

# Rhetoric in the Twenty-First Century



# Rhetoric in the Twenty-First Century:

*An Interactive Oxford  
Symposium*

Edited by

Nicholas J. Crowe and David A. Frank

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9020-0

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9020-5

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## REVIVING RHETORIC IN OXFORD: A FOREWORD

Dr John Feneley, then Principal of the Centre for Medieval & Renaissance Studies (CMRS) in Oxford, first suggested a rhetoric conference in summer 2011. The conference was planned by myself and Dr Nicholas J. Crowe of the Centre and announced as an “Interactive Symposium” by email and website placements in autumn 2011. Eventually 24 people took part: 19 scholars, the four priming speakers, with Nicholas Crowe as moderator and co-chair, together representing eight countries. The organizational plan was unique. Four “Priming Speakers” were asked only to address whatever issues they felt worthy of discussion. They were not asked to submit titles, nor were they asked to coordinate with other speakers. Neither Nicholas nor I knew what they would say. Just before each presentation, two participants were selected by lot to deliver a response – one “pro” and one “con”. Following these remarks and a general discussion on the first day, the participants were divided by lot into three Research Teams that would continue to meet separately during the Symposium. Each of the three successive Priming Speakers also had pro-and-con respondents through the conclusion of the Symposium. On the fourth day, each of the research teams produced a proposition for debate. Interactivity outside of the formal sessions was enhanced by the fact that all participants were lodged in St. Michael’s Hall, the city-centre home of CMRS: it was lively, and highly productive. (It should be noted here that the year 2014 marked the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the University of Oxford, and that CMRS assisted in noting the occasion with another highly successful interactive symposium on “Rhetoric in Time and Space”.)

—James J. Murphy





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors of the present volume are immeasurably indebted to Professor James J. (“Jerry”) Murphy for his unstinting support, encouragement and advice throughout the preparation of this book. His original vision was integral in both inspiring and realizing the Oxford symposium in 2012 (and its successor in 2014), and the present work gratefully acknowledges that vision as part of a remarkable career in scholarship devoted to the study of rhetoric, language and literature.

The venue for the 2012 symposium was the Centre for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Oxford. This admirable institution was co-founded by John and Sandra Feneley, to whom thanks are due for their assistance and hospitality alike, in making available a setting so uniquely suited to the residential and academic requirements of the event, and contributing thereby so materially to its success.

The introductory article to this book, pp. 1 - 26, and the foreword on p. vii, form an expanded and adapted version of an article by David A. Frank and Nicholas J. Crowe, entitled “A Revival of Rhetoric at Oxford: An Interactive Seminar Held at the Centre for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Oxford” and published in *Rhetoric Review* 33, 3 (2014): 281-294, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis LLC (<http://www.tandf online.com>).



## RHETORIC IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: AN INTERACTIVE OXFORD SYMPOSIUM



Back Row, l – r: Ryan Gillespie, Haixia Lan, John Gooch, Rudong Chen, Lyn Bennett, Hanne Roer, Mark A.E. Williams, Sean O'Rourke, Stephen Pender, Franz-Hubert Robling

Front Row, l – r: John Oastler Ward, Robin Reames-Henry, David A. Frank, Nicholas J. Crowe, James J. Murphy, Randy Allen Harris, Carol Poster

Not present: Renato Barilli, Michelle Bolduc, James Farrell, Elza Tiner

Photograph courtesy of John Oastler Ward



# INTRODUCING “RHETORIC IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: AN INTERACTIVE SYMPOSIUM” OUTLOOKS, OBJECTIVES, OVERVIEW

NICHOLAS J. CROWE AND DAVID A. FRANK

James J. Murphy, then of Princeton University, in an article published in 1960 in *Speech Monographs*, under the title “The Earliest Teaching of Rhetoric at Oxford”, provided readers with an analytical account of the status of rhetoric in the early years of its pedagogic significance at the University of Oxford. The oldest English-speaking university in the world (the University of Bologna [1021] and the University of Paris [1092] are older), the University of Oxford remains one of the more prestigious teaching institutions in the world, and its early relationship with the history of the rhetorical canon is of great importance. The study of rhetoric, Murphy writes, was there at the University’s founding, although its presence was often subordinated to logic and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> In a series of comprehensive studies since the publication of Murphy’s article, John Oastler Ward, who has conducted extensive research in Oxford archives, has documented a rich and robust tradition of rhetorical studies at Oxford in the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> Oxford continued its significant role in hosting rhetorical studies as they evolved and metamorphosed in the Renaissance, as Peter Mack has noted.<sup>3</sup> Later, Bishop Richard Whately was largely responsible for something of a recovery of rhetoric at Oxford in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Overviews and synopses of the topic consistently demonstrate that 20<sup>th</sup>-century Oxford, however, was markedly less hospitable to rhetoric. Logical positivism and the “analytical” tradition can be said to have fundamentally defined the nature and characteristic landscape of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Oxonian philosophy, signally to the concomitant exclusion of rhetoric. Drawing from the primary influence of Wittgenstein, a host of “Oxford philosophers”, as they became known, including Ryle, Austin, Ayer, Hare and a number of others, focused their efforts on what was deemed “ordinary language”.<sup>5</sup> Oxford’s 20<sup>th</sup>-century antipathy to rhetoric is nowhere better revealed than in a 1958 conference held in Paris, intended to engender a dialogue between “Anglo-Saxon” and “continental”

philosophers, as the respective schools were by this time firmly known. Oxonian philosophers controlled the “Anglo-Saxon” delegation.<sup>6</sup> According to Charles Taylor, who reported on the conference, this dialogue ultimately failed because the Oxford contingent did not appear to evince any authentic interest in finding common cause with their continental colleagues, who – as represented by Chaim Perelman, the co-author of the most important 20<sup>th</sup>-century rhetoric<sup>7</sup>—were concerned with particular methods of analysis, experience, and values deemed by the Oxonians to be beyond the reach of reason.<sup>8</sup> Above all, continental philosophers were interested in yoking the *vita contemplativa* with the *vita activa*, seeking thereby to infuse reason fundamentally into the experience of life in the aftermath of World War II. The 1958 “rhetorical turn”, furthermore, bypassed Oxford.<sup>9</sup>

A number of commentators have identified a pattern in the chequered vagaries of the treatment of rhetoric in the west more generally. Sir Brian Vickers, internationally recognized for his work on—among numerous other topics—Shakespeare, Bacon, and rhetoric, has identified an essentially contrapuntal pattern of decline and recovery.<sup>10</sup> This may certainly serve as an illuminating explanation of the trajectory of rhetoric at Oxford during its 800-year history. As Jennifer Richards notes in her important book *Rhetoric*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* itself captures the double meaning of rhetoric when it juxtaposes two definitions: one emphasizing the place of persuasion (which in turn may invoke suspicion), and the other acknowledging rhetoric as a humane art.<sup>11</sup> Twentieth-century Oxonian philosophers inclined to the first definition, as did those Oxford thinkers who typically emphasized the efficacious worth of deductive logic over rhetoric. The event entitled “Rhetoric in the Twenty-First Century: An Interactive Symposium” (3–7 July 2012), organized by James J. Murphy, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of California–Davis, and Nicholas J. Crowe, then Tutor in English and European Literature, and sometime Senior Dean, Centre for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Oxford,<sup>12</sup> may notably acknowledge a recovery of rhetoric in the city of Oxford that embraces the two definitions.<sup>13</sup>

Crowe and Murphy sought to bring to the fore and tap the fertile, in fact (re-)generative capacities of rhetoric by structuring the symposium as an intentionally collaborative effort, inflected with the agonistic impulses of parliamentary debate, dialogue, and disputation in the spirit of Cicero. The event was arranged to provide a platform for major rhetorical catalysts in the form of four “priming” or keynote speakers, chosen from the cream of the global field to make a provocative argument on the theme of rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Professor Sir Brian Vickers, Professor Peter

Mack, Professor James J. Murphy, and Professor Jennifer Richards. Nineteen delegates were selected from a number of applications to take part.<sup>14</sup>

As originally conceived by Crowe and Murphy, the symposium was to bear in many of its aspects a somewhat innovatory, indeed experimental stamp. By preference it was to be a small, concentrated gathering of original voices. Its intention was to lend a new and rigorous articulation to the concept of interactivity, with the effect of enacting rhetorical procedures alongside the simultaneous discussion and revisiting of the influence of these procedures on the cultural archive as broadly construed. The confluence of discussion of, and participation in, the rhetorical tradition was deemed peculiarly fitting, given Murphy's many scholarly investigations of the "preceptive" dimension in the long timeline of rhetorical history,<sup>15</sup> and the intent to reanimate this congruity in a specific Oxonian setting.<sup>16</sup> With a degree of success that priming speakers and delegates alike were ready to acknowledge, this intention was memorably achieved. Co-identification of practitioner and commentator was subtly and continuously underlined as a *modus operandi*. Active involvement, rather than passive absorption, was at the heart of each day's proceedings. Delegates were introduced, at the outset, to a symposiastic schema drawn up to accommodate individual and collective engagement with the topics generated by speakers and discussions, as well as timetabled periods of reflection, contemplation and reevaluation of those topics. A cumulative narrative, fostered by these dialogic formats, was thereby set in process to bring participants towards the final day's deliberations, framed with self-conscious formality in the form of a parliamentary-style debate. Its stated purpose was to ascertain the most profitable likely trajectories for the study and utility of rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and was conceived—in keeping with the spirit of the entire symposium, and as a fitting rhetorical recapitulation of its events—to emphasize method and procedure quite as much as conclusion or end-point.

Interactivity was to be understood in several complementary ways. The responses from delegates, consciously stylized as *pro* and *con*, after each priming address, were designed to initiate a first open-house discussion of the issues raised, with an opportunity for the priming speaker to address them. In the afternoon of each day, a second period of moderated open-house discussion, designated "second thoughts", was held (generally without the presence of the morning's priming speaker) to refine, hone and challenge such points as appeared to need revisiting. Every delegate was also assigned to one of three "research groups", whose remit, during each of their timetabled break-out sessions *in camera*, was to evolve an ongoing

response to the deliberations of the symposium as it proceeded, with the overarching responsibility of generating propositions which could be tested in the debate on the last day.

Sir Brian Vickers was the first priming speaker: as with, on subsequent days, the other keynote speakers, he was paired before the lecture with a duo of respondents randomly selected from among the delegates. Vickers’ *In Defense of Rhetoric* counts as one of the most important recoveries of rhetoric in modern times, a book that remains a foundational critique of 20<sup>th</sup>-century attacks on the ancient art.<sup>17</sup> It forms part of a substantive and influential body of work which Vickers has devoted to rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> In his priming speech, which inaugurated the symposium, Vickers observed that in his estimation 21<sup>st</sup>-century rhetorical studies would not differ markedly from the rhetorical activity of preceding centuries. The survival of the discipline, however, was conditional on a number of factors, allied to the capacity of rhetoric to identify its own boundaries in relation to cognate fields in language and literature. Specifically he identified three major areas of importance for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century.

- 1) Rhetoric as an expression of textual erudition. What matters primarily, argued Vickers, is the continuation of textual analysis of rhetorical commentaries. Such analysis would include translation, and the location of rhetorical texts in their cultural and historical milieus. Vickers pointed to Virginia Cox and John Oastler Ward’s *The Rhetoric of Cicero in its Medieval and Early-Renaissance Commentary Tradition*; James J. Murphy and Lawrence Green’s *Renaissance Rhetoric Short-Title Catalogue 1460-1700*; and Gert Ueding, Gregor Kalivoda, and Franz-Hubert Robling’s comprehensive seven-volume German survey of rhetoric, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* as illustrations of the finest textual analysis, within the field, which the 20<sup>th</sup> century has to offer.<sup>19</sup> His theme was the importance of continuity in the interests of maintaining a rhetorical canon able to recognize itself as such.
- 2) Rhetoric as an expression of social phenomena. Vickers called for rhetoric scholars to consider how rhetorical theories are handed down by one generation to the next; and for scholars, such as Peter Mack, to consider how universities and schools maintain, superintend and transfer rhetorical traditions. The study of how rhetoric has been taught, he emphasized, is key in the identification of how best to continue teaching it. A connection is implicitly to be suggested between rhetoric and pedagogy in this sense.



- 3) Rhetoric as an expression of political activity. Here, Vickers sounded a sceptical note about the efficaciousness of rhetoric in the political arena: good people and good rhetoric (even when co-existent) do not always win in democracies. An underlying suspicion is that rhetoric itself, as a mode of communication, is vulnerable to misinterpretation and even hostility, linked as it may be with the particular mistrust associated popularly with political discourse at the present time. One optimistic response to this situation is the encouragement of a possible rediscovery in culture of the role of rhetoric in political, legal and ethical decision-making, with an increased role for those who currently mistrust it, and a revision of the ways in which such decisions percolate through public understanding.

Drawing from these three topics, Vickers then suggested that the following questions deserve consideration by rhetorical scholars: How does persuasion work? How does persuasion happen? He made a point of lamenting the state of political rhetoric in the United States and the United Kingdom alike to illustrate the obvious need for a more informed, flexible and responsive political discourse. At the same time he was able to demonstrate once more the needful argument that in unexamined or populist contexts, the word “rhetoric” itself, with its constellated meanings in broad culture, can all too frequently serve as a term of disapprobation. A more informed rhetoric, in other words, is most likely to be achieved via a more informed and sympathetic conception of what the term “rhetoric” actually involves, partly through considering what it has involved in the past.

One memorable high point of the symposium was the subsequent exchange between Sir Brian, a leading scholar of rhetoric in the west, and Professor Rudong Chen, President of the Chinese Rhetoric Society of the World, and the leading rhetoric scholar in China, on the purpose and function of rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> As one of two Asian scholars of rhetoric at the symposium, Professor Chen invited his western audience to consider Chinese rhetoric in both its ancient and modern expressions, considerations that had not featured in Vickers’ priming statement. Chen acknowledged the roles played by persuasion, argumentation, and the discovery of truth in western rhetoric. He went on to say, however, that Chinese rhetoric more broadly outlines a “way of life”, a “social system”, and a “civilization”. In ancient China, Chen continued, rhetoric was primarily concerned with morality, ethics, and most importantly, the Confucian emphasis on love. Rhetoric, he concluded, has the real capacity

to serve as an alternative to war and violence, and offer different civilizations a means to negotiate significant obstacles through the awakening of moral communication.<sup>21</sup> While western rhetoric has itself been concerned with issues of morality and ethics, they have been subordinated in turn to questions of “truth”. Professor Chen, in his response, proposed a model of the ways in which cross-cultural dialogue on rhetoric ought to take place. He honoured Sir Brian with his respectful response, accurately interpreted what he said, and offered an alternative for his audience to consider: the rhetorical traditions and scholarship of China.

Peter Mack, author of a seminal history of Renaissance rhetoric, was the second priming speaker. Advertised by the Oxford University Press as the author of “the first comprehensive history of Renaissance rhetoric,”<sup>22</sup> Mack chose in his presentation to distil from that book 12 characteristics of Renaissance rhetoric that, he believed, might inform an understanding of rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His conspectus of “Renaissance Rhetoric in a Nutshell” belied the humorous modesty of its title, identifying strands of viable congruity between the Renaissance rhetorical tradition, particularly through its humanistic refraction, and the rhetorical situation of the present day. Mack’s firm conviction was that the Renaissance itself cannot be understood without a due appreciation of the place of rhetoric in it; indeed, that the new kinds of writing, making and thinking which we find in the civilization of the Renaissance are related to the availability of rhetorical theory and its role in education.

Referring to his own endeavours in the field, Mack adverted to the necessity of the study of textbooks and, simultaneously, to their limiting condition, noting that they are only meaningful in the context of the educational programmes in which they are taught. He emphasized the urgent requirement for greater archival information-sharing and the integration of source materials on a global scale, in order to understand the interpretive affinities and historic antipathies between rhetoric and dialectic, stemming from a recovery—so far as it is achievable—of the circumstances and places in which the Aristotelian *Rhetoric* and Ciceronian *De oratore* were taught and studied. Thereafter, a similar collaborative industry is going to be necessary, he insisted, for the collation and comparative analysis of the commentaries arising from this concerted investigation.

Mack’s 12 cornerstone characteristics ranged through the following areas: the reconstitution of ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric, in order to contextualize the problematic juxtaposition of rhetoric and dialectic; the use of rhetorical textbooks (letter-writing, printing manuals, handbooks of tropes and figures); the introduction of outstanding texts between 1479 and

1531 by, *inter alia*, Erasmus; vernacular rhetorics in languages other than Latin, including English, French and Italian; the humanistic re-establishment of the study of emotion; the revival of the study of disposition; an appreciation of *copia*; the collection and identification of stylistic figures; a focus on invention in its relationship to models and imitation; the need of a fillip to the study of Biblical and exegetical commentary-writing in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries; a scrutiny of the relationship between rhetorical commentaries and literary—specifically poetic—texts; the importance of greater emphasis on epideictic rhetoric. He followed the presentation of these dozen touchstones with an overview of rhetorical texts published in the Renaissance and an account of their subsequent interpretive history. Deriving from these vital areas of early modern focus, and gathering a momentum from them, Mack then outlined a number of avenues to which future generations of rhetoric scholars might profitably devote their attentions. He elected to specify the congruence of rhetoric and the grammar of the visual arts (citing the lead of Michael Baxandall)<sup>23</sup>; the interrelations of rhetoric, historiography and political thought (alluding to Quentin Skinner’s insight that theorizing about politics adapts rhetorical as well as historical thinking)<sup>24</sup>; a study of the access which women historically had to rhetoric, and the use they made of it in writing and oratory (with particular mention of the work of Virginia Cox, Alison Thorne and—the fourth priming speaker at the symposium—Jennifer Richards).<sup>25</sup>

Although Vickers and Mack had not coordinated their presentations, they both called for 21<sup>st</sup>-century rhetoricians to reappraise the canon of rhetorical texts and the commentaries devoted to those rhetorical texts. In recapitulating his priming speech, Mack declared that there were multiple rhetorical texts crucially inviting this kind of study, including several in the spheres of education, religion, and politics. He urged scholars to consider the place of rhetoric within education, and the nexus of rhetoric and disputation; and to canvas the ways in which rhetoric was deployed on the periphery of continental Europe. He also invited an analysis of the relationship between rhetoric and a wide swathe of communicative fields, including the arts, poetics, and law. Mack concluded with the hope that these studies would lead historians of rhetoric to a better understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and Renaissance culture, apprehended in the round.

Sean O’Rourke’s response offered what he termed a “gentle critique” of Mack’s presentation. Accepting Mack’s “brilliant” topology of rhetoric, based as it is on written texts, O’Rourke suggested that Mack’s approach was nonetheless limited in that it did not embrace the use of

rhetoric in instances of diplomacy and conflict-resolution. O’Rourke pointed to Dominic LaRusso’s *Training of the Venetian Diplomat* as an illustration of a study of Renaissance rhetoric going well beyond written texts.<sup>26</sup> He also noted that the use of rhetoric in Renaissance business (and religiously dissenting) discourses should be acknowledged. Secondly, rhetorical scholars should, O’Rourke continued, consider the nature of the assaults on rhetoric made during the period. He suggested the timeliness of a study of Guido Cavalcanti, and a consideration of the expansion of ethics (via rhetoric) into social morals.

James J. Murphy, the third priming speaker and widely acknowledged as the most distinguished scholar of medieval rhetoric in the field,<sup>27</sup> began by discussing the relationship between the word and the thing. Every culture, he then observed, creates for itself an extended meta-culture of naming. Murphy noted the relationship between spoken word and mental experience, pointing out that writing is a representation of the spoken word and that every known culture has produced a system of writing. He suggested that definitions, however, are not obligatory for understanding, and reminded delegates that in 1977, when 120 scholars from twelve countries convened to form the International Society for the Study of Rhetoric, the consensus emerged that it was not actually necessary to define rhetoric—and that it may, in fact, be unwise or erroneous to attempt to do so. That notwithstanding, a definition of rhetoric tracing its origins to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* did coalesce, to include a description of a process which involved the capacity to persuade.

Murphy compared the history of rhetoric to the flow of the Mississippi River, observing that the rhetorical tradition had had many streams and tributaries. The Romans, for example, inherited Greek ideas which they proceeded to codify.<sup>28</sup> This codification was not inert; it was, rather, the product of disputation. In this regard Murphy referred to a recent article by Alex Novikoff in the *American Historical Review* on the history of scholastic disputation as an illustration of rhetorical history properly done.<sup>29</sup> Disputation, which, as Murphy noted, has not been much studied by scholars of rhetoric, did indeed play a major role in bringing rhetorical concepts productively to life. At this point, Murphy took issue with Sir Brian Vickers’ claim that little rhetorical activity had taken place during the Middle Ages, asserting that the “river of rhetoric” had been in spate during this period as well.

Modern rhetoric, Murphy continued, drew from the rhetorical traditions that preceded it. This continuity is definitely identifiable as a pattern.<sup>30</sup> Its subsequent usage in the modern world, however, could in that sense become problematic. He ended by challenging his audience to

consider, for example, how certain rhetorical terms were currently being described and used in a recent textbook on rhetoric for undergraduates.<sup>31</sup> Those terms, he and the delegates concluded, were apt to be limited, risking an insufficient canvas of the richness of the rhetorical tradition and thereby predisposing to misinterpretation as much as to clarity. Murphy's challenge revealed a latent tendency among some modern rhetorical theorists to gloss over or downplay the history of rhetoric. He pointed to Borrowman, Lively and Kmetz's volume *Rhetoric in the Rest of the West* as an illustration of how rhetorical history should be undertaken.<sup>32</sup>

The Italian scholar and cultural commentator Renato Barilli, author of a keynote work entitled *Rhetoric*, amplified the burden of Murphy's discussion by noting the resistance of modernity itself to the very notion of rhetoric, and the phenomenal rise of the new rhetorics led by Chaïm Perelman.<sup>33</sup> Barilli argued that rhetoric has "many enemies", including modernists generally speaking, and that it deserves a stronger defense than it customarily receives at the present time. Franz-Hubert Robling further embellished Murphy's claim that modern rhetorical theorists have an urgent need to place rhetorically interesting concepts, like ethics, in their historical context. Rhetoric, Robling continued, does have a continuity in history that should be recognized, particularly in the context of ascertaining its future trajectories.

Jennifer Richards of Newcastle University served as the fourth priming speaker. As a professor of literature, as well as a specialist in rhetoric,<sup>34</sup> she acknowledged first of all that she did not approach rhetoric as a philosophical subject, and she also alluded to the suspicion in which the study of rhetoric is held in some quarters of the literature-teaching establishment. Her symposium presentation was divided into two topics. First, she surveyed the fall and rise of rhetoric in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She followed this with a corollary which centered on the pedagogy of rhetoric, via a study of *Hamlet*. Rhetoric, Richards suggested, collapsed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of its displacement as a central discipline by linguistics. Rhetoric, operating on the assumption that language was a resource that could be used, as an art, to affect and create things in the world, had been supplanted by linguistic theories which conceptualized language as part of an impersonal system presupposing no need to be referential. She adduced the famous essay by Roland Barthes, "The Old Rhetoric: an Aide-Mémoire", and Barthes' mixed account of the rhetorical tradition.<sup>35</sup>

Barthes, Richards reminded delegates, believes rhetoric was born in the context of brutal power plays in ancient Sicily, intended to secure not democracy but property. Taking Barthes seriously, Richards contested his

approach by challenging his aetiological conception of rhetoric, which in her view begins with Aristotle and the ancient texts. Barthes dislikes Cicero, Richards observed, for the same reason that she herself finds him compelling: he did not build, as Aristotle had built, a system of rhetoric. In this respect Richards takes James May and Jakob Wisse’s translation of Cicero’s *De oratore* to be a laudable and useful introduction to rhetoric.<sup>36</sup> As an enactment of rhetoric as the expression of disputation, Richards prefers the dialogic and argumentative display of *De oratore*, one in which advocates and positions shift and change, to the more static methodologies of Aristotle’s theory of rhetoric and those of structuralists like Barthes.

In order to illustrate that the operational method supplied by rhetoric is one designed for fluidity of experience and thought, Richards described how she uses a rhetorical stratagem in the teaching of *Hamlet*. Rhetoric, she noted, was useful in helping students understand messages, subtexts and themes developed in the Renaissance, in the context of their audiences; at the same time she aspires to teach students how to “think rhetorically”. To accomplish this aim, she teaches students how to identify tropes and commonplaces characteristic of Renaissance culture, imagining how an audience at that time might have understood them. She also encourages them to write poetry—which they do with some reluctance—drawing from these tropes and commonplaces. Richards uses exchanges from *Hamlet*, in particular, to demonstrate how rhetoric works in dialogic contexts. Rhetoric, she argues, is in fact central to Shakespeare’s drama, revolving as it does around commonplaces and the creative manipulation of these in dramatic encounters, demonstrating at once the playwright’s purchase on the usefulness of “commonplacing”, and his dramatization of the limitations of that usage.

Haixia Lan, a scholar of comparative rhetorics, responded by noting that Richards had underscored the inventive and generative capacities of rhetoric, and moreover demonstrated that the winning of arguments is not the only standard by which it is to be judged. She suggested that rhetorical theory, in the characterization thus propounded by Richards, may be traced to Cicero in the west and to Confucius in the east. Lan was intrigued by Richards’ claim that rhetoric constituted a way of thinking and being, confessing that she had not thought of western rhetoric in this manner.

The four priming speakers functioned as catalysts not only for response, discussion, and timetabled sessions of “second thoughts”, but also for the subsequent quasi-parliamentary debate, and offered *points de départ* for the study of rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, the four speakers adverted to the fundamental utility of the rhetorical canon and the received commentary on these texts. They were in consensus: the future of rhetoric

is to be found in an imaginative appreciation of the rhetorical traditions set out in the textual record. Second, rhetoric is most usefully located in fields of disputation and disagreement, and in both the informed acceptance and challenge of received ideas. Third, rhetorical studies will need to be expanded beyond Greek- and Latin-based rhetorics to include vernacular and indeed non-western *corpora* that may be radically different, not only in appearance and articulation, but cultural purpose also. At the same time, viewing rhetoric in the full field of its global expression will indubitably reveal a number of universal commonplaces.

On the final day, the debate drew the four priming presentations, which had by then been extensively investigated, challenged and defended, into an arena where consensus could be dynamically sought. At the start of the symposium, Crowe and Murphy had laid the foundations of the debate by dividing delegates into three research groups, literally designated (with a punning nod to the canon) by “rhetorical colours”, and inviting members of each group to work collaboratively towards a basic proposition to be aired on the final day: how to evolve the most fruitful approach to the study of rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each group was, in this way, charged with the task of forming a thesis to be presented to the entire audience, in such a way that a debate could then ensue.

The first group argued that translation ought to be the anchor for the future study of rhetoric. To make their case, advocates for this proposition argued that translation (particularly a revivification of the historical *translatio studii*), and the discipline of translation studies, were best placed to locate the movement of rhetoric in a global context. Translation allows for the communication of meaning across and between cultures. A broadened vision of what we may collectively understand by “reason”, a focus on ethics, on audience, and an emphasis on cosmopolitanism would serve as pillars for this approach. Metaphors, the party contended, are in this regard critical in enabling the conveyance of experience and ideas.

Cicero, Latini, and Perelman are historical exemplars of translation, from antiquity, the Renaissance and the modern era respectively. All three were exiled, all three turned to rhetoric as a response. Rhetoric and translation allowed them to translate humane ideas into a wider rhetorical philosophy. Translation by definition requires flexibility, ethical recognition of others, and creative responses to texts that may yield multiple meanings. The process of persuasion (rhetoric) itself, the party argued, was rooted in translation, arising first from the soul and mind and proceeding then to its transmission in the verbal, visual or written form of the argument.

The second party argued that rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should finally be identified as the cure and not the illness, in cases where misunderstanding and misinterpretation arise, and should be ethically sensitive to contemporary problems of cultural response, and accommodating of new theories and practices which are informed by history. An ethical rhetoric presumes a responsive posture, and the centrality of audiences in such a way as to constitute an ethical community. The apprehension of the history of rhetoric must remain open to reinterpretation, and be rooted in the recognition that there are going to be more than two sides, in fact yielding multiple rhetorics. A rhetoric of this sort has a “flexible rigour” whose continuing usage will be invaluable.

The group encouraged delegates to resist the temptation of seeking a victor: rather, they suggested that in keeping with the tenor and intent of the symposium, the audience should seek out a consensus. Chiming with the first party, the advocates of this second group confirmed translation to be a coping-stone for rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They concluded by emphasizing the role of rhetoric in supplying solutions to the new, as well as perennial, problems which citizens and populations face today.

John Oastler Ward spoke for the third party, highlighting the need to study and be aware of techniques of persuasion, and suggesting that 21<sup>st</sup>-century citizens should be equipped to resist persuasion in the media-sphere and elsewhere. Second, it was proposed that ancient rhetoric might be a useful foundation for the study of modern rhetoric. Persuasion may come in new and novel expressions, but it will still exhibit features characteristic of the ancient period. This third party then advocated a far more sedulous and widespread use of new digital technologies for the purposes of archival research, storage and communication. In concurrence with the previous two parties, the advocates of the third group reinforced the overarching need for the incorporation into rhetorically mobilized discussions of moral and environmental values.

The propositions were tested further in the form of a quasi-parliamentary debate which explored their implications by challenging and recapitulating a number of central contentions, under the aegis of finding common ground and areas of agreement. The sense of the house, finally, and in accordance with the inclusive timbre of the symposium, was that: “Rhetoric in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be ethically responsive to contemporary challenges such as propaganda, coercion, force, and power; should be culturally inclusive; and should be concerned with developing and teaching new theories, methods, practices and terminologies to be informed by and tested against history.”



This “Interactive Symposium” was a striking success, both in its use of a novel procedure and in terms of the products offered by the priming speakers and delegates. First, it marked a modest revival of rhetoric in the university city of Oxford. Drawing scholars from different rhetorical traditions, it provided an energized forum in which universal assumptions and commonplaces were shared, scrutinized, tested and challenged. Second, all the participants and delegates were moved to an agreement that rhetoric was a method and mode of thinking which encouraged creative dissociations of such commonplaces with their challengers. Third, and notably, Cicero was the most cited rhetorician of all, and his *De oratore* the most mentioned rhetorical text.

The essays gathered in the present volume recapture the sense and spirit of this robust five-day forum, as a locus of scholarly and intellectual energy. Within its small, focused compass, the symposium generated polyvalent, perceptive insights. The essays recall these in their complementary, though distinct, responses to the question of where in the 21<sup>st</sup> century rhetoric should best concentrate its energies. They seek to achieve this through the exercise of speculative projection, drawing on the most informed scholarship available, under the momentum gathered during the symposium. Such an exercise cannot by definition ever be categorical or conclusive: at its best it will, however, evince opportunity and latency in the practice of the disciplines of rhetoric. The intention was at no point to conduct a survey; but rather, to take a sounding. These essays put that procedure into operation. Their emphases—ranging among historiography, the current state of the discipline, the theory and practice of *translatio*, ethics, religion, and interculturalism—suggest a clear-sighted commitment to address the ramifications of the inquiry. None of the essays could have lived up to this challenge merely by flatly transcribing a timetable of events. At the very least this would have run counter to the “interactive imperative” of the symposium, and risked misidentifying rhetoric as an act of memory alone. Memory is unarguably a condition of custodianship, but this must, in turn, be required to take its place in a larger regenerative activity which is fundamentally active, not passive. Therefore each essay is more aptly a freshly minted piece of original scholarship inspired by the author’s involvement with the proceedings, often relating to context (discussion, “second thoughts”, research group experience, cross-questioning) as much as content (priming lectures, themes). These pieces testify at once to the high standards which the symposium set itself, to the demonstrable expertise of the speakers and the delegates, to the commitment of all to the embracing enterprise. They testify with equal eloquence, and optimism, to the undiminished capacity

of rhetoric, as a living discipline, to reassert itself and stake its claims in the evolving milieus of the future as well as the present. This vitality is a continuum, productive and original at each moment of its distinguished history, and facilitating reevaluation as a requisite of its survival. Each essay is part of that process, commemorating not only the event of the symposium, but, within modest confines, celebrating its purpose and message.

The methodological apparatus by which this productive co-dependence of past and future is enabled is the concern of Michelle Bolduc’s essay; and specifically the role of the activity—carefully rendered as *translatio*—which fuelled much of the final day’s debate. In particular the topos of *translatio studii* is investigated as a historically significant impulsion, comprehending textual authority in contradistinction to the legal and political authority invested in *translatio imperii*. Bolduc emphasizes that the purpose of *translatio studii* was predominantly as a vehicle for the transfer of antique lore into the culture of the High Middle Ages and beyond—a usage of “transfer” which itself betrays an etymological origin in the metaphoricity of translation as an activity. Employing a richly referenced and stimulating juxtaposition of anecdotal and scholarly or “scientific” narratives, she argues that the exemplary Aristotelian aetiology of rhetoric suggests its future trajectory, by means of translation “in and to the present”. In so doing she recalls that Cicero (whose *De optimo genere oratorum* is here cited pointedly) found it needful not only to be a translator of Greek oratorical texts, but to assume a theoretical position as a translator in order to achieve this: to translate as an orator rather than as an interpreter. This profoundly suggestive distinction anticipates a modern debate, in which post-structuralist theory has played a formative part, arising from the differential outcomes predicated on translating the semantic, as opposed to the purely lexical, components of a text. Bolduc does move her argument into this latter-day territory towards the end of her essay, but not before characterizing the particular kind of authority (*auctoritas*) accruing to medieval writers who placed themselves, as translators, in the post-Ciceronian line. With respect to the pioneering work of James J. Murphy among others, she observes that during the Middle Ages vernacular translation (in terms of *translatio* as well as *transductio*, both helpfully glossed) was an acknowledged component of rhetorical activity; and that in some authors—citing Chrétien’s prologue to *Cligés* and other sources—this inspires awareness of a typology of creative power available uniquely to the writer as a figure in culture. Thereafter a scrutiny of post-structuralist interpretations of this potency illustrates Walter Benjamin’s characterization of translation as “afterlife”, and

Derrida's reconfiguration of this as "procreation". The "rhetorical turn", much discussed during the symposium, and especially Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca's subjective experience of it, is an expression of the fecund power of the translator to "disseminate". Michelle Bolduc closes, most fittingly, by observing that translation is no mere linguistic quid pro quo, but an operation of multi-level cultural transference promising an endlessly unfolding future existence.

Ryan Gillespie takes up the need for collaboration and cooperation between disciplines in his paper, with a focus on the relationship between rhetoric and ethics. Despite the perception of an inherent boundary between ethics and the teaching and studying of rhetoric, and the acknowledged indispensability of linguistic communication to human identity, he argues that there has been strikingly little work done in the area. This is a theme which had been aired on occasion during the symposium, notably after James J. Murphy's priming lecture (in a discussion with Franz-Hubert Robling) and again during the presentation of propositions for debate on the final day. Consequently Gillespie's case here, drawing on an allusive analysis of contemporary scholarship, is that a concerted effort between rhetoricians and ethicists may lead not only to invaluable scholarly outcomes in those respective disciplines, but to measurable benefits in the assessment of the public good.

Gillespie emphasizes the capacity of rhetoric to link judgment to collective deliberation, as a conscious behaviour aimed at producing decisions: i.e. enacting *krisis*. He traces the argument back to the original relatedness of rhetoric in Aristotle to two basic modes of proof, *apodeixis* ("demonstration") and *dialektike* ("dialectic"), together with their concomitant frames of meaning. In the latter case, a "Dialectical Frame" already reveals an interplay of rhetoric and judgment via the proper interpretation of the Greek concept of *pistis*—whose multiple possible meanings converge on the modern terms: "argument"; "belief"; "faith"; "conviction". At this point Ryan Gillespie is able to issue his "main call" to rhetoricians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the construction of an efficacious "Rhetorical Frame". This desirable Frame is a function of the deliberate siting of the Dialectical Frame in a collective, public, social context, enacting *krisis*, with the ultimate goal of achieving *pistis* in ethical deliberations.

The significance of rhetoric's role in this procedure is in shedding light on the disputed question of the actual nature of ethical disagreement. Gillespie observes that in the two principal contemporary ways of approaching this question—the cognitivist and noncognitivist—rhetoric is conspicuous by its absence. The case is thereby made for its needful

inclusion in the metaethical quest for normative standards in the delineation of ethical parameters. This quest is crucial given the lack of agreement—or at least persistent possibility of disagreement—on what large terms like *right*, *good*, *ought*, and so on, actually mean. The dearth of such agreement has impeded clarity of interpretation and led to ethical confusion. A number of schools of thought, whose proponents and contentions Gillespie deftly characterizes, have emerged with their responses, but the question is still problematically open and there has—until now—been no self-evident way forward.

With a due caveat respecting the largeness of the assertion, Gillespie now uses the opportunity of his essay to stake a tentative claim for rhetoric in the collective apprehension of normative definitions. The ethical field—particularly at its interstices with a still elusive metaethical concurrence on terms and definitions—is one in which rhetoric may well be able to demonstrate its continuing pertinence. So the call is for a new spirit of partnership between rhetoricians and ethicists with a view to unraveling the “knot” which currently entangles normative ethics and metaethics. The applications would be multiple, stretching across an array including, among other things, politics, law, the environment, biotechnology, and education.

It is education which inspires John Gooch’s paper: specifically the teaching of rhetoric, and the role in rhetorical pedagogy of historical awareness and understanding. There was indeed broad agreement throughout the symposium, on the part of priming speakers and delegates, that this concern will warrant special scrutiny as the 21<sup>st</sup> century proceeds; and Gooch’s particular interest here arises from remarks made by James J. Murphy towards the end of his own priming lecture. Murphy’s distinguished address, he recalls, concluded with a critique of a modern tendency to “reinvent the wheel”: to present, as new, ideas which are in fact old ideas under new names. This tendency, it had been asserted, arises not from any intention to mislead, but simply from ignorance of the rhetorical tradition, and will have worrying implications for the teaching of rhetoric in the future, both as a scholarly discipline and an instrument for writers.

In seeking to query the presumed prevalence of such a tendency, or at least assess the grounds for such a claim, John Gooch provides a perspicacious analysis of the volume cited by Murphy as a case in point—Timothy Borchers’ *Rhetorical Theory: An Introduction*—as well as of three other recent texts. He supplies a résumé of Borchers’ section headings and finds that rhetorical history is in fact allotted due space in Chapter 2, “Rhetoric as Persuasion”, which sketches an overview of the place of

significant canonical figures, from the Sophists to Quintilian, alongside textual citations and descriptions of key writings and major asperities along the rhetorical path from antiquity. The historical treatment of such material, he observes, is continued in Chapter 3, and although from some perspectives it indubitably lacks detail, this observation—if meant as criticism—may be seriously qualified in the light of the textbook’s stated target-readership of undergraduate-level students.

Moving to scrutiny of three terms identified by Murphy as examples of wheel-reinvention—“managerial rhetoric”, “linguistic reflexivity” and “electronic eloquence”—Gooch submits variously mitigated evidence for the allegation of historical unawareness. He finds, for example, that Borchers does indeed locate “managerial rhetoric” in historical context, by recalling the role of this term in mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century disputes between Douglas W. Ehninger and Lloyd F. Bitzer over the right interpretation of “invention” in George Campbell’s 18<sup>th</sup>-century *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Borchers is on arguably shakier ground vis-à-vis the other two terms, however, in which a necessary historical dimension is found to be absent or only sketchily present, but Gooch concludes that, even so, these are best read less as accounts of reinventions than of additions of new spokes to the wheel.

A survey of another volume aimed at the same kind of target-readership, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, by Crowley and Hawhee, finds that space is consistently made for a discussion of historical antecedents in modern rhetorical analyses, alongside criticism of anachronistic misreadings arising from ignorance of them. Equally classically and canonically aware, Gooch argues, is Longaker and Walker’s *Rhetorical Analysis: A Brief Guide for Writers*. The focus here is on rhetoric as persuasion, but not in a historical vacuum: classical terms such as *kairos*, *enthymeme* and *epicheireme* are cited in the process of being deployed in new contexts for writers interested in invigorating authorial style via the applied knowledge of its past. In a similar vein, Paul Butler’s edited collection of essays, *Style in Rhetorical Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*, recognizes the centrality of history in generating contemporary definitions of literary style (however broadly construed), and shows an acute critical consciousness of its continuing claims, on the part of its contributors, writing from the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

In concluding that these instances reveal a tendency to reconsider—rather than reinvent—the wheel, John Gooch neatly draws his essay back to the overwhelmingly pressing matter of rhetorical continuity and how best to manage, superintend or enable it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In so doing he proposes that Murphy’s claim strongly merits further study, and concurs

that mindful vigilance of the historical record is paramount in the present day.

Identifying the best facilitation of continuity in the rhetorical tradition is also the theme of Franz-Hubert Robling’s essay, which furthers the comments he offered after James J. Murphy’s priming lecture on the issue of those areas of importance (ethics among them) most worthy of rhetoricians’ attention in the coming years. His piece here on ‘Intercultural Rhetoric’ builds from the proposition that humanist rhetoric is still an engaging and viable resource in the modern world, and that the legacy it has acquired—through historical consanguinity with education and commentary-writing—will stand it in good stead in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Robling’s essay examines two historical eras, the Renaissance and the present day, and in a third section suggests ways in which our understanding of these eras might best frame a rhetorically useful future.

The essay opens by revisiting the Renaissance nexus of arts, sciences, philosophy and pedagogy, as fostered by the studied promotion of eloquence and rhetorical awareness. Speaking and writing well are assumed to be effective modes of intercultural commonality, transcending (but involving) the relationship between vernaculars and a Latin *lingua franca*. The humanist rhetoric allied with this cultural assumption is shown (making due reference to the work of Peter Mack) to have permeated Europe from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At its heart is the inseparability of right language-use from the conception of a good education (drawing upon adaptation of ancient pedagogical models and exemplars), understood not as a synonym of vocational training but as a component of “cultivation” and the forming of the civilized individual.

In then asking how far this is possible or desirable today, Robling observes that the earlier model of civilized “formation” has unquestionably yielded to the modern imperative of globalized communication, with its altered set of priorities. Culture may be said therefore to be codified less by education, in this traditional sense, than by the mandate of acquiring skill-sets. Analogously and in consequence, rhetoric as an active practice will be increasingly obliged to take account of the multicultural, in its negotiation with the intercultural, dimensions of communication.

These are all elements of a culture which itself appeals to the global and the diverse for definition, comprising a newly holistic estimation of human achievement in which individuals are confronted by a plethora of options from which to cultivate their own identities. Robling argues (following Clifford Geertz) that such a culture can be reckoned the sum of available meanings in relation to objects. This, then, would make ever more compelling the task of understanding and involving polyvalence in