or of silence / voice issues. Therefore, some preliminary theoretical distinctions are needed in order to relate the self-help books' advice to the distinctions within rhetoric research.

3.1. Voice

As stated above, "women must first invent a way to speak in the context of being silenced" (Ritchie and Ronald 2001: xvii). The "way to speak" belongs to the broad category of *voice*, which, in self-help books, assumes two principal meanings.

A dictionary definition states: "voice (in something) – the right to express your opinion and influence decisions"[4]. The opposite of *voice* in this symbolic sense is *silence* interpreted as lack of this right. Since the canonical treatises of rhetoric were written for those who by default enjoyed the right to speak, no hint at such socio-cultural constraints appears in ancient texts. In the self-help books directed to women, instead, the silence of exclusion is overtly taken into account: women desire to have a voice in their workplace, to participate in the decision-making process, and in this way to enhance their own careers.

Voice also means "the sound or sounds produced through the mouth by a person speaking [...]"[5]. Since "[r]hetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1355), voice is one of these means at the speaker's disposal. Different types of silence (see Jaworski 1992, Kenny 2011) could also count as available means of persuasion; however, such a case is not attested in the corpus, so the issue is no further explored. The authors of self-help books present a skillful use of voice as a way to reach two interrelated aims: a short-term goal (to create the female speaker's ethos – in the folk-rhetoric sense – during a concrete interaction) and a long-term goal (to capitalize these single rhetorical achievements into the woman's professional reputation, likely to grant her promotion).

Voice realizes several functions: extralinguistic, paralinguistic, linguistic and rhetorical. The extralinguistic functions of voice allow the identification of a concrete speaker (individual vocal features, age, gender, etc.). Since gender is a cultural construct, such an identification is often accompanied by connotation (e.g., female voices are perceived as powerless, while male voices as powerful, which influences the credibility of a speaker). Next, the paralinguistic

[4] https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/voice_1.
[5] https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/voice_1.

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functions of voice reveal various kinds of information, such as the genre of transmitted information (e.g., gossip and oration are realized differently) or the speaker's emotional state. The linguistic functions of voice, in turn, include the appropriate pronounciation and overall technique of speaking (technical skills), the ability to convey emotions and intentions (expressive skills), and the ability to signal appropriately intentions regarding recipients' desired behavior (impressive skills). Finally, the rhetorical functions of voice are a combination of impressive and aesthetic features of voice, both of which enhance persuasion (Schnauber 1972).

3.2. Ethos

The direct relation of voice and ethos (i.e., roughly, speaker's credibility) is not addressed in canonical treatises on rhetoric. A theoretical account of such a relation, constructed in self-help books thus requires a short overview of ethos conceptualization.

3.2.1. Extradiscursive and discursive ethos

The rhetorical framework distinguishes two kinds of proof: technical (stemming from the application of the *téchne rhetoriké* 'technique / art of rhetoric') and non-technical (gained outside the *téchne rhetoriké*, i.e., from the extradiscursive universe). Consequently, one can distinguish *technical ethos* (which manifests itself within the text, and, therefore, may be called discursive ethos; see, however, below) and *non-technical ethos* (i.e., extradiscursive ethos) (for different conceptual frameworks of ethos, see e.g., Garver 2000; Woerther 2007; Amossy 2008 and 2011; Plantin 2011a; 2016: 240-249; Maingueneau 2014; Marimón Llorca 2016).

Extradiscursive ethos is called by Garver (1994) the speaker's "real ethos". The "reality" of the "real ethos" is rather the *perception* of a person before s/he starts to speak (expectations) and after s/he finishes to speak (evaluations).

Expectations have attracted more scholarly attention than evaluations. The former are conceptualized as "preliminary ethos" (Amossy 1999) or "prediscursive ethos" (Maingueneau 2002). Expectations may concern a speaker as a person or – if conveyed by prejudices or stereotypes – a speaker as a member of a category (e.g., a woman speaker).

When it comes to evaluations, after a speech they may confirm or disconfirm expectations. In the latter case, they also change expectations before a subsequent speech by the same speaker. A confirmation may be justified or not (as in the case of prejudiced expectations which are "confirmed" irrespectively of the actual performance). According

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to self-help books, a series of good performances is likely to influence positively the "real ethos" of a female speaker.

The extradiscursive ethos counts as non-technical ethos, since it is not an effect of the *téchne rhetoriké* applied within the text. However, if the evaluation leads to the change of perception, the extra-discursive ethos might be regarded as a by-product of the *téchne rhetoriké* applied within the text that provoked the change of perception.

The discursive ethos is a relational concept. It results from the relation between the speaker and his/her audience mediated by the text. From the speaker's perspective, the personal choice of the aforementioned "available means of persuasion" within a text inevitably reveals something about him/her. However, it is the audience who chooses on what basis to grant (or not) credibility to the speaker.

For an account of the persuasive strategies presented in the self-help books studied, three sub-types of ethos will be addressed: *mimetic*, *argumentative* and *poetic* (the distinctions and nomenclature, however, are not commonly accepted in the scholarly community; see Załęska 2012).

3.2.2. Types of discursive ethos

As its name suggests, the basic mechanism of *mimetic ethos* (from Gr. *mimetikos* 'imitative, good at imitating', from *mimetos*, verbal adjective of *mimeisthai* 'to imitate'[6]) is similarity. The mimetic ethos implies that speech mimics how the speaker is in the extradiscursive universe. The speech conveys thus the "symptoms," out of the control of the speaker, which unveil the speaker's personality. Such an ethos is not a *persuasive* achievement, but rather an authentic re-*presentation* which e*merges* during speech. Mimetic ethos, a by-product of speaking as it comes naturally, is essentially non-strategic: even when realizing a strategy of persuading somebody, the speaker does not realize a strategy of self-presenting. The perception of the speaker thus results from his/her individual talent, intuition and intelligence while communicating. In mimetic ethos, the voice is viewed mainly as an authentic self-expression that reveals something about the speaker. Authors of self-help books appeal to mimetic ethos when describing women's poor "natural" communicative practices, among which ineffective ways of using voice. Such poor practices constitute the rationale of writing the self-help books. The status of mimetic ethos as a technical ethos is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it is generated within the text. On the other hand, however, it is a re-*presentation* of the speaker that emerges during speech; it is

[6] https://www.etymonline.com/word/mimetic.

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not a manifestation of *téchne* meant as a way consciously chosen to achieve the desired goal.

Argumentative ethos, instead, is regarded as the technical ethos par excellence. In his *Rhetoric,* Aristotle presents a *téchne* from which the speaker's credibility emerges (see Garver 1994, 2000). The means of persuasion involved in argumentative ethos are reduced to only three: *phronesis* (i.e., 'prudence', 'practical intelligence' or 'practical wisdom'), *arethe* (i.e., 'virtue' in the rhetorical sense of the term) and *eunoia* (i.e., 'goodwill'). "When Aristotle specifies the dimensions of *ethos* as *phronesis, arethe* and *eunoia*, he specifies an *ethos* tied to *logos*" (Garver 2000: 121). In Garver's account, ethos is a by-product of logos: on the basis of arguments presented by the speaker, the audience infers the speaker's credibility. Since such an ethos is based on arguments, it is a realization of the "central way of persuasion" (in the terminology of Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Voice does not belong to the three aforementioned components of argumentative ethos; it may only strengthen their impact at the stage of delivery. Argumentative ethos is fully ignored in the self-help books analyzed here.

Folk rhetoric focuses instead on persuasive resources that may be seen as a counterpart of *poetic ethos* (from Gr. *poein, poiein* 'to make, create, compose', from PIE **kwoiwo-* 'making', from root **kwei-* 'to pile up, build, make'[7]). Poetic ethos roughly corresponds to "stylistic ethos": a stylistic category, constituted at all levels of the linguistic system, including voice that is a strong factor of attraction or repulsion (Plantin 2011a: 333). While argumentative ethos is a by-product of logos, poetic ethos is a strategic, conscious self-representation: *in order to* be perceived in the desired way, the speaker strategically chooses to speak in a certain way. The available means of persuasion, mobilized to create poetic ethos, are sought not within the *inventio* (i.e., arguments), but in the two parts of rhetoric that priviledge aesthetics: *elocutio* and *actio* (Gr. *hypokrisis*). Vocal, visual, gestural and spatial resources of delivery, as well as linguistic choices available within *elocutio*, are the most easily perceptible features of speech, hence their popularity in popular self-help books. Instead of intellectually challenging complexities of argumentation, the relatively simpler aesthetic means involved in poetic ethos promise minimum pain and maximum gain.

As it will be shown below, poetic ethos is the only one advised to women in the self-help books analyzed. To fashion herself *as if* she were self-confident and powerful, a female speaker is advised to strengthen her words by paying attention to her behavior (roughly, the rhetorical *actio*, especially voice). Voice – used *instead* of arguments – serves the speaker to construct the desired self-presentation.

[7] https://www.etymonline.com/word/poet.

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4. A typology of advice

The advice on how female speakers should use voice to self-present as powerful speakers fits four categories. The first one refers to the meaning of *voice* as the right to express opinions and influence decisions. Essentially, women in the workplace now have the right to express opinions, but they often refrain from doing so. They are therefore dissuaded by authors of self-help books from self-silencing, and are invited to "find their voice" (in the symbolic meaning of being "able to speak or express […] opinion"[8]; see 4.1.). The other pieces of advice refer to the use of voice meant as "sounds produced through the mouth by a person speaking".

The aforementioned view of ethos as a relational concept presupposes that voice – one of the essential means of persuasion within poetic, or stylistic, ethos – requires both reception and reaction. If voice is accounted for as a heterogeneous category which involves *producing sounds, speaking* and *saying something*, the corresponding reception manifests itself as *noticing / being noticed, hearing / being heard* and *listening to / being listened to*.

These concepts may be analyzed from the perspective of the audience reception of the message and its reaction to it. According to the habits, culture and goodwill of the audience, a female speaker, delivering the same message, may be perceived as just *producing sounds* barely *noticed* by the audience, or as *saying something* which is worth being *listened to*.

Self-help books adopt instead the perspective of the speaker's action, able to win any resistance and to self-promote as a credible person. *Producing sounds, speaking* and *saying something* skilfully is expected to bring desired effects: *being noticed, heard* and *listened to,* so that the woman could be eventually also obeyed and followed as a leader. The authors suggest that it suffices to produce virtually any sound to attract attention, since sound is more informative than silence (4.2.). They also offer advice concerning form: how to disambiguate the *elocutio* devices thanks to the skillful use of vocal resources (4.3.). Finally, the authors formulate advice concerning content: how to use verbal resources to strenghten the message in such a way that the speaker is listened to (4.4.).

4.1. Dissuasion from being silent

In the self-help books under scrutiny, the basic problem addressed by the authors is female silence, contrasted with male readiness to speak. Men by default have the right to speak, they want to speak, and they enjoy speaking, without being stereotyped as

[8] https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/voice_1.

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talkative. Men expect to be noticed, heard and listened to:

(1) […] mężczyźni uwielbiają perorować. Od wczesnej młodości opinie przez nich wyrażane są istotne; od nich wymaga się wręcz, by zabierali głos. Za dobrą odpowiedź są wynagradzani, a za złą otrzymują gratulacje, że się starali. (Text 2, p. 70)
'[…] men love speaking. Since their early youth, the opinions they express are relevant; they are even required to take the floor. A good answer assures them praise, a bad one is followed by congratulations that they did make a good try.'

The starting point for women is quite different. Women are portrayed in proverbs as talkative by nature (e.g., *It is not the nature of the female tongue to be silent*) and incapable of rational communicative behavior (e.g., *A woman has never spoiled anything through silence*). The double standards of evaluation are a part of gender construction: "Girls are not *supposed* to talk as much as men. Perhaps a 'talkative' woman is one who does talk as much as man" (Kramer 2015: 37, italics in original). According to such a stereotype, women want to speak and even enjoy speaking until the point of becoming talkative. However, their very right to speak and their communicative practices are contested: the misogynistic proverbs advise women to remain silent instead of speaking.

Against such a stereotype, the authors of the self-help books signal the opposite problem:

(2) Mężczyźni dużo mówią. Kobiety mówią za mało […]. (Text 2, p. 70-71)
'Men speak a lot. Women speak too little […].'

The proposed solution is quite at odds with the received "wisdom" of the proverbs: women should speak more, instead of remaining so silent. Silence means exclusion from the discursive universe where opinions, needs, and criticisms may be voiced, argued, and negotiated.

The long-established tradition of female silence in public settings has serious consequences. The audience finds it somewhat awkward to see a female speaker who has a view on issues of importance. The female speaker, due to the lack of widely acknowledged models, must invent appropriate ways of public speaking.

4.2. Advice concerning the interaction

Once a woman decides to speak, the first challenge is to make her voice noticed during the communicative interaction. The invocation *make your voice heard!* corresponds to a dictionary definition of 'voice'

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as "expressing one's feelings, opinions, etc., in a way that makes people notice and consider them"[9]. The classical didactics of the rhetorical *actio*, addressed by default to men – persons who used to have the right and custom to speak publicly –, did not even perceive the issue, quite extraneous to the male experience (see however Braconnier and Mayer 2015).

Instead, in a cultural background where women are silenced, the advice for them – *just speak!* – is frequently repeated:

(3) […] ważne jest, aby kobiety było widać i słychać. (Text 3, p. 186)
'It is important that women be seen and heard.'

Women are advised to voice their ideas. Voice is as an attention-attracting device: any "sound" is indeed more informative than silence, and it cannot be ignored:

(4) Zabierz głos, a wtedy twój głos zostanie zauważony. / Mów tak długo, jak potrzebujesz. (Text 3, p. 119)
'Take the floor, and your voice will be noticed. / Speak as long as you need.'

The option not to remain silent is presented as the most important from the "available means of persuasion" for women. The very act of speaking allows them to emerge, by comparison to the silence of others. It is therefore the first step to construct the poetic ethos.

4.3. Advice concerning form

Apart from the general advice on speaking, i.e. making their voice heard, as a basic persuasive device for women, there are suggestions about more technical aspects of using vocal resources. Some pieces of advice formulated in self-help books concern the form of the message, meant as an appropriate combination of the linguistic code with the vocal code. The skillful use of prosodic resources is expected to convey an unambiguous message. The recipients should recognize more efficiently the speaker's intentions (codified, for example, through typical patterns of sentence modality) or ways of information packaging.

However, the array of formal vocal devices offered to the readers of the self-help books is quite rudimentary:

(5) Należy […] budować krótsze zdania i mówić wolniej. […] twoje wypowiedzi zyskają na wadze i wywrą większe wrażenie, jeśli będziesz budować krótsze zdania. Zwiększysz również swoją skuteczność, mówiąc wolniej i robiąc więcej pauz. (Text 1, p. 103-104)

[9] https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/voice_1.

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> 'One must […] construct shorter sentences and speak more slowly. […] your messages will be treated as more important, and they will be more impressive if you create shorter sentences. You will also increase your efficiency speaking more slowly and making more pauses.'

In the example above, the delivery – the pace and the pauses – combined with information packaging (short, thus easily understandable sentences) function as ethos-building devices, useful for a leader who needs to be easily heard and understood by her team. This advice is directed to women, the default readers of the self-help books, although it could be followed by both women and men. It is thus not a gender-dependent piece of advice, but the explanation of the basic rules of persuasive communication for the beginners.

Grammatical combinations produce, among others, standard sentence patterns (assertive, interrogative, imperative), each of which has a standard intonational contour. Assertions and orders by default require a cadence pattern, i.e., intonation falling at the end of the sentence, while questions require an anticadence pattern, i.e., intonation raising at the end of the sentence. Authors of self-help books observe a gender-dependent prosodical pattern: women are inclined to use anticadence as their dominant intonational contour for any type of sentence:

> (6) Kobiety mają tendencję do podnoszenia głosu na końcu każdego zdania. To typowy wzór mówienia dla pytań. Kiedy zatem przedstawiamy jakiś stan rzeczy i podnosimy głos na końcu zdania, słuchacz pomyśli, że to pytanie. Im dłuższe zdanie, tym bardziej zawyżamy głos, niczym w pytaniu – w efekcie wygląda to tak, jakbyśmy same kwestionowały naszą wypowiedź. (Text 1, p. 103-104)
> 'Women have a tendency to raise voice at the end of each sentence. It is a typical pattern for questions. Therefore, when we assert a state of things while raising voice at the end of the sentence, the addressee will treat it as a question. The longer a sentence, the more we raise voice, like in a question; consequently, it looks as if we put our own assertion into question.'

The constant use of the anticadence pattern creates, within mimetic ethos, the effect of a powerless style of speaking (at least in the European languages). Women, contrary to men, appear insecure in their own words and/or unable to assign tasks to others (which is one of the essential skills required from any manger or leader):

> (7) Gdy chodzi o zadania organizacyjne lub polecenia to mężczyźni wysławiają się w sposób bezpośredni. […] Kobietom trudno przychodzi wydawanie jednoznacznych poleceń bez dodatkowych

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> komentarzy, aby utrwalić znajomość. […] W szczególnie niepewny oraz niezobowiązujący sposób brzmi to wtedy, gdy podnosi się tonację głosu pod koniec zdania powodując, że wypowiedź można potraktować jako pytanie, a tym samym zawiesić je w próżni. Zapytanie nie wymaga koniecznie zgody. Możliwa jest również odmowa. (Text 3, p. 118)
> 'As far as organizational tasks or orders are concerned, men communicate directly. […] For women it is hard to formulate overt orders without additional comments used to strengthen the relationship. […] This sounds particularly insecure and unobliging when one raises intonation at the end of the sentence, making the utterance seem a question and, therefore, holding it liable to suspense. A question does not necessarily require a consent. A refusal is also possible.'

The overuse of anticadence thus reveals women's counterproductive, sabotaging authority.

Summing up, the appropriate formal choices – the combination of lexicogrammar and intonation means – are treated as functional devices for the female poetic ethos. Self-help books authors suggest that women should use vocal resources to strengthen their images of self-confident persons, strong enough to give direct orders, and to be sure of their own affirmations.

4.4. Advice concerning content

In ancient rhetoric, the relation between the content of the message and its oral presentation was of the utmost importance (see Pernot 2016). In the Aristotelian framework, *actio* was functional to *inventio*: it served the efficient delivery of *arguments*. The delivery devices were expected to assure that the recipients do not only hear the speaker's arguments, but that they also listen to him with attention and, arguably, are persuaded:

> Now delivery is a matter of voice, as to the mode in which it should be used for each particular emotion; when it should be loud, when low, when intermediate; and how the tones, that is, shrill, deep, and intermediate, should be used; and what rhythms are adapted to each subject. For there are three qualities that are considered – volume, harmony, rhythm. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1403)

The self-help books' pedagogy, instead, hardly takes argumentation into account. Self-help books do not explicitly address the notion of content: it is as a rule hinted at through the verbum dicendi *to say*. The excerpts from the corpus suggest that the authors make a qualitative difference between: (a) *saying* meant as communicating any content (e.g. *say […] what you want; share your experiences*) and (b) *saying*

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meant as communicating the content of quality (*she has something interesting to say; she is better prepared than anyone else; he speaks as a knowledgeable person*) (see the examples below). Interestingly, the quoted formulations refer to the producer of the content, but not to the content itself.

The first case – *saying* meant as communicating any content – is illustrated by the following excerpt:

(8) Więc radzę Ci: mów. Mów głośno, czego chcesz. Nic się nie urzeczywistni, jeśli nie wypowiesz tego głośno. Kobiety zwykle zamykają się w sobie i cierpią po cichu. […] Nie mówiąc o niczym nikomu, nie poniesiesz porażki – ale i nie odniesiesz sukcesu. (Text 2, p. 69)
'So I advise you: speak. Say loudly what you want. Nothing will become real if you do not say it loudly. Women as a rule are *introvert*, and suffer in silence. […] By saying nothing to anybody, you will not fail, but you will neither succeed.'

Both meanings of the verb are instead illustrated in example (9):

(9) ON: Niezupełnie na bieżąco ze wszystkimi informacjami, ale gdy wie, o czym mowa, wypowiada się ze znajomością tematu. ONA: Wierzy w siebie tylko w 95 procentach, choć jest lepiej przygotowana niż ktokolwiek inny na spotkaniu. Dręczą ją wątpliwości i nie zabiera głosu. (Text 2, p. 70)
'HE: Even though not quite well informed, when he happens to know what is being talked about, he speaks as a knowledgeable person. SHE: She is only 95% self-confident, although she is better prepared than anyone else at the meeting. She is tormented by doubts, and she does not speak.'

The author argues about the existence of a gendered pattern: men tend to voice any content, while women feel entitled to speak only if they are sure they have something interesting to say.

In any case, for a woman it is better to speak than not to speak:

(10) Porzuć nieśmiałość w czasie następnego spotkania w firmie, poproś o glos i podziel się swoimi doświadczeniami z realizacji projektu. […] Mów zatem wszędzie i o każdym czasie, jeśli tylko uważasz, że masz coś interesującego do powiedzenia. (Text 1, p. 153)
'Get rid of your shyness during the next business meeting, voice and share your experiences from the project realization. […] Speak everywhere and everytime, provided you think that you have something interesting to say.'

Examples (8)-(10) show that the authors of self-help books do not have any articulate notion of content, or of its units (such as themes,

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topoi, arguments). Therefore, they are not able to advise their female readers on any principled way to use voice resources to strengthen the persuasive impact of the content. Since authors of self-help books avoid addressing the intellectual dimension of speech, the delivery is not presented as functional to logos, i.e., as strengthening the impact of arguments on the audience. The very *act* of pronouncing a message suffices for persuasive purposes. Within such an approach, the simple entrance into the communicative interaction appears to them as the most powerful persuasive strategy (see 4.2.).

Such authors only hint at the emotional dimension (roughly corresponding to rhetorical pathos). While speaking, a woman can convey emotions through the features of her voice. The qualitative aspects of sound and their impact on the woman's self-presentation are addressed in self-help books both in the context of gendered emotions and sentiments (which may be "female" or "unfemale") and in the context of the emotional labor in the workplace (Hochschild 2003). The quotations below unveil the rhetorical sociology of voice and emotions, informed by the double standards of *actio* for men and women:

> (11) Nikogo nie dziwi, gdy mężczyzna unosi głos, gdy okazuje swą złość publicznie, gdy aż gotuje się z wściekłości. Od mężczyzn oczekuje się, że będą krzyczeli. Przecież całe życie spędzają, wrzeszcząc na siebie nawzajem. […] Kobiety nauczone są kontrolować swoją złość. […] Gdy kobieta decyduje się jednak na okazanie swojego gniewu publicznie, świadkowie czują się nieswojo, są przestraszeni; uważają ją za trudną i niekobiecą. Zachowują się tak, jakby nie miała najmniejszego prawa krzyczeć. […] Uzewnętrznianie uczuć prawie zawsze odbierane jest w sposób negatywny. (Text 2, p. 123-124)
> 'Nobody is surprised when a man raises his voice, when he manifests his anger in public, and when he shows his rage. Men are expected to scream. They spend all their lifetimes screaming at each other. […] Women are taught to control their anger. […] When a woman decides to manifest her anger publicly, the witnesses feel akward and frightened; they treat her as difficult and "unfemale". They behave as if she had no right to scream. […] The manifestation of emotions is almost always treated in a negative way.'

Men are both allowed and expected to use voice of high intensity. They may thus freely scream or yell to manifest their negative emotions, such as anger, discontent or rage. Therefore, men are allowed to use high pitch (e.g., screaming) even as a reactive *symptom* of the negative emotions, without being accused of uncontrolled emotionality. They can also use high pitch as a pro-active *sign* of negative emotions, i.e., as a premeditated rhetorical appeal to *pathos* (e.g., a manifestation

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of anger to scare the audience, based on an argumentative-affective construction, see Plantin 2011b: 201).

In self-help books, a woman is offered two discordant pieces of advice. On the one hand, while manifesting her emotions – be they positive or negative – she should always adopt "female" ways of using voice: quiet, nice, controlled, and manifest only "female" – i.e., essentially positive – emotions. The following anti-example dissuades the woman from the inappropriate use of voice that does not well serve her construction of ethos:

> (12) Im wolno wrzeszczeć. Tobie nie. […] Wszystkich zdumiało to, że kobieta krzyczała tak samo głośno i zajadle jak mężczyzna. (Text 2, p. 123-124)
> 'They [men] are allowed to scream. You [a woman] are not. […] Everybody was shocked when a woman was screaming as loudly and angrily as a man.'

As shown in example (12) above, the general advice for women is not to use a scream as a *symptom* of their emotions. However, in example (11), the author slightly criticizes the cultural expectations in which the audience refuses women the "right to scream." In some contexts, it is even explicitly suggested that a scream can be an ethos-creating strategy in the workplace, if used purposefully as a *sign* to impress the audience:

> (13) W miarę, jak moja władza rosła, zaczęłam uświadamiać sobie, że są chwile, w których wręcz wskazane jest zastosowanie starannie dobranej dawki wrzasku. Czasem trzeba trochę powrzeszczeć. Jeśli od czasu do czasu – gdy Twoi ludzie popełnią błędy lub gdy nie osiągną zamierzonych celów – nie dasz ujścia swemu rozczarowaniu głośno i wyraźnie, przestaniesz ich inspirować do pracy. […] Masz święte prawo wściec się na kogoś. Ale gdy tak się stanie, weź głęboki oddech, przemyśl to, co masz do powiedzenia, i powiedz to spokojnie. W ten sposób pokażesz swoją władzę, a nie brak kontroli. (Text 2, p. 123-124)
> 'The more my power was increasing, the more I realized that there were some moments when it is highly recommended to apply an accurately measured portion of scream. Sometimes one has to scream. If from time to time – when members of your team make errors or when they do not reach desired goals – you do not release your disappointment loudly or clearly, you will stop inspiring them. […] You have the full right to be angry at somebody. But when this happens, take a deep breath, think over what you want to say, and say it quietly. In this way you will show your power, and not the lack of control.'

The excerpt is ambiguous. The advice "[…] take a deep breath, and think over what you want to say, and say it quietly" accounts for

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the stereotypical "female" pattern of using voice, i.e., controlling the manifestation of negative emotions. Such a self-presentation of the female speaker is shown as functional to the construction of her professional ethos in folk-rhetoric account ("in this way you will show your power, and not the lack of control").

However, a controlled "lack of control" – the overt manifestation of anger and disappointment – is also suggested as a useful persuasive device. The statement "[…] it is highly recommended to apply an accurately measured portion of scream" and the advice that the woman should manifest her discontent "loudly and clearly" invite her to adopt "male" behavior as a way of constructing her professional status. In such an approach, the poetic ethos is related to pathos – however only as a *manifestation* of emotions, and not as *arguing* from emotions.

5. Conclusions

Authors of self-help books for women share with some professional rhetoricians the conviction that the most important challenge for women is "to first invent a way of speaking in the context of being silenced". Since voice is presented in the folk-rhetoric account as the cornerstone of the speaker's role, the authors of self-help books focus on the speaker's external, easily perceived features: vocal behavior.

The mimetic ethos of an average woman in the workplace is diagnosed as poor. Women as workmates are socialized in a way that is dysfunctional for their careers. In their "natural" speech, they appear insecure, withdrawing and lacking self-confidence. The solution – i.e., advice on how to speak persuasively in the context of "being silenced" – is to find a voice. For men the consideration of voice is the endpoint in the methodical construction of a persuasive message (from *inventio* to *actio*). For women, instead, as the pedagogy of self-help books suggests, the opposite sequence applies: from *actio* (the most important in self-help books) to… *inventio*? The interrogative sign shows that the endpoint is not clear. Should poetic ethos suffice or is it but a preliminary step, eventually leading to the adoption of an argumentative ethos?

Accidentally, the use of the same concepts – *inventio* and *actio* – obscures the fact that the change of the sequence also changes the meaning of the terms. In the rhetorical framework, *actio* is the endpoint, i.e., the presentation of arguments prepared at the *inventio* stage. In self-help books, instead, *actio*, meant as the starting point, is not the presentation of arguments. Voice is described not only as dissociated from the argumentative dimension, but also as used *instead* of arguments.

In the Aristotelic framework, men – the only recipients of his treatises – did not have to fight for their role as orators; their only task

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was to elaborate a text, taking among others ethos as technical proof. In the case of self-help books directed to women, the situation is quite different. Credibility involves both issues: a woman must first persuade her audience, more accustomed to men in the role of speakers, and accept herself in the *role* of the speaker. Only then can she persuade the audience of her credibility as a concrete, or an actual, *speaker*.

The different role of arguments in argumentative ethos and poetic ethos also influences the concept of credibility. How is credibility – the customary translation of *ethos* – accounted for? Argumentative ethos is a fiduciary, yet controlling relation, rooted in the epistemic dimension (the description of ethos as a function of logos, where the intellectual value of arguments is essential). In the corpus analyzed, argumentative ethos is not even hinted at. Instead, self-help books promote self-presentation in terms of power: the "powerless" or "powerful" ways of using voice, expected to be functional for the professional career of women. Therefore, credibility does not concern the epistemic dimension of arguments, but rather the belief in the illusion of "power", fashioned through external features such as voice.

The study compares the "high culture" of rhetoric as a discipline with the popular culture of folk-rhetoric intuitions, geared to actual problems and their solutions. In the case of women speaking in the public sphere, the divergences between rhetoric and folk-rhetoric solutions regard the choices of means to reach the desired goals. While full-blown rhetoric is conceived of as an argumentative enterprise, the modern self-help books here under discussion do not address argumentative skills as a potential solution. Folk-rhetoric thus conveys to the (numerous) users of folk culture the message that arguments are not necessary to solve problems. What is instead essential is rather the impression management through the use of "powerful" voice. Such an account influences the perception of full-blown rhetoric as dispensable. This is rather disturbing in the era of post-truth and impression-formation, in which the serious rhetorical literacy appears to be more necessary than ever.

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