

RSE VZW Winter Newsletter

Dear Members of the Rhetoric Society of Europe,

As we approach the end of another year of intense RSE activity, we present you with the latest news from the Board as well as from Members, Featured Publications and a new rubric, Conference Reports. We also reprise the Interviews with a new series aimed at touring around Europe to meet researchers and teachers working on rhetoric at their diverse research centres.

As usual, if you have any news that you'd like to share with the members, please [just let us know!](#)

Happy reading and our warmest wishes for the Holidays and the New Year!

Ida Vikoren Andersen, Maria Freddi and Anne Ulrich

Board Announcements

After another successful Rhetoric in Society conference (see report below), the Board is pleased to announce that RiS 8 will be held at the University of Tübingen, May 26-28, 2021. The conference will be co-hosted by Anne Ulrich, Olaf Kramer and Dietmar Till. Please follow our 2020 Newsletters for more information on the conference theme and call for papers.

As Anne Ulrich will be busy organizing the 2021 conference in her new capacity as Conference Officer, another Board member, Maria Freddi, will take over the role of Communications Officer. The Board would like to thank Anne together with Magnus Hoem Iversen for starting the Newsletter in Fall 2015 and for keeping us abreast of so many interesting rhetorical news over the past 4 years!

Members Announcements & Other News

You can find the CFP extended deadline for the International Rhetoric Workshop 2020 to be held at San Luis Potosi,

Mexico: <http://www.internationalrhetoric.com/workshop-2020/>

The abstract submission deadline for the 5th International Conference on Rhetoric 'Days of Ivo Škarić' has been extended to January

15th: <http://dis.hfilosokod.hr/index.php/en/call-for-papers>

The booklet summarising the research findings of the Crisis of Rhetoric project is now available as a free download on the project

website: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/network/oratoratoryandpolitics/or/events.aspx>

Featured Publications

- *National Rhetorics in the Syrian Immigration Crisis: Victims, Frauds, and Floods* edited by Clarke Rountree (UAH, Huntsville, USA) and Jouni Tilli (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), published by Michigan State University Press, 2019

The Syrian refugee crisis seriously challenged countries in the Middle East, Europe, the United States, and elsewhere in the world. It provoked reactions from humanitarian generosity to anti-immigrant warnings of the destruction of the West. It contributed to the United Kingdom's "Brexit" from the European Union and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. This book is a unique study of rhetorical responses to the crisis through a comparative approach that analyzes the discourses of leading political figures in ten countries, including gateway, destination, and tertiary countries for immigration, such as Turkey, several European countries, and the United States. These national discourses constructed the crisis and its refugees so as to welcome or shun them, in turn shaping the character and identity of the receiving countries, for both domestic and international audiences, as more or less humanitarian, nationalist, Muslim-friendly, Christian, and so forth. This book is essential reading for scholars wishing to understand how European and other countries responded to this crisis, discursively constructing refugees, themselves, and an emerging world order.

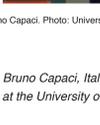
<http://msupress.org/books/book?id=50-1D0-45A9#.Xbid7-gzaUk>

- A special issue on the post-truth phenomenon, with guest editors Alberto Gil and Rafael Jiménez Cataño, has just been published by *Church, Communication & Culture*, the academic review of the School of Church Communication at the Pontifical University of Santa Croce, Routledge, 2019. *Church, Communication & Culture* is an open-access journal, and all volumes and issues are [available online](#).

- *The Eloquent Screen. A Rhetoric of Film*. By Gilberto Perez, with a foreword by James Harvey. University of Minnesota Press, 2019 <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/the-eloquent-screen>

- Ilie, Cornelia, 2018. Pragmatics vs Rhetoric: Political discourse at the pragmatics-rhetoric interface. In Cornelia Ilie and Neal Norrick (eds.) *Pragmatics and Its Interfaces*, 85-119. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://benjamins.com/catalog/pbns.294>

Interviews



Professor Bruno Capaci. Photo: University of Bologna.

This time we have asked prof. Bruno Capaci, Italian Literature and Rhetoric, to tell us about rhetorical studies at the University of Bologna. Below is the English version of the Interview.

Can you tell us what kinds of rhetorical studies you are currently involved in?

My field is argumentation. I am reading Perelman in light of the current and unique relationship between text and society, as society appears to be a much broader text, one that is written in a more unpredictable way than literature. Quasi-logical arguments as well as arguments based on the structure of reality are the object of my application. At the same time, identity, both in its normative, descriptive and rhetorical definitions, and in the more fluid scope established by the rule of justice, shows a variety of useful applications, especially in studies of society, such as, for example, those that explore the reciprocity of rights in a multicultural context.

I work and do my research at the Department of Classical Philology and Italian Studies of the University of Bologna. My primary objective is to find a place for rhetoric in the study of literature, but it is not just that. If we look at the impact Perelman can have on a reading of argumentation in Boccaccio's *Decameron* or Dante's *Comedia*, we see how extraordinary it is in that it allows to overcome the limitations of literary stylistics and to highlight the strictly argumentative, almost rhetorical, parts of these works. That is why I believe that *the New Rhetoric* should also be considered by literary criticism.

Can you describe the mission of REP (Research Centre in Rhetoric and Psychology)?

The group's research activity focuses on general rhetoric, the relations between rhetoric and literature, rhetoric and medicine, rhetoric and politics, but also rhetoric and didactics and rhetoric and the analysis of legal argumentation.

REP operates within a complex academic system comprised of the Centre for Medical Humanities, the Centre on *Ars Epistolandi* in the Renaissance (ARCE), and the Centro Studi Piero Camporesi focused on literary anthropology. It aims to act in a plurality of fields like the discipline of rhetoric does, being characterised by multiple discourses, from a variety of scientific arenas and human endeavours. To this purpose REP has been organising small meetings aimed at facilitating this kind of interdisciplinary exchange, like the one in January 2018 on the concept of anticipation and awaiting (*La regia dell'attesa. Declinazioni tra retorica, filologia, psicologia, scienze della natura, letteratura e medicina*).

What is the kind of rhetorical studies legacy you draw from in your work? Can you name a couple of works in rhetoric that have been influential in your research and teaching?

I would say straightaway Book II in Aristotle's Rhetoric, with its analysis of passions and enthymemes. Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca's *New Rhetoric* has helped me understand, or better rediscover, rhetoric, after studying University textbooks which would often refer to this book without capturing the full range of possibilities it has opened. Another much-loved book is Ezio Raimondi's *La retorica d'oggi*. After years of listening to his lectures and working with him towards my PhD thesis, his book compels one to consider the hermeneutic side of rhetoric, namely to read texts but also actions; words, but also argumentative procedures, especially those we see at work in so-called asymmetrical relationships, such as doctor-patient, teacher-pupil (parent), lawyer-client. Finally, Andrea Battistini's work on rhetoric in Galileo and Vico has also been influential in my teaching.

How do you see the role of rhetorical studies in the Italian University curriculum?

It is a role that needs revamping and rediscovering. More courses on general rhetoric should be offered. And we should stop combining rhetoric with something else, as if we are afraid to teach it. Rhetoric will lose its identity in stylistics or in the broader field of communication if we do not call it by its name, if we do not engage with its rules and procedures. Italy is the country that invented etiquette (*Galateo*) as a form of caring about the other in the basic principles of communication, it is the home of Dante and Giambattista Vico, and yet some are afraid of affirming the peculiar interpretive role of rhetoric, besides its persuasive power.

What is your experience with the RSE (Rhetoric Society of Europe) and what do you consider important for the society?

A very positive one, because it is multidialogical. If communication is the climate for words and the atmosphere for emotions, the RSE meeting in Ghent truly had the right environmental conditions! There were so many inspiring talks, ideas and useful critical observations for our future work. RSE has been a welcoming gathering of a variety of people with diverse interests, something which makes us happy and wishful to repeat the experience. I am especially grateful to some of the members of RSE who have supported REP from its beginnings, particularly Maria Załęska of Warsaw University and Francesca Piazza from the University of Palermo.

What I consider important for the society? Above all, that it continues to exist since it is a bulwark against all the isms that are burgeoning around Europe at present.

Conference Reports

The 7th Rhetoric in Society conference of the RSE (RiS 7) was held at Ghent University from 11 to 13 September 2019 on the topic of "Rhetoric as Equipment for Living", a topic explored from the perspective of rhetorical fields such as argumentation, persuasive communication, deliberation, public speaking, composition and new rhetoric; and/or embedded in disciplines such as pedagogy, social work, psychology, cultural studies, heritage studies, management and communication.

The meeting, hosted by RSE President Kris Rutten and organized together with the Department of Educational Studies of Ghent University, saw 180 participants from all over Europe as well as extra-European countries often, but not just, representing the parent Rhetoric Society of America.

Three keynote speakers opened each day's proceedings addressing the conference theme from a different angle. On Day 1, David R. Gruber, University of Copenhagen, gave a fascinating talk on the rhetoric of materiality, showing how everyday material objects may enter "textualization" processes and acquire rhetorical force, cutting across the material and the semiotic. His compelling argument throughout was for an interpretative methodology of situated rhetorical analysis informed by materiality.

The next day Lisa A. Flores, University of Colorado Boulder, discussed patterns of public discourse on race and migration from the perspective of critical race scholarship. She forcefully called for the need on the part of rhetorical scholars to expose and interrupt those patterns, what she calls the "vulnerable ontology of race" which is discursively created by public discourse out of fear and racism.

On the third and last day, Geert Biesta, professor of Public Education at Maynooth University, took the audience on a tour of contemporary debates on education from the perspective of educational anthropology and philosophy, thought-provokingly questioning some of the equations which have become common, such as teaching equals control and learning equals freedom, suggesting instead that these positionings of teaching and learning need to be reconsidered.

The variety of papers presented during the parallel sessions speaks to the wealth of ongoing research in rhetoric, ranging from ancient rhetorical tools as equipment for contemporary citizens to rhetorics of science and technology, from environmental rhetorics to populist rhetoric in the media, and from the place of rhetoric in literary studies through rhetoric & law to rhetorical education. Thematic panel sessions dealt with more focused themes, such as, for example, the panel on Epideictic as equipment for politics, or the one on Public engagement.

The many stimulating conversations continued during the conference dinner in the Foyer terrace of the municipal theatre in Ghent, overlooking the celebrated Saint Bavo's Cathedral and the Belfry, and during the closing reception on campus. Ghent's quays stretching along the Leie (famous Graslei and Korenlei) and the mild weather also offered the ideal setting for more peripatetic discussions in the evenings.

Maria Freddi, University of Pavia

Submit something for next newsletter



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