

# Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in

Lingue Moderne per la Comunicazione e la Cooperazione Internazionale

Classe LM-38

Tesi di Laurea

Rhetoric and Emotions in social networks: a linguistic analysis of the appeal to emotions as a form of persuasion in the Cancel Culture Movement

Relatrice
Prof.ssa Fiona Clare Dalziel

Laureanda Beatrice Carta n° matr.1225032 / LMLCC

# Table of Contents

Introduction
CHAPTER 1: An introduction to rhetoric and social media
1.1 Definitions of Rhetoric
1.2 From Classical Antiquity to the beginning of Middle Ages
1.3 From the Christian rhetoric of the dark Age to the Scientific rhetoric of th Age of Reason
1.4 The birth of Mass Media: the evolution from the printing press to th telegraph
1.5 Media theories from the invention of the telephone, to the radio rhetoric of Orson Welles, and the moving images of TV
1.6 The evolution of language and Rrhetoric in the Digital Era
CHAPTER 2: Content and method of analysis
2.1 Features and language of social networks
2.3 Evaluative language and the Appraisal Theory 4
2.4 Corpus Linguistics and the software AntConc
CHAPTER 3: Data Analysis
3.1 Analysis of rhetorical and evaluative language in anti-Rowling posts 5
3.1.1 Quantitative analysis
3.1.2 Attitudinal Patterns
3.1.3 Qualitative Analysis
3.2 Analysis of rhetorical and evaluative language in pro-Rowling posts 6
3.2.1 Quantitative analysis
3.2.2 Attitudinal patterns 6
3.3 Analysis of the rhetorical language in anti-Columbus posts
3.1 Quantitative analysis
3.3.3 Qualitative analysis
3.4 Analysis of rhetorical and evaluative language in pro-Columbus posts 89
3.4.1 Quantitative analysis
3.4.2 Attitudinal Patterns
3.4.3 Qualitative analysis
3.5 Comparison of the corpora

3.5.1 Comparing Rowling's corpora	103
3.5.2 Comparing Columbus corpora	108
Conclusions	114
References	130

#### Introduction

Langer, in her book entitled Philosophy in a New Key, explains that: "not higher sensitivity, no longer memory or even quicker association sets man so far above other animals that he can regard them as denizens of a lower world: no, it is the power of using symbols—the power of speech—that makes him lord of the earth". It is thanks to this peculiarity that the human being is able to give voice, through his body, which is the window of the mind, to his ego and the realm of emotions that together define his identity. Emotions, on the other hand, are something difficult to explain but at the same time fascinating, whose power has been known and studied since ancient times. In fact, according to Aristotle, emotions, called by Leonardo da Vinci the movements of the soul, have the ability to affect people's judgement. And it is precisely the language which is able to paint the motion of the soul and reveal the interiority of the ego. Yet, since ancient times, man has understood that the power of language and emotions can also be used to persuade: to persuade oneself and to persuade others. Thus, in time, various theories and concepts related to rhetoric have been developed that have evolved from time to time and adapted to changes both external and internal to man, as well as changes in language. In fact, language, over the course of history, has undergone and continues to undergo an incessant transformation, because if it is true that the word is useful to man to give voice to his interiority, it is also useful to describe the world around him, and the change in the external world is accompanied by a consequent adaptation of the language to ensure that it is always able to fully describe the surrounding reality.

Human beings passed from a long oral tradition in which the fundamental element was memory, to the preservation of writings with the invention of Gutenberg's printing press. The invention of the printing press is one of the great changes that have been reflected in the language and which has entailed attention to the aesthetics of the text and composition. The continuous technological progress has led to the birth of social networks at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which, in fact, represent alternative realities to the physical one, with new and peculiar rules and mechanisms. Even the language has adapted to this new reality and so have the forms of persuasion. Virtual reality and material reality are, however, closely linked and have reciprocal effects, which means that changes in physical reality can have great resonance within social networks and vice versa. An example of this interrelation is provided by the movement that has

arisen around 2017, called the Cancel Culture movement. This movement is so called in reference to a form of ostracism in which a person is distrusted from social or working life and this distrust can take place both in virtual reality and in the material one. This movement over the years has assumed ever greater importance linked to important social issues such as racism or other forms of intolerance.

The aim of this thesis is to examine, from a linguistic point of view, two corpora previously collected and relating to the Cancel Culture movement and, in particular, one concerning the question of the transsexual community and J. K. Rowling's positions, and another relating to the dispute over the legitimacy of Christopher Columbus. The purpose is to observe how people who took part in these discussions on social networks, have appealed to emotions as a form of persuasion, or, more simply, to what emotions, what techniques, and for what purposes these were used by participants in the discussions to be persuasive.

In particular, the first chapter opens with the introduction of the difficulty connected to the definition of rhetoric due to the different meanings it acquired in different historical periods, and then it continues with the historical outline of this concept, from its origins in 465 B.C., passing to the Ancient Greece with the much criticized masters of rhetoric, the Sophists, with their major critic, Plato, and then it moves on to the presentation of one of the most important theorists of ancient rhetoric: Aristotle. The importance of Greek rhetoric, however, extends to ancient Rome, where great orators and theorists can be found and, first of all, Cicero. The following era is the Middle Ages, which is characterized by a negative consideration of ancient knowledge, seen precisely as pagan, and above all by the rise of the power of the Church, which requires a rhetoric of God, and the one who adapted the ancient rhetoric to the new needs of the Church is Saint Augustine. The greatest representative of rhetoric in the following era, namely the Renaissance, is Campbell, who argues that persuasion, in order to be effective, must be based on both reason and emotions. Later in the chapter, an evolution of the main mass media and therefore of technology is presented, from the telegraph and the importance of its invention, to the computer and the theories connected to it, and then to the birth of the internet and social networks.

The second chapter is dedicated to the explanation of the concept of Cancel Culture, and in particular, of the debates that arouse around J. K: Rowling and Christopher

Columbus. This explanation is necessary to have a more complete understanding of the corpora that will be analysed in the third and last chapter, but, to understand them, it is equally necessary to understand the peculiarities of the language of social networks, made up of combinations of images, symbols, texts, and sounds. Further in this chapter, Martin and White's theory, known as the Appraisal Theory, is presented. This theory, placed within the field of Language of Evaluation and Systemic Functional Linguistics, is the theory used in this thesis for the analysis of corpora and its usefulness lies in the fact that it proposes a taxonomy, which includes the three sub systems of attitude, engagement, and graduation, and which is used for evaluating, adopting stances, constructing textual personas and managing interpersonal positionings and relationships. In particular, in this thesis, the first category is taken into consideration, namely that of attitude, as it is strictly connected to emotional language and to the analysis of feelings. Lastly, this chapter presents the main features and operations of AntConc, the software developed by Anthony Laurence and used for the analysis of corpora.

Lastly, the third chapter is dedicated to the analysis of corpora. There are two of them, one concerning J. K. Rowling and the other one concerning Columbus, and each one is made up of five hundred comments and posts taken from both Facebook and Twitter. These corpora were analysed at first from a quantitative point of view with the help of AntConc, which means that, for example, the most recurring terms, their context, their position in the text, and their frequency have been identified. This led to results schematized in tables and the analysed from a qualitative point of view, meaning the analysis of emotional words or words that indirectly appeal to emotions to persuade the putative reader, their meaning and effect. The analysis of the corpora ends with a comparison between the two which aims at highlighting common and recurring traits or possible differences in the use of emotional persuasion.

#### CHAPTER 1: An introduction to rhetoric and social media

As this thesis intends to explore the relationship between persuasion and social media, and in particular, the way in which social network users appeal to emotions to persuade, this chapter will focus on the origins and history of rhetoric, as well as on the major contributions in terms of theories formulated in this field, as a useful starting point to acquire a more general and complete view of what has been defined as a form of art, in order to better understand its development in terms of techniques adopted. Starting with the difficulties faced in the attempt to define the concept of rhetoric, the discourse then shifts to the problematic relationship between rhetoric and persuasion, because of which rhetoric was long looked upon with distrust (Hall, 2003), finally referring to the renewed interest and importance of this discipline today.

Furthermore, in this first chapter, the history of rhetoric, which is connected to the difficulty of defining the term itself, is explained. Starting from the origins, in 465 B.C., in Sicily, the outline follows various developments, passing through the analysis of ancient Greece and its representatives, the Sophists Gorgias, whose studies focused on the power of words, and Isocrates, according to whom persuasion is a natural gift. The analysis relating to the period of ancient Greece ends with the presentation of two of the cornerstones of ancient rhetoric: Plato and Aristotle, echoes of which will be found in almost all subsequent works on the subject. Thus, following the succession of historical events, the explanation moves on to the Roman Republic and the centrality of rhetoric in education. The conception of rhetoric in force in that period is observed through the works of Cicero.

Later, a new era, the Christian one, began. In this period, due to the incompatibility and the difference between Christian values and the antecedent, or pagan ones, we witness a process of fragmentation and adaptation of rhetoric of the ancient authors (instead of destruction), and the credit belongs to a person, known as St. Augustin, who, thanks to his innumerable and priceless translations, avoided the oblivion of many key authors. During the Middle Ages, rhetoric showed a great interest in preaching and aesthetics, in virtue of which letters became of great importance. Yet it was only during the Renaissance that, as the name itself suggests, the interest in rhetoric was renewed to the extent of considering it as fundamental. The following period, known as the Enlightenment, was

the century of science and, as a consequence, scientific rhetoric developed, based on the rigour of the scientific method.

All this is a sufficient premise to understand the characteristics that rhetoric acquired in the 20th century. After a brief reference to the changes of the 18th century, the chapter focuses on the history of mass media, from the telephone to the social networks, along with an analysis of the evolution of rhetoric through these media up to understanding the characteristics of today's rhetoric, bearing in mind all its developments and the historical and evolutionary path it has followed. I believe that this historical outline is useful to understand how the evolution and changes in language are reflected in a change in rhetoric and, consequently, in the persuasion techniques implemented in time through the different means of communication available, up to the computer, in the so-called *digital age*, characterized by totally different environments and languages that led, as a logical consequence, to a change in the techniques of persuasion.

"Human beings are rhetorical beings" (Herrick, 2008)

#### 1.1 Definitions of Rhetoric

Rhetoric has been defined as the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion<sup>1</sup>, as "an acquired competency, a manner of thinking that invents possibilities for persuasion, conviction, action, and judgments."<sup>2</sup>, "that discipline which studies all of the ways in which men may influence each other's thinking and behaviour through the strategic use of symbols"<sup>3</sup> or again as "the art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its end"<sup>4</sup>. Yet these are just some of the various definitions that this word has acquired throughout time. A more general definition that perhaps can give us an idea why this concept is so ambiguous and difficult to semantically circumscribe, is the one provided by (McKeon, 1942:19), who defines it as "a universal and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rhetoric

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Thomas B. Farrell, Scholarly Definitions of Rhetoric, American Rhetoric, American Rhetoric, www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricdefinitions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Douglas Ehninger, Scholarly Definitions of Rhetoric. American Rhetoric, American Rhetoric, www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricdefinitions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>George Campell, Scholarly Definitions of Rhetoric. American Rhetoric, American Rhetoric, www.americanrhetoric.com/rhetoricdefinitions.

architectonic art". The word "universal" refers to the fact that it is everywhere and everyone uses it (even though most of the time it is used in an unaware way), while, by using the word "architectonic", McKeon suggests that rhetoric gives a harmonious shape to the other arts.<sup>5</sup> "This is because rhetoric is, among other things, the study of how we organize and use language effectively, and thus it becomes the study of how we organize our thinking on a wide range of subjects" (Herrick, 2008:3)

Yet, whatever the definition we choose to give to this concept, its association with persuasion is undeniable, and it is precisely this proximity that prompts both scepticism and interest<sup>6</sup>. After all, if we define rhetoric as a universal art, i.e. applied by everybody, we must admit that we have all been both the object *and* the subject of persuasion. Thus, we can be weary of persuasion if the person in front of us is a solicitor, a salesperson or a politician, since we can become the *object*, but at the same time, we use persuasion in our personal relationships when we make arguments with friends or relatives or give opinions, as in this case, we are the *subject*. Moreover, we can become objects of ourselves, since we have a "self- persuasion" when we argue with ourselves, and on this kind of persuasion are made up most of our life's decisions (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015). Therefore, even if this closeness between rhetoric and persuasion has been considered something negative for a long time, in the last few years this view has changed, since the great importance of persuasion in many fields and disciplines has been acknowledged (Vian Bakir, 2018:3) and more importantly, so has the huge difference between persuasion and manipulation.

Evidence of this acknowledgement is provided by the fact that it has become an important topic of study; there are many courses in rhetoric and many books are published every year that deal with it. Moreover, (McCloskey, 1994:17) writes that "a third part of economic talk is persuasion" and that "persuasion has become astonishingly important. Weighted sums<sup>7</sup> suggest that more than 28 million out of 1125 million people in civilian

66T.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "In education, architectonic rhetoric organizes the entire curriculum of study as well as courses in writing, reading, and speech/in business, architectonic rhetoric organizes work among technologies isolated by their different languages, methods and ends/in politics, architectonic rhetoric creates communities of informed action out of diverse cultures, polities, interests and ideologies." (McKeon, 1987)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> "Rhetoric and communication have doubters especially among philosophers, who learned from Plato that there is something evil about trying to persuade someone, that we do not need democratic discourse but aristocratic proof. But we learned in recent years that the philosophical version of certitude is fanciful, even in mathematics." (McCloskey, 1994)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Data based on the Census Bureau

employment- one quarter of the U.S. labor force- may be heavily involved in persuasion in their economic life. Then, recalling *the lectures on Jurisprudence* by Adam Smith in which he asserts that "men always endeavour to persuade others [...] and in this manner everyone is practicing oratory throughout the whole of his life", she writes that "the talks that makes for friendships, contracts, sales, or political culture is not cheap. It is expensive and essential to the work of a complex society [...] Some economists are beginning to explore the economics of this talk. They are beginning to see that persuasion is vital for the exchange of goods, services, and monies". (McCloskey, 1994:19)

# 1.2 From Classical Antiquity to the beginning of Middle Ages

The reason why the word rhetoric cannot be given a univocal interpretation lies in the fact that its value depends on the importance that people have placed on it from its very beginnings. In fact, "rhetoric did not originate at a single moment in history. Rather, it was an evolving, developing consciousness about the relationship between thought and expression." (Enos, 1993:31). The first traces of rhetoric, at least in Western culture, date back to Ancient Greece, as indeed, the etymology of the word itself suggests."

It is a commonly shared opinion among historians (Enos, 1993:43) that the study of oratory had its origins in the city of Syracuse, in Sicily, around 465 B.C., when the tyrant Thrasybulus was dethroned, and a rhetorician named Corax played an important role in conducting the city towards a democracy. He focused on the rhetoric for the law courts and helped common people to restore their property that had previously been in the hands of the tyrant. He and his pupil, Tisias, are therefore considered the fathers of rhetoric. Their rhetoric was rapidly exported to the Magna Graecia and in particular to Athens, where it had a great fortune, since the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. were marked by a great change: the fall of aristocracy in favour of democracy. This transformation was characterized by the implementation of a series of reforms that "created the need for a new kind of education, an education consistent with the new politics of limited democracy and this guaranteed a broader distribution of power across different backgrounds, occupations and economic statutes than ever before" (Poulakos, 1995:74). The Greek

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact, the word rhetoric comes from the Greek word rhētorikē tekhne which means "the art of an orator", from rhētōr, "speaker, master speaker, orator; artist of discourse; teacher of rhetoric, orator in public." Related to the word rhesis "speech" and rhema "word, phrase, verb." (https://www.etymonline.com/word/rhetoric)

territories in which there was democracy were known as *polis* and, as Herrick (2008:32) notes: "as a larger number of men entered the political arena, the key factor in personal success and public influence was no longer class but skill in persuasive speaking [...] and with democratic reforms, the political life of the polis came to be managed by oratory and debate". Kitto (1968: 22) writes that if tyrants ruled by "torture and the lash: the Greeks took their decisions by persuading and debate". So, the art of rhetoric became of great importance and, therefore, the need for teaching it became clear, but not available for everyone. Earlier, "young Athenians could learn a trade from a master specializing in medicine, sculpture, architecture, navigation, or one of a number of other technical skills. But they received no systematic intellectual education. Suddenly, these ambulant teachers appeared upon the scene, offering, or rather selling, an education" (Romilly, 1992:30). The ambulant teachers, as de Romilly called the Sophists<sup>9</sup>, were a group of orators, educators and advocates whose fame was controversial since their teaching for a fee led people to consider this movement in a negative way and they were branded as false wise men more interested in making money and success than in the truth<sup>10</sup>. Their reflections focused on human beings and the problems connected with moral as well as social and political life, since their goal was that of reconsidering everything that had been elaborated by the former thinkers in order to adapt them to the new and complex social reality. They used the dialectical method under which a principle or thesis is presented and the people taking part in the discussion have to argue for and against it. This method taught one to argue either side of a case and its goal, for the Sophists, is eristic, i.e. the art of winning discussions.

An important rhetorician was Isocrates, who, around 390 B.C., founded the first rhetorical school in Athens and became the most respected teacher of rhetoric in the city. His ideas and methods of education were different, more rigorous and innovative than those before, since he produced some political speeches which were used as models to teach rhetoric. This tendency to write out his speeches represented a change in Greek

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> This name derived from the Greek word Sophos, meaning wise or skilled. (Schiappa,1991)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> "John Poulakos affirms that the Sophists believe 'the world could always be recreated linguistically That is, reality itself is a linguistic construction rather than an objective fact. If truth and reality depend on who can speak the most persuasively, what becomes of justice, virtue and social order? Some philosophers condemned the Sophists for dealing in illusions and opinions rather than in knowledge and truth. Truth became a completely subjective notion, with the individual capable of creating a private view of morality and even of existence." (Herrick, 2008: 32)

rhetoric: the shift from a spoken medium to a written one. In his conception, rhetoric was the principal discipline among the arts, the only one capable of developing the necessary abilities to be successful in life and, moreover, rhetoric made human civilization possible. In *Antidosis* he claimed that "there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish." (Isocrates, 350 B.C. [1988])

As noted above, the Sophists were considered controversial for many reasons and one of the most vociferous critics of their practice was Plato, especially in two dialogues entitled *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. The first one, *Gorgias*, is a dialogue in which different topics are discussed but its importance is contained in the critique of the Sophists' notion of rhetoric. In fact Plato affirms that "the kind of rhetoric Sophists perform is a sham art that imitates the true art, or *techne*, of justice" since

true justice is aimed at restoring health to a soul that has been made sick through illegal, unjust, or immoral activity. Rhetoric, as practiced by the Sophists in court is not concerned to restore the health of a sick soul, but rather to pervert the judgement of judges and juries. Because they are not knowledgeable about justice, but only skilled in creating belief about justice, Sophists may mislead their audiences into committing injustice. And doing injustice, living an unjust life, is for Plato the worst evil. (Herrick, 2008:59).

"Oratory is the art of enchanting the soul, and therefore, he who would be an orator has to learn the differences of human souls: they are so many and of such a nature, and from them come the differences between man and man." (Plato, 360 [1956]). This is the definition of rhetoric Plato provides in the *Phaedrus* and it is clear that in this dialogue this concept acquires a different quality and consideration. De Romilly (2002:71) indeed affirms that "in the Phaedrus, Plato was to recognize another kind of rhetoric, a science of dialects this time". Thus, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato maintains that rhetoric should be used for the good of the individual and of society. As Herrick (2008:63) explains, "*Phaedrus* is not devoted strictly to discussing rhetoric, but summarizes Plato's views on several issues including love, immortality, the soul, and poetry". This dialogue deals with a conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus, a young student defined by Poulakos, 1995:79) as "an immature youth intoxicated with rhetoric".

The first part of the conversation is about love, the human soul and its eternity<sup>11</sup> but, the following part is about speech writing, speech making and the art of rhetoric, suggesting that there is a connection between rhetoric and love. Indeed, "the first thing a lover of wisdom who wishes to use rhetoric well must learn, is the truth, and truth comes via the arduous study of philosophy" (Herrick, 2008:65). Socrates then asks

is not rhetoric, taken generally, a universal art of enchanting the mind by arguments; which is practised not only in courts and public assemblies, but in private houses also, having to do with all matters, great as well as small, good and bad alike, and is in all equally right, and equally to be esteemed?

In this passage he provides a complete, rational description of the art of rhetoric i.e. the ability to guide the human soul toward truth through arguments, but, the knowledge of truth as well as that of the human soul are a sine qua non of the true art of rhetoric. In fact, Socrates affirms that

it is clear that someone who teaches another to make speeches as an art will demonstrate precisely the essential nature of that to which speeches are to be applied. And that, surely, is the soul. This is therefore the object toward which the speaker's whole effort is directed, since it is in the soul that he attempts to produce conviction." (Plato, 360 [1956]).

In sum, fair and true rhetoric uses persuasion towards "the good ordering of our lives, which is called virtue, and this depends on the right ordering of the two lower parts so that they obey reason, in the same way as good governments depend on the lower orders obeying the wise ruler" (Hare, 1982:54). So, according to Plato, "true rhetoric" requires the study of the human soul and that of the arguments which must be tailor-made for each soul. The final goal is justice.

Around one century after the date considered to be the beginning of rhetoric, Aristotle wrote perhaps his most influential book: *Rhetoric*, a text made up of three parts and for each one a specific topic can be identified. Book I provides the definition and domain of rhetoric, book II presents and discusses the means of persuasion, while book

11 "All soul is immortal, for she is the source of all motion both in herself and in others. Her form may be

sentimental part of the soul, the one with spiritual character, the black one, instead, portrays the concupiscent part of the soul, the appetite-loving part. When the charioteer succeeds in handling the balance between these two opposite forces "order is achieved in the soul, and happiness is the result" (Herrick, 2008).

described in a figure as a composite nature made up of a charioteer and a pair of winged steeds", says Jowett in his introduction to the translation of the *Phaedrus*. As a matter of fact, Plato defines the soul "like the composite union of powers in a team of winged horses and their charioteer" two parts of which had "the form of horses, the third that of a charioteer". In this myth the charioteer embodies the rational or intellectual part of the human soul whose task is to control two opposite kinds of horses: the white one representing the sentimental part of the soul, the one with spiritual character, the black one, instead, portrays the

III is about matters of style arrangement. The opening words are: "rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic" (Aristotle, 367-322 B.C, [1954]), and the closeness between these two concepts is stressed in different ways, by first defining rhetoric as an outgrowth of dialectic and finally as part of dialectic. This suggests that rhetoric and dialectic share many features: in fact, they both begin from commonly held opinions and take into account a wide range of issues, but while rhetoric is a shared art used to solve everyday issues in the political and judicial areas, dialectic is a less public activity which deals with both brief questions and answers. In addition, rhetoric is suitable for a large audience not logically trained, while dialectic refers to a skilled interlocutor or small group. By defining rhetoric as a counterpart of dialect, Aristotle wanted to criticize the definition of rhetoric that was provided in the *Gorgias*, asserting that "it is thus evident that rhetoric does not deal with any definite class of subjects, but, like dialectic, is of general application, also, that it is useful, and further, that its function is not so much to persuade, as to find out in each case the existing means of persuasion" (Aristotle, 367-322 B.C. [1954])".

Rhetoric then may be defined as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject." In other words, unlike the Sophists who considered rhetoric as a technique to make persuasion and who made their students memorize speeches and utilize imitation in order to gain persuasion, Aristotle understood rhetoric more as a funding of persuasive arguments and appeals, teaching his students the investigative and rational ability in order to find what is persuasive in every single and different situation. So, rhetoric, according to Aristotle, is a *techne*, since it has its own function, and this is "a function of no other of the arts, each of which is able to instruct and persuade in its own special subject....that is why we say that as an art its rules are not applied to any particular definite class of things." (Aristotle, 367-322 B.C. [1954]).

In the first book Aristotle, provides four reasons why rhetoric is positive, such as the advocacy of ideas according to which people (speakers and writers) who are rhetorically capable contribute to ensure that just and true ideas succeed over unjust and false ones, or it can be useful especially "before some audiences", writes Aristotle, which can be pretty hard to persuade, since sometimes the presentation of the facts is not enough, so it is important to use rhetoric to build a bridge between the message and the beliefs already held by the audience. A third benefit of rhetoric derives from the fact that it helps

one to see the whole of an argument, the pros and cons of an issue, "we may see clearly what the facts are, and if another argues unfairly we on our part may be able to confute him". The last reason relates to the concept of defence: he says that it is absurd that people are taught to defend themselves physically but not "to defend themselves with speech and reason". And that is the function of rhetoric.

Since Aristotle defined rhetoric as an art, he also provided three proofs or arguments which make up the *techne: logos*, *pathos* and *ethos. Logos* or logical reasoning is used by Aristotle to refer to proofs available in the words, arguments, or logic of a speech. Yet instead of concentrating on the formal logic used by dialecticians, Aristotle focused on the kind of logic used by people when making a decision, the typical argument for the reasoning involved in practical decision making.

Pathos or human emotions was defined by Aristotle as "putting the audience in the right frame of mind" (Aristotle, 367-322 B.C. [1954]). Herrick (2008:82) writes that "the term pathos is often used to refer to the affective or emotional appeals that give persuasive messages their power to move an audience to action, but Aristotle's interest in emotion has to do specifically with emotion's ability to affect the judgement of audiences", while (Barnes, 1995:267) points out that "the stimulation of emotions is therefore relevant to him only insofar as the emotions do affect judgement". The important thing for Aristotle is not simply to attract the attention and the favour of the audience in order to win a debate, as it was for the Sophists, but rather to place the audience in the right frame of mind. This means that the speaker has a moral duty and concern. Thus, the term pathos refers to an analysis of emotions in order to discover and act on the truth. "The emotions" according to Aristotle, "are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements and are accompanied by pleasure and pain." (Aristotle, 367-322 B.C., [1954]). (Fortenbaugh, 1975:17) writes that "Aristotle's analysis of emotion made clear the relationship of emotion to reasoned arguments" adding that "Aristotle showed that emotional response is intelligent behaviour open to reasoned persuasion" and "it was Aristotle's contribution to offer a very different view of emotion, so that emotional appeal would no longer be views as an extrarational enchantment."

*Ethos*, lastly, or human character and goodness, refers to the persuasive potential of the speaker related to his character, personal values or credibility. The three qualities necessary to make the speaker convince the audience are: practical wisdom, virtue and

goodwill. "If Aristotle's study of *pathos* is a psychology of the emotion, then his treatment of ethos amounts to a sociology of character" (Herrick, 2008:84) and since a skilled orator must know what are the values or virtues that the community believes make a person trustworthy, this can be considered as a careful study of what Athenians view as the qualities of a believable individual.

Greek rhetoric continued to play an important role and to influence the following theories and thoughts for several centuries, still representing today the cornerstone for teaching the subject. Its importance can be well understood if one takes into consideration how much the following eras have been influenced by the Greek concept of rhetoric, starting from the Roman republic. Fuhrmann (1994:26) writes that "like all subjects of instruction in the ancient world were created by the Greeks; the Romans dutifully adopted both its forms and its subject-matter". Herrick instead (2008:143) notes that:

Greek-based rhetorical studies resided at the centre of liberal education in Rome for several reasons. First, rhetoric was a means of achieving personal success in politics. Second, rhetoric provided a method for conducting political debates. Third, the study of rhetoric developed the verbal skills that signalled refinement, wisdom, and accomplishment. In other words, in order to play a significant role in Roman society, it was virtually a requirement that one be skilled in rhetoric. Thus, rhetorical education was vitally important to the Romans.

To fully understand Roman rhetoric, one needs to grasp the meaning and value of education in that period. Classicist Grube, (1965:52) writes that "rhetoric remained, though Greco-Roman times, the essential content of higher education", while Troup (1999:156) holds a similar idea saying that "rhetoric was the system of education in the Roman Empire." One important trait distinguishes the education system of those times from the modern one: it was based on oral expression, which means that spoken words were of the greatest importance in politics as well as in education, and one of the most important elements of this oral knowledge transmission was memory: "when written texts are relatively rare, memory becomes essential to expression, to influence, and to education of the content of the conte

In the Roman Republic, power was held by people who belonged to a *gens* (clan): a group of influential families who were so powerful that it was almost impossible for an outside person to achieve political prominence. But one of the most important politicians

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Rhetoric appeared in Rome around the second century B.C. and the main teachers were Greek, so that instruction was conducted in the Greek language and it followed the rhetorical theories of the Greek tradition.

in Rome was Marcus Tullius Cicero, who was "a political outsider with sufficient intellect and rhetorical talent to become influential without family connections" (Herrick, 2008:173)<sup>13</sup>. Throughout his life Cicero wrote many letters (more than 800) and received as many, as well as six books on rhetoric and philosophy, but the most well-known is *De Inventione*, which was written around 85 B.C. and "was Cicero's youthful effort to adapt Greek rhetorical theory to Roman purposes" (Herrick, 2008:174).

De Inventione is a collection of fragments and musings on oratory art which was later called by Cicero himself "inchoate and rough" (Clark, 1953:14). It is also such a successful attempt to transfer Greek rhetorical theory into the Roman culture that Habicht, (1990:32) found him skilled at "creating the Latin term capable of expressing the meaning of the Greek ones." One of the most important themes presented in *De Inventione* is the essential combination of wisdom and eloquence. "Reason itself especially induces me to think that wisdom without eloquence is but of little advantage to states, but that eloquence without wisdom is often most mischievous, and is never advantageous to them." According to Cicero, rhetoric is what makes human social life possible and, thanks to eloquence:

The most numerous advantages accrue to the republic, if only it be accompanied by wisdom, that governor of all human affairs. From this source it is that praise and honour and dignity flow towards all those who have acquired it; from this source it is that the most certain and the safest defence is provided for their friends. And, indeed, it appears to me, that it is on these particular men, who in many points are weaker and lower than the beasts, are especially superior to them, namely, in being able to speak" (Cicero, 85 B.C. [1976]).

Here he refers to the fact that eloquence is fundamental and of great benefit, but when it is separated from truth it can arouse many problems instead of benefits.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Christian Habicht (1990) writes that "no one else in antiquity is as well-known as Marcus Tullius Cicero, with Julius Caesar and the emperor Julian far behind", while Craig (1994) asserts that "he was the greatest speaker and one of the most prolific writers of his day, an unparalleled master of argument with an astonishing understanding of his Roman audiences."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Cicero in his work presents a division of rhetoric into five parts or canons: invention, arrangement, expression, memory and delivery. "*Invention* is the conceiving of topics either true or probable, which may make one's cause appear probable", which in a broader sense, refers to the discovery and recollection of arguments and materials useful for the speech. "*Arrangement* is the distribution of the topics which have been thus conceived with regular order", i.e. the orator has to organize the arguments or materials he acquired in an effective and intelligible order. "*Elocution* is the adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the topics so conceived", so it refers to the dignity of the language and style used, since it has to result in a persuasive speech. "*Memory* is the lasting sense in the mind of the matters and words corresponding to the reception of these topics". Given the great importance of orality on which the Roman culture was based, memory played a fundamental role and since the rhetor delivered long speeches from memory, this had to be trained. "*Delivery* is a regulating of the voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subjects spoken of and of the language employed". This last canon concerns the presence of the rhetor, the way he

Another important Ciceronian work on rhetoric is *De Oratore*, which was written around 55 B.C. in a dialogue form. This mature work on rhetoric, according to (Mooney, 1985:67) "was written in response to Plato's *Gorgias*, and in particular to what Cicero held was Plato's separation of eloquence from clarity of thought." but contrary to the dialogues of Plato, here there is no attempt to discredit one another but instead the participants (Crassus, Antonius, Rufus and Cotta) interact to provide insight into the topic.

It is divided into three books. In the first one, Crassus is Cicero's spokesperson and explains the principal thesis of the work: i.e. a skilled rhetor has to possess a deep knowledge of the topic at hand. Book II focuses on the parts which form rhetoric (*inventio*, *dispositio* and *memoria*) while the last one deals with the style, the way in which the orator must behave during the speech (*elocutio* and *actio*).

One of the most important themes for Cicero was the relationship between eloquence and wisdom, which have to be united in the so-called *perfectus orator* or complete orator. In fact, Cicero trained his students to become complete orators, public servants "whose ability with words is informed by a command of the entire cycle of learning." (Mooney, 1985:70). He writes "in the orator we must demand the subtlety of a logician, the thoughts of the philosopher, a diction almost poetic, a lawyer's memory, a tragedian's voice and the bearing of the most consummate actor" and concludes by stating that "no rare thing than a finished orator can be found among the song of men." (Cicero, 55 B.C. [1976]). Furthermore, Cicero claimed that "in every free nation, and most of all in communities which have attained the enjoyment of peace and tranquillity, this one art has always flourished above the rest and ever reigned supreme." (Cicero, 55 B.C. [1976]), demonstrating that in his view the eloquence of the wise is the foundation of civilization.

One of the most important abilities the orator must have is the understanding of emotions: "the mental emotions [animorum motus], with which nature has endowed the

displays himself as well as the speech. Taking into account the fact that a public speech in Rome was a performance, the presence, power, poise, grace and charm of the orator were of great influence on the result, or at least the impact, of the speech. "Accounts of Roman orators slapping their thighs, stamping their feet, and even ripping open their togas to reveal war wounds suggests that delivery in Rome was quite a different matter from the stolid "talking head" approach to speaking characteristic of contemporary politicians."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> "Socrates" writes Cicero "separated the science of wise thinking from that of eloquent speaking. This is the source from which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance between the tongue and the brain, leading us to have one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak." (Cicero, 85 B.C. [1853])

human race, are to be intimately understood, because it is in calming or kindling the feelings of the audience that the full power and science of oratory are to be brought into play." (Cicero, 55 B.C. [1976]). Furthermore, "it is impossible for the listener to feel indignation, hatred or ill-will, to be terrified of anything, or reduced to tears of compassion, unless all those emotions which the advocate would inspire in the arbitrator, are visibly stamped or rather branded on the advocate himself" (Cicero, 55 B.C. [1976]). A good orator must arouse *and* experience emotions, and the functions of rhetoric are *to teach, to delight* and *to persuade*, and the last one is based on the audience's emotions.

Thus, the other important element is the audience from whom, Cicero understood, the orator can never be aloof, since he has to know the concerns of the citizens. In fact, Cicero writes that "whereas in all other arts that is most excellent which is farthest removed from the understanding and mental capacity of the untrained, in oratory the very cardinal sin is to depart from the language of everyday life, and the usage approved by the sense of the community [sensus communis]" (Cicero, 55 B.C. [1976]). This entails the fact that the orator must know and base himself on, for example, changes in the language and values of the public. "With the possible exception of Aristotle, Cicero's influence on subsequent rhetorical thought and practice was unparalleled...he is the source of virtually all of the rhetorical theory of the Middle Ages" (Herrick, 2008:109).

# 1.3 From the Christian rhetoric of the dark Age to the Scientific rhetoric of the Age of Reason

With the barbarian conquest of the Roman Empire, rhetoric, like many other disciplines, was not greatly considered since "the tribes of northern and western Europe did not maintain Roman and Greek traditions, and often hastened the passing of classical learning by acts such as destroying libraries." (Herrick, 2008:123). Yet, as Kennedy (1980:13) writes, "classical rhetoric did not die. A few private teachers of grammar and rhetoric could probably be found at most times in cities of Italy and Gaul." Thus, the cities, at least in Italy, started to re-establish themselves and to build a new civic life and, therefore, rhetoric regained its importance. The one determining factor that was changed was the rise of a new power, the Church, which came to control every aspect of public and private life in its domination of Europe.

Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, rhetoric, due to its undoubted usefulness, was simply adapted to what were the needs of Christian European society but, this adaptation was "a somewhat constricted and fragmented appropriation of the rich classical tradition" (Herrick, 2008:122) and that was the consequence of the destruction of many libraries which caused the loss of many classic texts. There are two exceptions to this situation: Cicero's De Inventione and the anonymous Rhetorica ad Herrennium, which represented the basis for the vast majority of medieval rhetorical treaties. At the basis of the rhetorical treaties of the Middle Ages, there were Roman works despite the fact that the Greek and Roman works and culture in general were seen as belonging to people who were not Christian, because of the limited availability of many sources. In fact, Miller, Prosser and Benson (1974:78) write that "a strong hostility marked the attitudes of Christian scholars toward an art which they viewed as reminiscent of all the immorality of pagan Rome." It is precisely because of this suspicion that medieval scholars often took components from classical studies on rhetoric and rearranged them in order to serve the purposes of Christian culture and "for this reason some historian of rhetoric view the medieval period as one during which classical rhetoric was dismantled or fragmented." (Herrick, 2008:125).

The merit of having introduced ancient rhetoric belongs to one of the most important writers of the Middle Ages: Augustine of Hippo, known as St. Augustine, who translated the Ciceronian rhetoric into the language of the Church. St. Augustine, teaching rhetoric in many universities in Italy, celebrated God using the magnificent power of words through rhetoric. But St. Augustine, as well as the Christian rhetoricians in general, had to solve a paradox: rhetoric, whose medium is language, is a finite system of signs, but God is infinite, which means that it cannot be adequately described by rhetoric. Yet, at the same time, a rhetoric of God is essential. Thus, the task is that of creating a rhetoric capable of describing God and its truth. St. Augustine, in response to this question, affirmed that the mind has to be cleaned in order to contemplate God, and this can be done by using rhetoric: "the preacher corrects through good preaching the errors that have corrupted the mind" and "rhetoric assists the preacher to discover divine truth in the scriptures and to teach this truth to the congregation." (Herrick, 2008:126).

Moreover, he found in rhetoric another essential function: confuting the heretics, bearing in mind that the downside of this art is persuasion by verbal trickery. All these problems are at the basis of the most important work written by St. Augustine: *De Doctrina Christiana*, defined by Johnson (1976:4) as "not merely the most influential but perhaps the most precious book in the tradition of humanistic rhetoric." In this work he developed a theory concerning signs and the concept they represent. In particular, he affirms that the world is made up of signs or words, and that these signs can be conceived as directing people to God. Thus, every object encountered in life as well as in scripture has two meanings: the physical and the spiritual one. In so doing, "he taught the Church how to employ pagan writers without paganizing Christianity. He thus provided a model to many later teachers and preachers." (Herrick, 2008:128).

In medieval rhetoric, except for church settings, neither new nor original theories were produced and to this end Murphy (1971:19) writes that "the middle ages did not produce any major original works on secular speaking, since the political climate which had encouraged such writing in ancient Greece and Rome simply did not exist in medieval Europe." Thus, Faulhaber (1978:35), explains that rhetoric played different roles in the Middle Ages:

First, rhetoric provided a framework for pursuing the complex social relationships that characterized a hierarchically organized world. Rhetoric facilitated social interaction. Second, rhetoric brought a measure of grace and decorum to the harsh and difficult lives of people living in Europe at this time. Third, rhetoric allowed a link to classical antiquity for the descendants of barbarian Europe.

Finally, Murphy (1971:22) pinpoints three medieval rhetorical arts. The first one, the art of letter writing, was connected with the need for maintaining records and preserving social hierarchies; the rhetoric of preaching is due to the fact that the vast majority of the population was illiterate and the last one, poetry writing, is linked to the rising interest in the aesthetic potential of written language.

The following era is known as the Renaissance, which, as the name itself suggests, is a period characterized by the revival of European art and culture under the influence of classical models, from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the 16<sup>th</sup>. During this period, fundamental institutions such as the Catholic Church were challenged in many ways: the religious conflicts which split Europe and the movement known as the Protestant Reformation (1517 A.D.) ,or the explorations such as the famous voyage of Columbus in 1492 which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Johnson also noted that "the De Doctrina was written for clergy and highly educated members of the laity to help them in their efforts to read the bible and to give them advice about how to go about sharing what they had learned with fellow Christians who were less educated than themselves".

revealed that the world was actually larger than previously conceived. Lastly, the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in the early 1450s was fundamental, since it made possible the dissemination of printed material everywhere. As concerns rhetoric in this period, Herrick (2008:147) affirms that

the classical rhetorical tradition attained a place of prominence in European education and social life. In fact, rhetoric flourished in the Renaissance as a method of instruction in writing and persuasion, an avenue to personal refinement, a means of managing the intricacies of civic and commercial interests, and a critical tool for studying a variety of literary texts both ancient and contemporary.

Vickers (1982:18) points out that "during the European Renaissance, rhetoric attained its greatest pre-eminence, both in terms of range of influence and in value". In fact, rhetoric in this period was connected to medieval letter writing as a mere consequence, but it was classical in conception and characterized by a new appreciation for the role of speech which led to the study of classical rhetoric and to the concentration on the specific role of persuasive speech in shaping civilization.

During the Renaissance there was a group of intellectuals known as the Italian Humanists, who studied rhetoric in order to understand the origins and flourishing of civilization. "The Italian Humanists school found in rhetoric a means of both self-improvement and social development" (Herrick, 2008:145). In fact, the study of rhetoric was so important that "the quantity of rhetoric texts known to have been published is immense" (Vickers, 1982:21) and this is connected to the print press which made available a huge quantity of printed books which led to the spread of knowledge of ancient rhetoric such that "rhetoric dominated the thoughts of Renaissance intellectuals and the curriculum of Renaissance schools to a degree that is extraordinary" (Abbott, 1974). This great availability of ancient rhetorical texts led, on the one hand, to the attempt of systematization of rhetorical knowledge for educational purposes, and, on the other hand, to the fact that anyone capable of reading could have access to rhetorical education. Finally, classical treatments of rhetoric represented the basis even for personal conduct.

Given the great interest humanists had in persuasion, they studied human will and emotions following books of Aristotle and Cicero and their interest in emotions "resulted", affirmed Vickers (1982:24), "in a new sub-discipline of rhetorical psychology, *pathologic*." Thus, the trained orator experienced a particular emotion with regard to a subject and sought to arouse the same emotion in his audience. This relates to their interest

in *elocutio* or rhetorical style. "The impulses of Italian Humanism were both iconoclastic and conservative. Humanism mixed Christian moral principles with an aggressive search for new ways for education and inquiry that honoured classical sources" (Herrick, 2008:165). Thus, rhetoric was important in the Renaissance due to both its potential to provide a new way of studying ancient books and for preserving important cultural values.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century is the time of the Enlightenment, characterised by a predominance of rationality over everything else. Rationality was seen to be at the basis of truth instead of authority. The method based on rationality is known as the *scientific method* and, from this period onwards, this was the method used to seek solutions to many problems and, since the scientific method produces scientific laws, the entire universe was understood as ruled or governed by inviolable physical laws. "It has been noted by some scholars" writes Herrick (2008:171) "that the eighteenth century marks a period in which rhetorical theory turned away from its traditional concern for the invention of arguments, and toward aesthetic matters of style and good delivery." According to Warnick (1993,125) this change of emphasis is the consequence of the works of Ramos and Descartes who "moved arguments and proof out of the domain of rhetoric and into the domains of logic, dialectic, and mathematics." At the same time, rhetoric, which played a public role in ancient Greece, being understood as a *techne*, moved to the private sphere "as a window on the human mind or a means of personal refinement" (Herrick, 2008:171).

Thus this historical period is characterized by a scientific rhetoric trend, which gained a foothold in this period thanks to some Enlightenment rhetoricians who, out of curiosity, wanted to know what rhetoric could reveal about the human mind, since "the world of the human mind was beginning to be mapped using new philosophical approaches, and rhetoric was seen by some as a means of expanding our understanding of human thought itself" (Herrick, 2008:181). One of the most important representatives of scientific rhetoric is George Campbell, who published his masterpiece in 1776: *The philosophy of rhetoric*. Here he expresses his idea of rhetoric as intrinsically connected to philosophy, since science to him meant something like what philosophy means today: "an organised and rational account of a subject." (Herrick, 2008:183). In his introduction he writes that every art is based on science, but the most sublime ones are theology and ethics, so what he tries to discover and to understand is how the human mind works and to provide instruction in eloquence based on that understanding. This theory is based on

current psychology in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the mind was divided into faculties or capacities and, for Campell, each of these faculties had its own language: the understanding spoke the language of logic whose function is to be informed and respond, while the passion spoke the language of emotion, whose task is to move towards action while imagination perceives beauty.

All these faculties are fundamental in the persuasive process, as he writes, "all the ends of speaking are reducible to four: every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (Campbell, 1776 [1963]). One of the most famous contributions by Campell to the history of rhetoric is the *theory of persuasion*. Howell (1971:86) says that "two things must be done by an author who would persuade others: the first is to excite some desire or passion in the hearers; the second is to satisfy their judgement, that there is a connection between the action to which he would persuade them, and the gratification of the desire of passion which he excites." In fact, according to Campell, persuasion has to address both emotions and the reason "as people are not convinced without arguments and do not act except in response to emotions" (Herrick, 2008:185). "Campbell explains the relationships between emotion and reason this way: the former is effected by communicating lively and glowing ideas of the object; the latter by presenting the best and most forcible arguments which the nature of the subject admits." (Howell, 1971:102).

1.4 The birth of Mass Media: the evolution from the printing press to the telegraph The ability to communicate has been determinant for the evolution of the human being and for his cultural progress. Thus, the search for suitable means and technologies to manage and control the communication process has characterized the history of every civilization. Every new means of communication, by reducing the distances and times of communication, has profoundly changed culture and society by irreversibly affecting the daily habits of an increasing number of people. Before the creation of the internet and the following spread of social networks, people communicated among themselves, for example, with the help of animals or with structured signals. These means, though, had some limits, such as the long waiting time needed for the message to arrive at its destination and the scarcity of exchangeable information. Over time, this exchange of messages and ideas has become easier thanks to new technologies. The ideas and

knowledge which are at the basis of the most important mass media were developed or acquired during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, since this was the century of science and technological progress. In fact, Winston (1998:15) maintains that:

Man began to use electricity in signal transmission from the eighteenth century onwards, practically hand-in-hand with the scientific understanding of electricity itself. He concludes affirming that: It is such knowledge and understandings that form the ground of scientific competence which can then be transformed into technology. Although the technological idea will be grounded in scientific competence, it will not necessarily relate directly to science any more than a conscious understanding of the deep structure of linguistic competence is not a prerequisite of utterance, so too a lack of formal scientific competence is no bar to technological performance. But the technologist will, at some level, have absorbed the science; just as a speaker, at some level, has absorbed grammar.

From this premise, the importance of the link between language and medium can be inferred. Besides, as a logical consequence, we can also deduce the consequent change and adaptation of the rhetoric of the symbolic universe of language. A great change in the history of communication technologies was the invention of the printing system by Gutenberg in 1456 A.D. Immediately after the invention of the printing press, printed books substituted manuscripts since they were cheaper and more manoeuvrable and this contributed to the spread of information in every part of the world. In 1809, "the latest wonder of the country's mining area" was brought to London by Richard Trevithick: "an iron wagon-way upon which a steam locomotive ran." (Winston, 1998:23). Yet, these railways, as (Fahie, 1884: 284) points out, necessitated a signalling method and, therefore, the telegraph, a remote communication system designed for data transmission based on a code, was invented. So, it is clear how the invention of the telegraph is connected to a supervening necessity, that of railway safety, and this is an example "of how one technology, in this case the railways, creates a supervening necessity for another, the telegraph." (Winston, 1998:56)<sup>17</sup>. After its invention, the telegraph rapidly spread in every part of the world and governments had, for the first time, the possibility of exchanging information with all the state regions and, with the laying of submarine cables, even with their own oversea colonies. Even if the electric telegraph fell into disuse after the telephone invention which, thanks to electromagnetic waves, directly transmitted

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> In 1840, the first telegram from London was sent containing the news concerning the birth of the Queen's son. Four years later, Morse sent his first public message, "What hath God Wrought", from Washington to Baltimore.

the voice, "is the model of all the electric signalling systems which follow." (Winston, 1998:61).

1.5 Media theories from the invention of the telephone, to the radio rhetoric of Orson Welles, and the moving images of TV.

On 10 March 1876, Bell transferred the immortal words "Mr Watson, come here I want you" using what would henceforth become known to the world as the *telephone*, thanks to which it was possible to overcome many limits posed by the telegraphic system.<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, thanks to the decrease in prices, the telephone was present in many houses, symbolizing its huge spread both in private and professional life, and, Winston (1998:70) specifies: "for its obvious usefulness in the home, the telephone is a child of commerce, specifically of mid-nineteenth century commercial developments". Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, thanks to the spread of the telegraphs and telephones, messages were sent more rapidly, easily and further away than was possible in the past, which was of great advantage to information. Nevertheless, the transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial one fostered urbanization and led to the rise of *mass society*, which subsequently transformed into the consumer society which was characterized by an augmented availability of money for common people (thanks to industrialization) which, in turn made it possible to purchase new products belonging to the new technologies. Between 1900 and 1914, another important mass medium was introduced: the cinema. The invention of photography (1839) with its subsequent developments had already fostered the knowledge of new and distant people, places and things, while its public perception as a mass medium started to spread at the end of the nineteenth century when it was possible to reproduce images in books, newspapers and magazines.

The transition towards mass society was hastened by radio broadcasts. The fatherhood of the radio belongs to Marconi who, already before the turn of the century, succeeded in transmitting messages using Morse code without cables. The first big radio broadcasters were born in the 20s and offered regular programs, listening to which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The telephone relied on the voice transmission and therefore it was not limited to written documents. Furthermore, while the telegraph required some technical competences as well as the ability to decode the Morse code, the telephone could work without both of them.

became a hobby as well as a source of amusement for many. At the end of the decade, despite the Great Depression, many families owned a radio device.

The existence and efficiency of the radio were challenged by the entry of television into citizens' houses. The difference between the radiophonic device and television relies on the particularly evocative process produced by the first one. Through the use of sound alone, and in particular the voice, radio takes advantage of the imagination and creativity of the human mind, which does not find the answer in the already given images but looks for it in the forms it prefers<sup>19</sup> (Garofolo, 2020:5). A famous example of the evocative rhetorical power of words happened on Halloween night 1938, when Orson Welles, at the Mercury Theatre "on CBS radio, aired what is known today as the broadcast that caused mayhem and panic; panic of an alien invasion attack, that some suggest people presumed was attacks from Nazi Germany" (Ntahonsigaye, 2008:3) as "American had grown accustomed to hearing radio programs regularly interrupted by distressing news from Europe" (Schwartz, 2015:45). Using what Welles called "the theatre of the imagination" (Heyer, 2003:35) he provided an interpretation of the novel *The War of the Worlds* which depicted a Martian invasion of the earth. He decided to perform this book since, in his words, "he conceived the idea of doing a radio broadcast in such a manner that a crisis would actually seem to be happening" (Schwartz, 2015:53). Thanks to "his techniques of first-person narratives and meticulous script writing, and re-writing" (Ntahonsigaye, 2018:17), this broadcast, which "mixes science fiction tropes with the conventions of radio broadcasts" (Crisell, 1986:25) created a shock reaction into population to the point that, after the production ended, "the CBS building was inundated with police and press, as reaction to the calls of panic concerning the broadcast." (Schwartz, 2015:64)<sup>20</sup>. This reaction was connected to the peculiarities of the radio and to the fact that it

has changed the way speech, culture, narrative and many other socially constructed elements are consumed and standardised...By overcoming space in reporting news happening far beyond the span of an individual's community, and in manipulating time with things such as pre-recorded programs, radio had the ability to restructure things such as cultural standards around concepts such as race and class....not only that, but the immateriality of radio allowed for women to masquerade

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> This process allows the radio to remain an original means of communication despite the evolution of society and let it adapt to every news in an excellent way.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> The New York Times reported "a wave of mass hysteria seized thousands of radio listeners" and some adults required "medical treatment for shock and hysteria. Thousands of persons phone different agencies seeking advice in protective measures against the raids." (New York Times, 1938, http://www.war-of-theworlds.org/Radio/Newspapers/Oct31/NYT.html). The Daily News published the headline "Fake Radio War stirs terror though U.S."

as men, more often, men as women....men could enter the home to entertain the woman of the house...women had the potential to enter the public sphere and assume the voice of authority reshaping social boundaries and expectations. (Ntahonsigaye, 2018).

The arrival of the television questioned the dominant position of the radio. The first television commercial broadcast took place in North America in 1939, but it was only after World War II that television started to establish itself as a mass medium, and the 1950s were characterized by the great expansion of this means. The mass audience, who was thrilled in the 30s for the radio, in the 50s was ready to shift to the television. Television during the 50s had a strong social impact since it, along with suburban life and new styles of consumption born in the post bellum period, had a simultaneous development.

Thus, in simple words, for more than four centuries the only mass medium was the printing press while, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of the railways, along with the electric lines, created the conditions for the rise of the second mass medium, the telegraph, which was followed by the telephone, the radio and the television. *Mass media*<sup>21</sup> are means projected to implement *mass communication*, which, in turn, was defined by Littlejohn and Foss (2008:201) as "the process whereby media organizations produce and transmit messages to the large public and the process by which those messages are sought, used, understood, and influenced by audience". Thus, mass communication is the transfer of messages to the public through media or technology-driven channels. McQuail (2010:54) defines them this way:

The mass media (a plural form) refer to the organized means of communicating openly, at a distance, and to many in a short space of time. They were born into the context and conflicts of this age of transition and have continued to be deeply implicated in the trends and changes of society and culture, as experienced at the personal level as well as that of society and the world system.

From the very beginning of this great technological development represented by television, many theories concerning this new medium were developed, as well as theories regarding the relationship between the media and the audience. This is obvious, since the development of technology and mass media in general has influenced language and consequently the rhetorical techniques aimed at persuasion have changed with them. For example, in 1964, McLuhan wrote a book on media theory in which the famous sentence "the medium is the message" is enclosed. What McLuhan affirms is that what

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> The term *medium* was chosen since it refers both to the word *means* and *something that is halfway* between two poles (between the sender of a message and the addressee).

affects a society is not the message delivered by the medium but rather the medium itself, and to explicate this concept he refers to a light bulb which is a tool used by people to illuminate spaces at nights that otherwise would be in the darkness, thus, the bulb, is a mere medium without the content. Furthermore, McLuhan states that every medium requires a different degree of participation and, based on this assumption, he divides the media into *hot* and *cold media*. A hot medium "extends one single sense in high definition" (McLuhan, 1964:10) and examples could be photographs or the radio which require the use of one sense as well as little participation by the audience. On the other hand, a cold medium is, for example, represented by the television, considered the "large amount of multisensory information" (McLuhan, 1964:13).

Another important theory was developed in the US between the two world wars by Harold Lasswell. During this period, Europe was characterized by Nazism and Fascism and the masses were persuaded to support these regimes (propaganda) since they were unaware of the real power of communication means<sup>22</sup> and that is why this theory is known as the *hypodermic needle theory* (or *magic bullet theory*). According to this theory, messages directly and personally affect people, resulting in a change in opinions and behaviours, considering that "people were assumed to be uniformly controlled by their biologically based instincts and that they react more or less uniformly to whatever stimuli came along" (Lowery, 1995:114). Essentially, the media are a sort of injection of ideas and behaviours into a passive audience incapable of any critical re-elaboration (Croteau, Hoynes, 1997).

The first thirty years of the twentieth century are therefore characterized by the so-called *omnipotent media theories*, which include the theories listed above. A second phase can be identified which started from the 1930s until the 1960s. The dominant theory of this period is the *limited effects theory*, suggested by Lazarsfeld, according to which the media have limited effects on the audience which has the ability "to control what it saw, learn or opined, while consuming the media" Thus, mediated messages "could not be considered as a pied piper but rather as a reinforcer/endorser of pre-existing ideas, attitudes and opinions." From the 50s till the end of the 70s, the persuasive effect of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> This theory was developed also taking into account the effects of Hollywood in the 30s and 40s. (http://communicationtheory.org/magic-bullet-or-hypodermic-needle-theory-of-communication/)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> https://www.communicationtheory.org/limited-effects-theory/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> https://www.communicationtheory.org/limited-effects-theory/

mass media was explained by the *spiral of silence* theory, developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. This theory argues that mass media, and in particular television, due to its huge persuasive power on public opinion, is able to emphasize prevalent opinions and sentiments by silencing minority and dissenting views. In particular, Anderson (1996:227) claims that a single person is not so confidential in openly expressing his opinion, which is perceived as contrary to the majority opinion, due to the fear of being alone, since "not isolating himself is more important than his own judgement" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

## 1.6 The evolution of language and Rrhetoric in the Digital Era

A further step in the development of the mass media occurred in 1936 when Alan Turing published the paper *on computable numbers* in which he referred to a *universal computing machine*. He demonstrated that such a machine was capable of computing information stored on tape, which meant that the machine was programmable. Since necessity is the mother of invention, the computer can be considered as the son of a war necessity<sup>25</sup>: starting from 1939, British Government gathered the most brilliant mathematicians from Oxford and Cambridge, including Turing, who were entrusted with the task of deciphering Nazis and their allies' communications. The interaction of these scientists produced the first computer, which was known as *Colossus*.

The determining factor for the success of the computer was the development, starting from the second half of the 60s, of a mechanism capable of putting two or more computers in communication with each other. In fact, in 1968 the National Physical Laboratory developed the first telematic network which was used by ARPA<sup>26</sup> due to all the military and strategic implications. The following year, the universities in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, the University of Utah and the Sandford Research Institute created a link between them using this technology and thus, the first web was born: *ARPANET*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> "Advanced electronic calculators were needed for cryptanalysis specially to overcome German submarine dominance in the Battle of the Atlantic. The work of the British teams, which developed the machines to do this in the secret war, appears to have been essential to overall victory" (Ntahonsigaye,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Advanced Research Project Agency

On August 6, 1991, the computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee published the first website: the *World Wide Web*. Berners-Lee was an employee of CERN<sup>27</sup> at that time and he first conceived the Web as a tool by which scientific documentation could be converted into an electronic format in order to improve communication, and therefore cooperation, among researchers of that institute (McPherson, 2009:15). In 1993, with the decision of CERN to make WWW available to everyone, started a quick and huge development of this technology which offered everyone the possibility to create web pages in a very simple way, so that websites, for general use, started to become available (Couldry, 2012:27). With the beginning of the new millennium, the *Digital Age* began.

This age starts with what was defined as the *digital revolution*, which refers to the passage from the mechanical technology to the digital one, and it is also called the *information revolution* with reference to the socio-economic changes brought by information and communication technologies. This revolution is characterized by the multiplication of the ways by which we access information, which have changed the ways in which communicative acts are done. The resulting *information society* was defined by Martin, (1995:41) as "a society characterized by rapid growth and use of information, widespread exploitation of varied information sources; a society where people know and appreciate what information they need, where to get it, how to get the information, and in the end, how to use it", as well as "a new type of society, where the possession of information (and not material wealth) is the driving force behind its transformation and development [...] (and where) human intellectual creativity flourishes." (Lyon, 2006:582)

The birth of the Internet led in a short time to the birth of *social networks*, which are defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007:154) "as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site".

Until social networks came along, the Internet was mainly used for mailing lists, emails, e-commerce, online forums and personal websites. In 1999, blogging first started to gain popularity with platforms like "open diary" or "live journal". After the emergence

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> The European Organization for Nuclear Research

of blogging, social networks exploded onto the scene. Sites like *Myspace, LinkedIn* and *flicks* gained popularity in the early 2000s. Even though the first social network service, *SixDegrees*, was born as early as 1997, social networks experienced exponential growth starting from 2004, when Zuckerberg registered the domain *Thefacebook.com*, which was on to become the most widely used social network, now just called Facebook. Beginning with 2006, when it was opened to the public, today there is a huge variety of social network sites for various purposes.

Facebook was first developed by Zuckerberg and other colleagues to connect with one another Harvard students until 2006, when it was expanded to other North American universities becoming, thus, very popular, in fact Farrell (2018:47) writes that:

Facebook users can share anything from their personal life with their friends and in some cases, well, total strangers. Also, any updates from their friends show up directly on their newsfeed. Actually, the newsfeed was one of Facebook's revolutionary features. Another key element-Facebook is always changing. The people behind it are updating it often, in an effort to keep up with the latest social media demands.

In 2006, Dorsey published the first *Twitter* message. *Twitter* is a network on which users interact with messages known as "tweets" whose trademark trait, up until 2017, was the 140 characters limit of the message (now it is double- 280 characters). The functioning of Twitter was defined by Johnson (2009:125) in this way:

As a social network, Twitter revolves around the principle of followers. When you choose to follow another Twitter user, that user's tweets appear in reverse chronological order on your main Twitter page. If you follow 20 people, you'll see a mix of tweets scrolling down the page: breakfast-cereal updates, interesting new links, music recommendations, even musings on the future of education.

In 1989, Richard Lanham delivered a lecture in which he used the term *digital rhetoric*, which "was subsequently crystallized in his 1993 book *The Electronic Word*." (Hodgson and Barnett, 2016:65). Digital rhetoricians understand rhetoric

as both a theory and an art of making and teaching. This is in excellent keeping with longstanding understandings of rhetoric from antiquity to the present. For ancient rhetoricians in particular, to study rhetoric was to learn specific concepts and strategies for persuasion as well to perform those lessons through speech and writing." (Hodgson and Barnett, 2016:67).

A more general definition is provided by Eyeman (2015:238), according to whom this term refers to communication within the digital sphere, "as such, digital rhetoric can be expressed in many different forms including, but not limited to text, images, videos, and software" (Eyman, 2015:240). Furthermore, Eyman understands the emerging field of digital rhetoric as interdisciplinary, since it embraces areas such as: digital literacy,

visual rhetoric, new media, human-computer interaction and critical code studies. The breath of this field of study is underlined also by Hass (2018), who defines rhetoric as "the digital negotiation of information and its historical, social, economic, and political contexts and influences to affect change". In simple words, any kind of communication realized in the digital sphere can be considered as digital rhetoric. In fact, Yunfeng (2013;833) affirms that "rhetoric encompasses all forms of discourse that serve any given purpose within specific contexts, while also simultaneously being shaped by those contexts." Obviously, this new form of rhetoric is both a consequence and a key element of this new era, which, being conveyed by new media, has led to the development of new forms of communication and, therefore, to a new type of rhetoric. Jenkins (2009:231) explains that there is "...a move toward an increasingly participatory model of culture in which people shape, share, re-frame and remix media content in ways not previously possible within the traditional rhetorical formats like print."

Thus, this new form of communication is known as *computer-mediated communication* (*CMC*), defined by McQuail (2005:12) as "any human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices." CMC, having communication as its object of study, and this, being a very broad field of investigation, can be analysed from different points of view. Furthermore, many books have been published concerning the study of paralinguistic and other features of CMC, such as emoticons, turn-taking, styles and registers used in this environment. All the research in this field has brought to the logical rise of CMC theories, such as the *uses and gratification, social presence*, and *social information processing theory*.

The uses and gratification theory focuses on "why people use media and what people do with media" (Katz, 2009:4) and the premise is that people have the power to choose the medium depending on the different and specific goals they want to fulfil. "Zizi Papacharissi and Alan Rubin were the first scholars to apply the uses and gratifications theory to how people use the Internet" they found five reasons why people use the Internet: "interpersonal utility (allows people to interact with others), pass time (helps people kill time), information seeking (people look for specific information they want or need), convenience (it's faster than FtF or even a phone call), and entertainment (people enjoy using the Internet)" (Punyanunt-Carter and Thweatt, 2020:16).

Social presence theory investigates how "the sense of being with another" is influenced by digital interfaces in CMC (Biocca, Harms, and Burgoon, 2003:462). This theory refers to the fact that *presence* is a psychological state of mind and when people are truly present, they forget they are using technology. Norton (1978:104) collocates presence "at the heart of humans' desire to use media to move beyond the limits of the body and sensory channels". In this case, the term *presence* refers "to the physical world and how technology mimics the physical world". Thus, Burgoon and Buller (1994:179) defined social presence theory as "the degree to which we as individuals perceive another as a real person and any interaction between the two of us as a relationship" and it relies on the degree "to which we have the ability to interpret nonverbal cues from the people we are interacting with." (Punyanunt-Carter and Thweatt, 2020:43).

The last one is the *social information processing theory*, which was formulated in 1992 by Joseph Walther and was defined in this way: "social information processing theory explains online interpersonal communication without nonverbal cues and how people develop and manage relationships in a computer-mediated environment" (Walther, 1992:23). Essentially, while the other theories assume that because of the lack of nonverbal cues in CMC, people will inherently find it less rich and/or less present when compared to face-to-face interactions, social information processing theory asserts that online interpersonal relationships can be identical and can have the same qualities as faceto-face relationships, but "due to the limited channel and information, it may take longer to achieve than FtF relationships" (Jarvenpaa and Leidner: 1998:74). Some years later, Walther developed his theory further and included the concept of hyperpersonal interactions, which are the kind of interactions that go beyond the possibilities of the traditional ones. "For example, many people who belong to online self-help groups discuss feelings and ideas that they would never dream of discussing with people in an FtF interaction unless that person was their therapist." (Punyanunt-Carter and Thweatt, 2020:76).

## **CHAPTER 2: Content and method of analysis**

The aim of this second chapter is that of introducing the elements representing the necessary work tools for the analysis that will be the object of the third and last chapter of this dissertation. In particular, the opening section presents the language of social networks, given the peculiar characteristics that distinguish it from other types of language, and this is aimed at a better understanding of the texts that make up the corpora, since these are being extracted from Facebook and Twitter.

The second section will introduce the topic of analysis that is the Cancel Culture movement. This is a movement which over the years has been acquiring more and more visibility and breath and which deals with delicate issues such as gender inequality and racism in all its forms. Given the size of the movement, I have chosen to analyse two figures both because of the relevance of the topic raised and the fame of the figures: the explorer Christopher Columbus and the writer J.K. Rowling.

The following section is an introduction to the theory I will apply for the identification of rhetoric in the two corpora. Appraisal Theory is a theory developed by Martin and White (2005) and was chosen for this analysis for its clearness and completeness as well as for the possibility it provides to observe the results from different points of view. The illustration of Appraisal Theory starts with the depiction of the larger universe to which this belongs, known as Evaluative Language, and then moves on to the examination of its main elements.

The last section of this chapter illustrates the structure and main functions of AntConc, the software I will use for the application of Appraisal Theory to my corpora. In particular, this last section will open with a presentation of the concept of Corpus Linguistics and the details of the corpora in order to provide the necessary notions for the analysis in the next chapter.

### 2.1 Features and language of social networks

As Knipfer (2014:3) writes "Language is a reflection of society's culture and its perception of the world", and therefore, every change, evolution, progress of society is reflected in a change of language. As a matter of fact, language "relays information, demonstrates how a certain society takes in, processes, evaluates, and conveys information", and thus, "the development of a specific language over time shows how the

society or societies using it develop over time as well, as changes in cultural perspective, social composition, and political circumstances deeply impact the characteristics of language" (Knipfer, 2014:5). Since social networks, according to Granieri (2006) contain all the complexity of a social system (to the point that he defines modern society as the digital society), it can be easily deduced that they have their own use of language which is a reflection of the society that interacts within it. The language through which the vast majority of modern interactions take place is characterized by the use of emojis, hashtags, abbreviation and text speak, slang and neologisms. An important feature of social networks language is represented by the fact that many common words, in their transition to the digital society, have changed their meaning such as: *avatar*, *bio*, *chat* and *follower* (Heid, 2015). In fact:

the word avatar used to be a Hindu term for a material manifestation of a deity. Bio used to be a detailed description of someone's life. Chat used to be just an informal conversation. Follower used to be a synonym for acolyte or companion. Now avatar is a graphical representation of someone over the internet, bios are short explainer texts on someone's profile, chats can refer to chat rooms where people will hang out in a virtual room and hold conversations, and follower refers to someone who subscribed to an entity on social media to receive updates from them. (Heid, 2015:4)

One of the most important elements of language use on social networks are emojis. These "picture characters" (Evans, 2017:5) originated in Japan in the late 1990s and are now spread worldwide. As Evans (2017:5) points out, "emojis simply are not relevant for long form written communication. Emojis' relevance lies in the abbreviated digital messages of daily life for expressing sympathy or frustration." In fact, "emojis don't replace language; they provide the nonverbal cues, they fill in the emotional cues otherwise missing from typed conversations" (Evans, 2017:6). Thus, emojis are the written representation of human emotions which are of the utmost importance in conversation, even just to avoid misunderstandings and to be clearer. Emojis can be found in a text (meaning that they can be found as part of a written text and in this case they have a clarifying function) or alone, and in this case they convey all the meaning by themselves (such as the raised thumb which conveys the idea of approval or agreement).

Another feature of the language of social networks is represented by hashtags which can be single words, or a phrase preceded by the hash symbol #, "used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it." Maynard

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> https://www.dictionary.com/browse/hashtag

(2014:12) specifies that "hashtags are the strongest predictor of whether or not a statement is sarcastic." In fact, hashtags, like emojis, reveal the feelings of the author in a more or less explicit way (hashtags can directly or indirectly contain the words describing the state of mind). This tool is so important that a new term has been associated to it: activism. In fact, as Humphreys (2016:9) points out: "the hashtag has become one of the many ways that social media contributes to civic engagement and social movements." Hashtag activism allows people on the web to share information and opinions concerning a social issue but, more importantly, it allows people to share their opinion with a global community, thus being engaged in a worldwide conversation. In fact, Maples (2008:43) affirms that: "through the use of hashtags these groups are able to communicate, mobilize, and advocate for issues less visible to the mainstream". This is the case, for example, of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag which highlights racial inequalities, especially those of the black community, and the #MeeToo movement hashtag, born to give voice to those who have been victims of sexual abuse.

Yet another feature that is closely related to the written word is the use of abbreviations, text speak, slang, and neologisms. The reasons for the diffusion of abbreviations and text speak are mainly linked to Twitter and the allowed length of the message: 140 characters. The small dimensions of a tweet have led to the employment of shortened versions of a word or phrase used in order to save time and space. As a matter of fact, Ehrens (2019:1) writes that "although many seem as if they are misspelled, grammatically incorrect or confusing, texting abbreviation and texting acronyms are commonly used and are meant to expedite communications by shortening them so that the user doesn't have to spell out phrases, expressions or sentences." (e.g. L8R stands for "later", LOL for "laughing out loud" and ?4U stands for "I have a question for you"). As far as neologisms and slang are concerned, Nurtaev and Muratova (2019:4) affirm that

neologism on social networking sites can be derived from other words that already exist in this particular language, on social networks, affixes can be added to English words to form neologisms with a specific meaning. Neologisms of social networks, as a rule, are productive, so users can easily generate new words. On social networks, users can generate countless new words to enable them to express new and old ideas that have adopted a new cultural context

Some examples of neologisms used on social networks are: *slanguage* (a language that uses a lot of slang), *tweetup* (derived from the combination of tweet+up and means the

personal gathering for twitter users) or *twicide* (twitte +suicide in reference to a person become unpopular because of, for example, an insult to someone or a group of people).

A final feature of the language of social networks is the meme, defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as: "an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online especially through social media"<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, on the internet, memes of every kind can be found, and most typically these are humorous. Doung (2017:6) explains that "Memes serve many purposes and functions, but at a fundamental level, they serve as an expression of people's opinions and emotions" and "meme content can range from complaining about the hardships of being a college student, to expressing embarrassment felt during an encounter in a person's daily life – something that everyone is able to sympathise with."





Figure 1: the figure on the right represents a meme of Leonardo di Caprio in the film "The Great Gatsby", while the one on the right depicts the character of Willy Wonka from "Willy Wonka the Chocolate Factory".

Memes are made up of short messages in short texts or image format and are understood by lots of people all over the world and, firstly, "they can help to foster strong relationships within the cyber community" and secondly "forge a feeling of belonging among certain internet users" (Duong, 2017:7). On the contrary, some people believe that memes could have the opposite effect which is that of aggravating prejudicial behaviours which feed division at the expense of integration between people. (Fung, 2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meme

#### 2.2 The Cancel Culture movement

As Slyt (2020:1) points out "For those of you who aren't aware, cancel culture refers to the mass withdrawal of support from public figures or celebrities who have done things that aren't socially accepted today. This practice of "cancelling "or mass shaming often occurs on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook." Yet, to be precise, this practice, also called *call-out culture*, is not new and, as Tunzelmann (2021:4) explains: "statues are always work in progress: toppled, moved, reworked, re-erected and reinterpreted. There has never been a time when they were not contested". As a matter of fact, Beard (2021) maintains that in Ancient Rome people "gleefully toppled and threw into the nearest river" statues of figures they did not admire any more, others were reworked and, "if cash was very tight, you might just put a new name on to an old statue." What is new, however, is the power, speed, and diffusion capacity of the media involved in this process, that is: social networks. Thanks to (or because of, depending on one's position) these features of social networks, Cancel Culture has taken on a worldwide dimension, involving more and more people and concerning more and more features: from sentences considered inappropriate to behaviours labelled as disrespectful (Henderson, 2020).

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary<sup>30</sup> the rise of this term is related to the #MeToo movement, the movement born in 2017 whose aim was that of encouraging everyone who had been abused to "call out their countless abusers in a forum where the accusations might be heard and matter."<sup>31</sup> In the wake of this movement's success, other movements related to social injustices adopted this method as a way of being heard and having a wide appeal with the general public, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement. Therefore, in the semantic universe of Cancel Culture, anyone (famous or not) can easily end up under accusation by society and these accusations can easily result in the cancellation of the accused him/herself. Yet, given the breadth that this investigation is taking and given the reach of the behaviours and sentences under examination, Cancel Culture itself has come under fire. As a matter of fact, many people have started to publicly denounce the redundancy and the paradoxical excessive intolerance of this movement and in particular, the fact that many people have been cancelled for expressing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cancel%20culture

<sup>31</sup> https://www.procon.org/headlines/is-cancel-culture-or-callout-culture-good-for-society/

personal opinions, actually highlighting the fine line between politically correct discourse and freedom of speech (and broadly speaking censorship)<sup>32</sup>. In Friedersdorf's words: "cancel culture poses a threat to pluralism and deliberative democracy" (Friedersdorf, 2022:16), while in an article from The New York Times we can read that "many Americans are understandably confused, then, about what they can say and where they can say it. People should be able to put forward viewpoints, ask questions and make mistakes and take unpopular but good-faith positions on issues that society is still working through — all without fearing cancellation," (editorial board, 2022) specifying in particular that:

Freedom of speech and expression is vital to human beings' search for truth and knowledge about our world. A society that values freedom of speech can benefit from the full diversity of its people and their ideas. At the individual level, human beings cannot flourish without the confidence to take risks, pursue ideas and express thoughts that others might reject. Most important, freedom of speech is the bedrock of democratic self-government. If people feel free to express their views in their communities, the democratic process can respond to and resolve competing ideas. Ideas that go unchallenged by opposing views risk becoming weak and brittle rather than being strengthened by tough scrutiny. When speech is stifled or when dissenters are shut out of public discourse, a society also loses its ability to resolve conflict, and it faces the risk of political violence.

All the above has given rise to a public debate which, in some parts of the world such as in the USA, acquired such huge importance that 153 public figures, on July 7, 2020, signed what is known as "A letter on justice and open debate". The authors decided to open this letter with a solid and factual depiction of the social reality of our times, underlying the importance of the "powerful protests for racial and social justice" which "are leading to overdue demands for police reform, along with wider calls for greater equality and inclusion across our society. 33" Yet, at the same time, they realised that "this needed reckoning has also intensified a new set of moral attitudes and political commitments that tend to weaken our norms of open debate and toleration of differences in favour of ideological conformity" and their opinion regarding what is now known as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Many people wonder what Cancel Culture really is. For instance, in an article from Vox we can read "is cancel culture an important tool of social justice or a new form of merciless mob intimidation?", the New York Post defines it as a "toxic online trend" while the Conversation as an "endless purgatory" affirming that it "curtails speech". On March 18, 2022, the editorial board of The New York Times published a very discussed article with an emblematic headline: "America has a free speech problem" in which was written that "Americans are losing hold of a fundamental right as citizens of a free country: the right to speak their minds and voice their opinions in public without fear of being shamed of shunned" thus defining Cancel Culture as a "social silencing".

<sup>33</sup> https://harpers.org/a-letter-on-justice-and-open-debate/

wokeism<sup>34</sup> is that: "As we applaud the first development, we also raise our voices against the second". They justify this position by referring to the "forces of illiberalism" which are supported by Donald Trump "who represents a real threat to democracy". Yet, if the illiberalism of the "radical right" is somehow "expected", what is not is the "censoriousness" that is "spreading more widely in our culture: an intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism, and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues in a blinding moral certainty," affirming that now is "too common to hear calls for swift and severe retribution in response to perceived transgressions of speech and thought." Their conclusion is that "the restriction of debate, whether by repressive government or an intolerant society, invariably hurts those who lack power and makes everyone less capable of democratic participation. The way to defeat bad ideas is by exposure, argument, and persuasion, not by trying to silence or wish them away."

One of the signatories of this open letter is the writer J. K. Rowling, defined by The Washing Post as a "controversial supporter" since she has "recently faced public condemnation for comments widely deemed to be anti-transgender."<sup>35</sup> This accusation originates from a tweet by the writer "in response to an article about access to sanitary supplies during the coronavirus epidemic that included gender non-binary" writes Roberts (2020) by The Washington Post.

2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> The term *wokeism* is defined by Collins dictionary as "the behaviour and attitudes of people who are sensitive to social and political injustice." It is a word that originated in African American Vernacular English and, more simply, refers to the awareness of social inequalities or as Bacon (2021) defines it: a term used to "signify a consciousness around racial issues in America." Today this word has acquired a negative meaning such as The Economist (2021) defines it: "following an intolerant and moralising ideology" or Poole (2019) from The Guardian refers to it as a term used "to mock overrighteous liberalism." It is also used as an insult by the right wing since, as Bacon (2021) explains, "the term *woke* has gained popularity amid an increasing leftward turn on various issues among the American left; this has partly been a reaction to the right-wing politics of U.S. President Donald Trump, but also to a growing awareness regarding the extent of historical discrimination faced by African Americans." Thus, this term is very used as part of the right-wing strategy as, for example, when Donald Trump said that "Biden administration is destroying the country with woke" (nbcnews).

<sup>35</sup> https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/07/08/letter-harpers-free-speech/



Figure 2. Tweet from J.K. Rowling which brought to the accusation of transphobia

"People who menstruate' I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone helps me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?". The sentences with which J.K. Rowling decided to comment on the article have been harshly judged, first of all, by The Washington Post which decided to open its article in the following way: "A TERF, as it turns out, is not a fantastic beast- but J.K. Rowling continues to insist on showing us where to find one".

The term TERF is one of the most widely used terms to refer to these statements made by the writer. This term stands for *trans-exclusionary radical feminist* and Roberts (2020) from The Washington Post explains that it refers to "someone who denies transgender women's womanhood on the theory that it detracts from cis women's womanhood." Thus, this term is used within the world of feminism to refer to those people who refuse to consider trans women as women and ask for the exclusion of trans women from women's spaces. Nevertheless, the nature of this term is controversial since it has acquired a negative connotation and is therefore used and considered by some as a slur. Therefore, this ill-fated comment has unleashed the anger, disappointment, and disdain of many people who tried to cancel the famous writer with the accusation of intolerance.

The Washington Post explains that "of course, no one is telling Rowling that *she* can't be a woman. No one is trying to erase the term women, at all. The tolerant are merely trying to move beyond the biological dichotomy our society has constructed over centuries- to show there's something between Platform 9 and Platform 10 after all."

This tweet has led to a great deal of debate between Rowling's supporters and those in favour of transgender rights, and it acquired such a huge dimension that I decided to analyse, in the third chapter of this dissertation, the rhetorical constructions used in the comments of this tweet to appeal to others' emotions rather than reason, in order to identify the more or less explicit awareness of the persuasion exercised by people in the comments. I have chosen this topic also because I think it is a very important, delicate, and controversial one, that should be handled with kid gloves, in which legacies of ancient stereotypes lurk and collide with the emotions of those who have to fight to be heard.

Along with this delicate topic concerning the transgender community and in general gender inequalities, there is another one around which a heated public debate has developed. It concerns another kind of inequality and to be precise one that occurred more than five hundred years ago: the controversial legacy and nature of Christopher Columbus. Christopher Columbus is a well-known figure of the past: thanks to his titanic voyage, directed to India, he ended up instead in that land that would later become known as America. Thus, he is famous for being the one who discovered America but, even this fact, which was universally accepted as true until recently, has actually been questioned.

This debate concerning Christopher Columbus is part of a broader debate that began following the murder of George Floyd, which occurred on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, which sparked a wave of protests aiming at putting a spotlight on a problem that is deeply rooted in American society (Buteau, 2020): that of racism and the related police violence. These protests had a very strong social impact and a wide media coverage and figures belonging to a very distant past have also fallen into its vortex, such as Christopher Columbus. In particular, the controversy arising over continuing to honor the Italian explorer as a hero concerns three issues, all related to his encounter with the indigenous people: "the use of violence and slavery, the forced conversion of native peoples to Christianity and the introduction of a host of new diseases that would have dramatic long-term effects on native people in the Americas." (Matthews, 2020:64) In fact, some Spanish historians uncovered a document on Columbus which brought Tremlett (2006)

to affirm that: "he was a greedy and vindictive tyrant who saved some of his most violent punishments for his own followers." In his article for the Guardian, Tremlett (2006) writes that: "As governor and viceroy of the Indies, Columbus imposed iron discipline on the first Spanish colony in the Americas, in what is now the Caribbean country of Dominican Republic. Punishments included cutting off people's ears and noses, parading women naked through the streets and selling them into slavery." This document is a previously lost report written following an investigation on Columbus' actions and it commissioned by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, the rulers of Spain at the time, since there were rumours concerning "Columbus' barbarity and avarice" (Tremlett,2006). All this gives an idea of how old the charges against him are, accusations that after the death of George Floyd have given rise to protests that aim at the demolition of the statues and the elimination of his figure as a historical example and which propose instead of celebrating and respecting the memory of Native Americans.

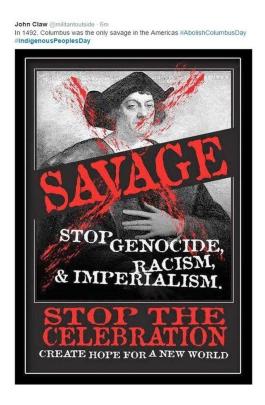


Figure 1.1 Tweet with a poster against Christopher Columbus

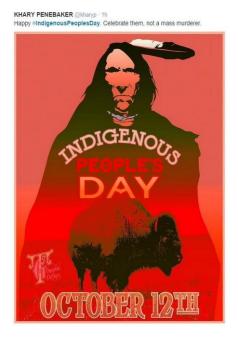


Figure 1. 2 Tweet with an image in favour of Indigenous People's Day

The protests against this controversial historical figure have resulted in the concrete destruction of statues. As mentioned above, the controversial relationship of man with statues is very ancient and some scholars have wondered what their function is. Thus, for example, the answer provided by Beard (2021) is that: "certainly, many of these were put up to celebrate those we no longer wish to celebrate;" but "the statues now have an important job to do in helping us face up to the past, in focusing our justifiable anger, or at least ambivalence, about some of those we were taught to regard as heroes, and in prompting us to ask how much better than them we really are, or should be." Yet, if on the one hand there are those that, like Beard, maintain that the statues have a function, on the other hand there are also people who think that statues should not exist at all, like Younge (2021) who writes that "statues of historical figures are lazy, ugly and distort history." In particular he affirms that "this statue obsession mistakes adulation for history, history for heritage and heritage for memory. It attempts to detach the past from the present, the present from morality, and morality from responsibility".

Thus, the newspaper company Reuters headlined the article of June 11, 2020: "Protesters tear down Christopher Columbus statue in Saint Paul, Minnesota". A similar title is given to the article of the New York Times of June 10, 2020: "Christopher Columbus statues in Boston, Minnesota and Virginia are damaged. The incidents came as protesters angered by the death of George Floyd have targeted monuments that they

see as symbols of white supremacy", or again the CNN on the same day: "Statues of Christopher Columbus are being dismounted across the country". In particular, the author of this last article, Asmelash (2020), writes that:

As racial reckoning occurs across the country following the death of George Floyds, many Confederate statues which some consider racist symbols of America's dark legacy of slavery, have been removed. Now, statues of Christopher Columbus, another controversial figure in US history, are also being taken down. There have been three reports of Christopher Columbus statues being tampered with: one thrown into a lake, one beheaded, and another pulled to the ground.

By September, according to CBS news, the demolished statues of Christopher Columbus were at least thirty. The demolition of the statues in particular, and all the criticism surrounding this figure, in general, can be seen as a form of *damnatio memoriae*, and are mainly related to the accusation of genocide by Columbus against the indigenous population, as the CBS news explains:

Protests have targeted Columbus because he is accused of the genocide of indigenous people. A 2019 study published in the journal Quaternary Science Review estimated that between 1492 and 1600, about 55 million people in the Americas died. The Taíno people were virtually wiped out in the decades after Columbus first arrived on the island of Hispaniola, where Haiti and the Dominican Republic sit today.

Some of these protests were more "peaceful" and people voted to remove the statue along with the holiday related to Columbus. In fact, "for more than 80 years, Columbus Day has been a federal holiday in the US, now celebrated on the second Monday in October. In many places, parades and festivities commemorating the explorer's arrival in the Americas date back far longer." (Judah, 2015). Traditionally celebrated in the United States since 1792, Columbus Day became a federal holiday in 1972<sup>36</sup> inasmuch he was considered as a symbol by some ethnic minorities (Pretelli, 2020) and in particular the Italian community. In fact, between the 19th and the 20th centuries there was mass migration and these Italian Americans, who were subjected to much prejudice, decided to refer to Columbus as the symbol of the Italian presence in the continent since the dawn of the American history (Pretelli, 2020). The first statue of Columbus was put up in 1892, a year after the lynching of eleven Sicilians in New Orleans, considered by Gambino (2000) "one of the largest single mass lynchings in America history."

In the climate of "historical revisionism", the countless statues erected in memory of Columbus all over the country have taken on negative shades of meaning for many

<sup>36</sup> https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/october-12/

people who think that representing the man "who discovered America" (Pretelli, 2020) is just a symbol of racial hatred, minorities discrimination, and white supremacism. Therefore, many people consider that Columbus Day should be replaced with the Indigenous Peoples' day, which, indeed, has happened in many local contexts such as in the city of Los Angeles<sup>37</sup>. In other parts of America this discussion is far from being solved: the Italian American governor of the New York state Andrew Cuomo "defends Columbus statues for symbolism to Italian Americans" writes Szekely (2020) on Reuters adding that "New York should keep statues honouring Christopher Columbus even though the brutalization of the West Indies inhabitants he encountered on his voyages to the New World is inexcusable." Meanwhile in the city of New York, another Italian American, the mayor Bill De Blasio, "had recently announced that New York City would conduct a ninety-day review of all symbols of hate on city property. He said that statues of Columbus would fall under review" reports an article from the New Yorker (2017). Eventually the decision taken by NY Council was that of keeping the statues "but will add historical markers instead. One statue will be relocated, and the city will commission a new monument for indigenous people." (Cascone, 2018).

# 2.3 Evaluative language and the Appraisal Theory

Appraisal Theory is the theory I have chosen to study and apply to my two corpora in order to observe and analyze the implicit and explicit rhetoric contained and conveyed by social networks users in expressing their opinions. This theory has been developed by scholars J.R. Martin and P.R.R. White (2005) and it is one of the many theories developed for the analysis and explanation of a particular type of language known as *evaluative* language. More precisely, language can be referred to as *evaluative*, attitudinal or affective. According to Hunston (2010) the term evaluation can sometimes be interchanged with 'appraisal', 'stance' or 'metadiscourse' and is defined as follows:

Evaluation is the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> This happened on August 30, 2017, as reported by the headline of the Los Angeles Times: "L.A. City Council replaces Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day on city calendar. The Los Angeles City Council voted Wednesday to eliminate Columbus Day from the city calendar, siding with activists who view the explorer as a symbol of genocide for native peoples in North America and elsewhere."

Thus, the evaluative language can be defined as the manifestation of a standpoint or opinion regarding a person, an entity, other matters or situations, and this *stance-taking act* is characterized by a subjectivity and has to be necessarily considered within a specific system of value provided by the related society and the typical social relations that take place in it. In fact, according to Hunston (2010) one of the three functions that evaluation is used to perform is "to express the speaker's or writer's opinion, and in doing so to reflect the value system of that person and their community". All this allows one therefore to analyse the words of a sentence, which are deliberately chosen by the writer (or speaker) for their evaluative meaning, with the aim, first of all, of expressing a personal take on that specific matter and, secondly, of negotiating an alignment with the public, "hoping to instil the same reasoning in the mind of the potential reader and eventually bring new allies to his side" (Landucci, 2020: 14) which, broadly speaking, is defined by Hunston (2010) as the second function of evaluative language: "to construct and maintain relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader". In fact, as she stated:

Expressing an attitude and an opinion towards an individual, an entity or a situation is crucial for linguistics acts that are oriented towards social purposes, like the actions of argumentation and persuasion, taking a position in relation to a matter and trying to achieve an eventual alignment with the public is of utmost importance for establishing social relationships and fostering social interaction between people.

In her definition, to refer to the concept of evaluation, Hunston (2010:14) speaks of "a broad cover term", and this is true since "there are no immediate and specific set of language configurations, for example lexis or grammar, that can truly include the wide range of expressions pertaining to the sphere of evaluative language" (Hunston, 2010:46). This means that different scholars, analysing the notion of evaluation as the object of investigation, have provided different definitions and developed many different methods and techniques of use, such as, for example, Englebretson (2007) who understands the concept of evaluation as related to that of stance-taking, i.e. it implies an active and direct participation, or Hyland and Tse (2004) who define metadiscourse as "the linguistic resources used to organize a discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader", or again Conrad and Biber (1999) according to whom the aim of stance is to reflect personal feelings and points of view from a subjective perspective. Among these prominent scholars, Martin and White developed the notion of *Appraisal*. Yet, regardless of the various differences, all these theories and approaches share, according to Hunston

(2010), some points: the first common feature is that evaluation has to be considered both from a subjective and an intersubjective point of view since personal opinions (subjectivity) are expressed with social interactions purposes and therefore serve as a bridge (intersubjectivity) between the writer and the interactants, in fact, Du Bois (2007) explains that:

Every single evaluative act implies that writer and reader find an alignment when negotiating their points of view. Construing, developing and then being able to preserve relationships are considered by many to be some of the fundamental purposes of evaluative language. Therefore, we can affirm that social interaction can be accomplished through evaluation.

Another common point is that evaluation realizes among interactants who share similar ideological and social values since "writers tend to use some types of evaluative language because of the beliefs and principles they sustain and that they assume are shared among the readers." (Hunston, 2010: 58)

A third point of agreement regards the fact that "evaluative language is performed within a context" (Hunston,2010:58) which means that an isolated word, taken out of context, cannot be judged as evaluative due to the lack of elements which allow us to interpret that word in the right way. Landucci (2020) explains it this way:

When thinking of the term eye, the first and most obvious context that come to mind is that of a body part (e.g. blue eyes), therefore making it a word lacking evaluative meaning. However, if we put it in a different context, e.g. that was eye-catching, the message we are trying to express changes notably, and it is to be considered evaluative, namely describing something as attractive and appealing.

As mentioned above, within the huge world of evaluative language there are different approaches and methods and the one I consider most appropriate for the analysis of the corpora is the Appraisal Theory. This theory, proposed by Martin and White, was developed by the two authors on the basis of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which was first introduced by Michael Halliday (2004) and "considers language primarily as a system, specifically a social semiotic system." (Halliday, 2004:26). One of the most important notions of this theory is the *intention*: every communicative act is carried out with intention, which means that it is the result of a *choice*. Therefore, SFL aims at locating all the choices available in any linguistic variety and representing them as a system network. Hunston (2010) states that "as a result, language is considered as a system of choices, thanks to which the expression of meaning consists in the selection of one option out of all the other options available." Another important scholar who deals

with SFL is Eggins (2004) according to whom "in contemporary life, we are constantly required to react to and to produce bits of language that make sense", in other words we have to negotiate texts, which are also defined "authentic products of social interactions". According to Eggins (2004:7) the functional-semantic approach aims at answering two main questions: how people use language (what do people do with language?) and how is this structured for use (how is language organized to make meanings?). In general, here too the basic idea is that people interact in order to make meaning, and therefore, with every conversation we participate in, is a "record of meanings that have been made in that particular contest". This is the reason why Eggins (2004) explains that language is a semiotic system, asserting more generally that SFL "is a very useful descriptive and interpretative framework for viewing language as a strategic, meaning-making resource."

Thus, among these scholars, Martin and White developed Appraisal Theory as a tool for evaluative language but, according to Wei, Wherrity and Zhang (2015) the beginnings of the Appraisal Theory can be found back in the 1980s and 1990s. Originally it was a project called "write it right" of a group of scholars led by linguistic James Martin from the University of Sidney. This project was aimed at changing the traditional study of interpersonal meanings based on SFL since, working with monoglossic texts, they realised that SFL was not so helpful. Martin also affirmed that "the research methodology of SFL made no reference to the interpretation of evaluative meaning—the speakers' feelings, estimations, and their judgments on the values of various phenomena or experiences." Therefore, Huston and Thompson (2000) assert that: "they found it necessary to shift their focus from grammar to lexis and, accordingly, developed a systemic lexico-grammatical framework called Appraisal Theory. Instead of examining the clause level of interpersonal systems such as Mood and Modality, AT examines evaluative lexis expressing the speaker or writer's opinion on the good/bad parameter". Thus, the definition of appraisal provided by Merriam-Webster dictionary is the following: "in everyday language, the term refers to the act of examining a person or a situation in order to form a judgement or an opinion."38 while Martin and White (2005) explain Appraisal Theory in this way:

This book is concerned with the interpersonal in language, with the subjective presence of writers/speakers in texts as they adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with

<sup>38</sup> https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/appraisal

whom they communicate. It is concerned with how writers/speakers approve and disapprove, enthuse and abhor, applaud and criticise, and with how they position their readers/listeners to do likewise. It is concerned with the construction by texts of communities of shared feelings and values, and with the linguistic mechanisms for the sharing of emotions, tastes and normative assessments. It is concerned with how writers/speakers construe for themselves particular authorial identities or personae, with how they align or disalign themselves with actual or potential respondents, and with how they construct for their texts an intended or ideal audience. (Martin and White, 2005:1)

Thus, even though rhetoric, discourse, and in general communication have long been analysed by researchers, this new theory based on SFL allows us to understand the way in which meaning is the result of specific linguistic choices made by the author. Moreover, the authors specify that:

Appraisal itself is regionalised as three interacting domains: attitude, engagement and graduation. Attitude is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things. Engagement deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. Graduation attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified, and categories blurred.

According to Martin and White (2005) thus, appraisal is made up of three key features that interact simultaneously. Of these three features, that I will briefly describe below, the one that is best suited for the analysis of my two corpora is the first one, i.e. *Attitude*, since it is strictly related and meant for the analysis of the semantic region of emotions. In fact, it is divided itself into three further "regions of feelings":

- "Affect deals with resources for construing emotional reactions" or in other words the tools used to provoke emotional reactions. The importance of this first domain was underlined by the two scholars who recognized affect as the foundation of the two-remaining regions "seeing as the emotional sphere is one of the most relevant expressive resource that social individuals develop and embrace since the very first time they are born" (Martin and White, 2005:42). Considering the huge size of this first domain which is the reflection of the emotional world, Martin and White identified different useful elements for the classification of the different kinds of emotion and in particular they proposed an arrangement into three main groups: un/happiness, which "concerns emotions such as happiness and sadness, love and hate in all of their facets", in/security is related to "ecosocial wellbeing" which refers to emotions that result from the belonging of an individual to a community, thus, from interactions, such as trust, confidence, fear or anxiety while dis/satisfaction deals with "emotions related to activities we take part in", included a discussion.

- "Judgement is concerned with resources for assessing behaviour according to various normative principles". According to White and Martin (2005) and Iedema, Feez and White (1994), judgement involves what can be defined as "an institutionalised feeling, which takes us out of everyday common-sense world into the uncommon sense worlds of shared community values." Thus, to put it simply, this domain refers to how we should behave, and which conducts are allowed on the basis of the societal and traditionally agreed values. These behaviours can be judged as positive or negative and therefore Martin and White (2005) divided this domain into social esteem and social sanctions: the first one is further divided into normality (how usual someone is), capacity (how capable they are), and tenacity (how resolute they are) while the latter is further divided into veracity (how truthful someone is) and propriety (how ethical someone is).
- "Appreciation looks at resources for construing the value of things, including natural phenomena and semiosis (as either product or process)", or the tools used to give value and analyse the complexity of things and situations (Coffin, 1997). This domain as well is further divided into: reaction which refers to our reactions to things or, in other words, to the impact they have on us (did it grab me?) and the quality (did I like it?), composition deals with balance (did it hang together?) and complexity (was it hard to follow?) while valuation refers to the fact that the object was worthwhile or not. Clearly, this study of feelings goes beyond a simple linguistic construction of emotions, rather it considers the way in which attitude is used to influence behaviours and opinions.

The picture of this theory is completed with the categories of *engagement* and *graduation*. Engagement refers to the writer's position both regarding the point of view proposed in the text and the possible reactions of the readers "for example, whether the writer is reposting or quoting, asserting, negating or rejecting the information conveyed to the audience" (Landucci, 2020:36). In fact, Martin and White (2005) affirm that every type of textual interaction has to be considered as dialogic, meaning that the it is not on its own, but it always refers to something that has been previously written. In other words, the relationship existing between the writer and all the previous ones (that addressed the same topic) have to be taken into account. Another thing to consider, according the two authors, is the attempt of the writer to anticipate the reaction of the interlocutors (e.g. agreement or rejection, its authenticity and complexity) (Martin and White, 2005:94). Thus, as concerns engagement, "the two researchers conduct a semantically and

rhetorically oriented investigation on those meanings and structures which have traditionally been examined as tools for assessing the truthfulness or untruthfulness of a statement, instead of being considered as crucial instruments for the establishment of social relations" (Körner, 2001).

On the other hand, graduation deals with the evaluation given to phenomena and situations, and this is made by examining the intensification or reduction of the feelings. This category applies to all others since everything is gradable and is divided into *force* of graduation, when we establish the strength or weakness of a feeling and focus of graduation when sharpening or softening categories are used to identify objects and situations.

From the description of this framework, it is evident that the object of analysis of Martin and White's study are not grammatical elements but rather "meaning in context" and the "rhetorical effects" these are able to produce (Martin and White, 2005:94) or more simply, they are not focused on the written word but rather both on the rhetorical choice hidden behind the written word and the subsequent rhetorical effect and meaning which that word is capable of producing.

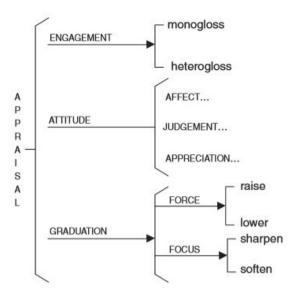


Figure 1.3 An overview of appraisal resources (Martin and White, 2005:38)

# 2.4 Corpus Linguistics and the software AntConc

The objects of analysis of my dissertation are two corpora made up of posts taken both from Twitter and Facebook: the first corpus is a collection of posts containing comments, opinions, support, or disdain towards J.K. Rowling and her position concerning transgender people, while the posts making up the second corpus are related to the figure of Christopher Columbus and the legitimacy of the demolition of symbols referring to him. Both these corpora consist of five hundred posts each, further divided into positive and negative ones, i.e. the ones supporting and sharing J.K. Rowling and Columbus positions and figures, and the ones against.

The organization of texts into corpora is one of the many approaches that fall under the branch of linguistics called *corpus linguistics*. As Baker and McEnery (2015) explain "Coming from Latin a corpus is a body, so we may say that corpus linguistics is simply the study of a body of language." A corpus can be very large, and it may "consist of hundreds of thousands of texts (or excerpts of texts) that have been carefully sampled and balance in order to be representative of a specific variety of language." (Baker and McEnery, 2015). The definition provided by Hunston (2010:4) of corpus linguistics is "the activity of collecting quantities of text in electronic form so that they are open to data manipulation techniques". These techniques are, for instance, statistical evaluations, the identification of a search term and the study of the surrounding context, its frequency and classification, the identification of similarities in order to find correspondences, and others. Partington (2006) explains that in the field of corpus linguistics "several topics are investigated including: sites of evaluation, how evaluation contributes to the meaning and organization of texts, how degrees of commitment to and responsibility for a particular evaluation are expressed, the various evaluatory voices which are set up in texts and how the authorial voice relates to them, the links between evaluation and modality", asserting that "evaluative meaning is all-pervasive in human communication, it is interwoven in the very fabric of texts and just how much of it is accessible to corpus technology is a vital experimental question".

The central element of this approach are the words and their combinations since "single words were attributed a far greater significance compared to grammatical classes" (Hunston, 2010:5). The definition of corpus linguistics provided by Nordquist (2019) is:

corpus linguistics is a methodology, comprising a large number of related methods which can be used by scholars of many different theoretical leanings. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that corpus linguistics is also frequently associated with a certain outlook on language. At the centre of this outlook is that the rules of language are usage-based and that changes occur when speakers use language to communicate with each other. The argument is that if you are interested in the workings of a particular language, like English, it is a good idea to study language in use. One efficient way of doing this is to use corpus methodology.

McEnery and Wilson (2001) also explain that the studies concerning corpora received great attention starting from 1980, "as corpora, techniques and new arguments in favour of the use of corpora became more apparent" specifying that this attention is still constant and that "schools' of corpus linguistics are growing" since "it is maturing methodologically, and the range of languages addressed by corpus linguists is growing annually." The definition of corpus linguistics provided by Nordquist (2019) is: "the study of language based on large collections of real-life language use stored in corporacomputerized databases created for linguistic research. It is also known as corpus-based studies". He also explained that some scholars consider corpus linguistics as a "research tool or methodology", while others consider it as "a discipline or theory in its own right", dilemma to which Kübler and Zinsmeister (2015:48) try to provide an answer by stating that "it can be both. It depends on how corpus linguistics is applied."

An important feature of corpora analysis is that it allows a corpus to be investigated both under the quantitative and the qualitative points of view. In fact, Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (2004:3) affirmed that:

Quantitative techniques are essential for corpus-based studies. For example, if you wanted to compare the language use of patterns for the words big and large, you would need to know how many times each word occurs in the corpus, how many different words co-occur with each of these adjectives (the collocations), and how common each of those collocations is. These are all quantitative measurements... A crucial part of the corpus-based approach is going beyond the quantitative patterns to propose functional interpretations explaining why the patterns exist. As a result, a large amount of effort in corpus-based studies is devoted to explaining and exemplifying quantitative patterns.

In this regard instead, Leech, Hundt, Mair, and Smith (2012:7) explain that:

In corpus linguistics quantitative and qualitative methods are extensively used in combination. It is also characteristic of corpus linguistics to begin with quantitative findings, and work toward qualitative ones. But...the procedure may have cyclic elements. Generally, it is desirable to subject quantitative results to qualitative scrutiny—attempting to explain why a particular frequency pattern occurs, for example. But on the other hand, qualitative analysis (making use of the investigator's ability to interpret samples of language in context) may be the means for classifying examples in a particular corpus by their meanings; and this qualitative analysis may then be the input to a further quantitative analysis, one based on meaning.

Furthermore, Partington (2004), who underlies the importance of the use of corpus linguistics "in helping to explain how particular discourses construct reality, social identities and social relationships", declares that:

corpus linguists were generally unaware that their quantitative techniques could have much to say about discourse, while discourse analysts rarely saw reason to venture forth very far from their qualitative ivory tower. However, over the last decade, a number of developments took place, both technical and philosophical, which gradually made it possible to contemplate the mating of discourse and Corpus Linguistics

Partington (2006) explains that the techniques of corpus analysis can be used to "uncover evaluation which may be "hidden" to the analyst's naked eye and even to the text producer herself", while Baker (2015) explains that topics or issues prior to corpus studies were "predominantly qualitative in nature". Partington (2006) explains that: "qualitative discourse study typically takes a small data set, a single text or a relatively small sample of discourse and studies this in considerable depth" but Baker (2015) continues by explaining that "complementing the qualitative with a more quantitative approach, as embodied in Corpus Linguistics, not only allows a greater distance to be preserved between observer and data but also enables a far greater amount of data to be contemplated". Baker and McEnery (2015) also focus on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the analysis of a corpus explaining that:

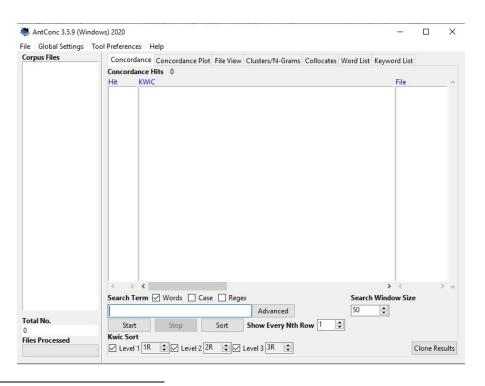
while the earliest stages of a corpus analysis tend to be quantitative, relying on techniques like keywords and collocates in order to give the research a focus, as a research project progresses, the analysis gradually becomes more qualitative and context-led, relying less on computer software. Once quantitative patterns have been identified, they need to be interpreted and this usually involves a second stage of analysis where the software acts as an aid to the researcher by allowing the linguistic data to be quickly surveyed

Furthermore, Baker and McEnery (2015) refer to the "tagging" operation on a corpus which refers to having "explicit linguistic analyses introduced into them" and this automatically done by softwares. Corpora annotations can be of various kinds: they could be grammatical or semantic thus, "for example, all of the words in a corpus may be automatically assigned codes which indicate their grammatical part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) or which semantic group they are from" (Baker and McEnery, 2015:2)

Therefore, it is clear that this field is closely related to that of technological progress which has led to the diffusion of softwares and "using specially designed software in conjunctions with a corpus, analysts are given a unique view of language" (Baker and McEnery, 2015:2). These softwares employ many techniques based on the concept of

frequency which gives the field "a quantitative flavour" (Baker and McEnery, 2015) and in particular two of these features are: Keywords and Collocates. "Keywords are words which are more frequent than expected in one corpus, when compared against a second corpus which often stands as a reference, usually being representative of a notional standard language" explain Baker and McEnery (2015), affirming that "keywords reveal words which may not be hugely frequent but are definitely statistically salient in some way". For what concern collocations, Baker and McEnery explain that "collocation involves the identification of words which tend to occur near or next to each other a great deal, much more than would be expected if all words in a corpus were ordered in a random jumble" while Stubbs (1996:195) affirms that "from an ideological point of view, collocates are extremely interesting, as if two words are repetitiously associated with each other, then their relationship can become reified and unquestioned".

Among these softwares, a useful toolkit for conducting text analysis is AntConc, a software developed by Laurence Anthony who defines it as "a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing and text analysis." AntConc is the tool I will use to apply the appraisal theory to my corpora given its usefulness in identifying quantitative patterns of evaluative language.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/

54

Figure 6: Layout of AntConc and main functions

The layout of AntConc is, as we can see from figure 1.4, very simple and easy to understand: after uploading the files in txt format their title will appear in the "Corpus Files" section and then there are different functions that the programm can perform on texts:

- Concordance: after typing a word, technically called Keyword in Context (KWIC), in the search bar below, the concordance function will return the total number of times the word appears in the texts and the words that often occur near it.
- Concordance Plot: this function displays the position of the KWIC in the correspondent file representing the last one as a horizontal bar with a black vertical line in it symbolizing the position of the word.
- File View: this function allows to visualize the result in a larger context: in a full file view
- Clusters/N-Grams: the result of this function is a list of the words that appear together more frequently in texts.
- Collocates: it shows words that are statically likely to appear together with the word selected.
- Word List: it shows all the words contained in the texts.
- Keyword List: is used to make comparisons and correlations between two corpora.

Thus, one of the first thing a user can do with AntConc is to create a list of all the words included in the corpus and these can be organized alphabetically or by frequency. Another important point is that it gives the possibility to analyse words based on their stems and the possibility to generate a stop list, which is a list of terms, usually the most frequent ones, that would slow down the process and therefore are automatically excluded by the programm, and it allows the researcher to mainly focus on the frequency of content rather than on the functions of the words (Anthony,2005). Yet, the most important feature of AntConc is the Concordancer which, according to Sun and Wang (2003) "have been demonstrated to positively affect second language acquisition and foreign language learning processes by promoting vocabulary expansion as well as improving grammar

and writing styles." Specifically, this shows how a search term is used in the corpus, and the search terms are defined as (substrings, words, phrases, or full regular expressions, providing a researcher with access to multifaceted searches." (Anthony, 2005). The view files tool is another important feature of AntConc which can be used both with the Concordancer or alone: in the first case the term searched will be displayed in the original file, if, instead, it is used on its own it can show examples of a word, phrase, substring or regular expression in the original file, thus showing the user the context in which they are used.

The main advantages of this software are that it provides a multitude of functions, includes common statistical methods, it can be used for the analysis of very large corpora, it supports many languages (included Asian languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) by processing characters outside of the ASCII character set, and has a user-friendly interface that is more suitable for users with little computer experience. Thanks to the variety of operations and analyses that this program allows one to conduct on corpora, I believe it is particularly useful and appropriate for my research.

# **CHAPTER 3: Data Analysis**

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate how the theoretical and practical features of Appraisal Theory, described in the previous chapter, can be used for the analysis of the data. The purpose of the analysis is to observe and examine the emotional rhetoric conveyed by the words of the users. As shown in the previous chapter, my investigation will be focused on posts taken both from Facebook and Twitter, amounting to a total number of five hundred concerning Christopher Columbus and the controversial historical importance of his figure, and the same number of posts was collected regarding J.K. Rowling and the transphobic accusations. Each of these topics represents a single corpus and, since one of the assumptions is to conduct an impartial analysis, the posts making up each corpus were divided in two parts: one part is made up of comments in favour of J.K. Rowling, or in favour of the historical importance of Christopher Columbus, while the other one is made up of comments against J.K. Rowling or against everything represented by the figure of Columbus. These corpora will be analysed both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, and then compared in order to observe common and different patterns of rhetoric and, in general, of evaluative language, by the application of the methods of the Appraisal Theory.

In particular, section 2 will focus on the rhetorical analysis of language in anti-Rowling posts, both from a quantitative point of view, referring to the identification of patterns with respect to Attitude (Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation), and from a qualitative point of view, meaning the observation of the results of the quantitative analysis from a different perspective, notably, the rhetorical and emotional power of the words used and their ability to invoke attitude and exercise persuasion. The following sections will follow the same structure as the second one, but the analysis will concern pro-Rowling posts (section 3), anti-Columbus posts (section 4), and pro-Columbus posts (section 5). Section 6 will focus on comparing the results of both corpora, those of Columbus and those of Rowling, in order to detect similarities and differences in the rhetoric employed to appeal to emotions. The last section of this chapter will be dedicated to the conclusions of the analysis.

3.1 Analysis of rhetorical and evaluative language in anti-Rowling posts

The first corpus I have chosen to analyse is made up of 250 posts which express a negative attitude towards J.K. Rowling opinions. These posts were collected from Twitter and, in

particular, are the answers given following the publication of a post by the famous writer which represents itself a comment on an opinion article, taken from devex.com, stating: "opinion: creating a more equal post-COVID-19 world for people who menstruate<sup>40</sup>"

#### 3.1.1 Quantitative analysis

In Chapter Two I introduced the structure and functions of the software AntConc, which will be used for the analysis of the corpora of posts, since it has different analytical functions. Among these functions, I will mostly employ that one of the *concordancer*, which allows me, in the quantitative analysis, to easily identify the frequency of the searched words; that of *clusters* which shows the words that most often appear together with the searched word, and the *collocates* function which provides the surrounding context.

#### 3.1.2 Attitudinal Patterns

The search for patterns with respect to Attitude means examining human feelings and emotions conveyed by words, and therefore the depiction of feelings and emotions in written discourse. The emotional words are divided according to their positive or negative nature. Furthermore, *Attitude*, as illustrated in the previous chapter, is itself divided into three semantic domains: *Affect*, which represents emotions, *Judgement*, representing ethics, and *Appreciation* which is related to aesthetics. The results of my application of the category of *Attitude* on the corpus via AntCon have been organized in the following table:

<sup>40</sup>https://twitter.com/jk\_rowling/status/1269382518362509313?ref\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etw eetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1269382518362509313%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\_&ref\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ilpost.it%2F2020%2F06%2F11%2Fjk-rowling-trans-identita-genere%2F

Table 1: Attitudinal pattern in anti-Rowling posts

AFFECT	Positive	Negative
Total (218)		
UN/HAPPINESS	Total (16)	Total (109)
Total (125)	Love (9) (others)	Hate (27)
	Hating (3)	Sad (10)
	Happy (2)	Disappointed (8)
	Happiness (2)	Hurt (8)
		Love (6) (irony)
		Happy (4) (irony)
		Hurtful (4)
		It breaks my heart (4)
		Hatred (4)
		Pain (3)
		Hurting (3)
		Confident (2)
		Heart-breaking (2)
		Suffer (2)
		Glad (2)
		Suffering (2)
		Angry (2)
		Sickening (2)
		Insulted (2)
		No joy (1)
		Saddens (1)
		Heartbroken (1)
		Heart-warming (1)
		(irony)
		Hurts (1)
		Anger (1)
		Haters (1)
		Extinguishing (1)

		To feel sick (1)
		Worried (1)
IN/SECURITY	Total (17)	Total (64)
Total (81)		
	Freedom (4)	Violence (8)
	Not a threat (4)	No safety (8)
	Friends (4)	Fear (7)
	Defend (2)	Marginalized (7)
	Defending (1)	Discrimination (7)
	Together (1)	Rape (5)
	Solidarity (1)	Not safe (4)
		Assault (4)
		Exclude (4)
		Minorities (3)
		Demonizing (2)
		Excluded (2)
		Discrimination (2)
		Not an ally (1)
		Assaulted (1)
		Anxious (1)
		Panic (1)
		Discriminating (1)
		Discriminate (1)
DIS/SATISFACTION	Total (7)	Total (12)
Total (19)	Care (7)	Don't care (4)
		Angry (2)
		Interesting (2)
		(Irony)
		Rants (2)
		Bored (1)
		Sick of (1)

JUDGEMENT	Positive	Negative
Total (216)		
SOCIAL ESTEEM		
Total (76)		
Normality	Total (7)	Total (11)
Total (18)	Beautiful (4)	Common (3)
	Idolized (2)	Not cool (2)
	Celebrated (1)	Odd (2)
		Beautiful (2)
		(irony)
		Narcissistic (1)
		Crank (1)
Capacity	Total (16)	Total (35)
Total (51)	Power (4)	Discriminate (9)
	Influence (3)	Ignorance (5)
	Talented (2)	Hero (5)
	Creative (2)	Discriminating (4)
	Powerful (1)	Close-minded (3)
	Successful (1)	Sick (1)
	Genius (1)	Stupid (1)
	Value (1)	Idiot (1)
	Idol (1)	Insane (1)
		Ignorant (1)
		Clown (1)
		Brilliant (1)
		Disgrace (1)
		Narrow-minded (1)

Tenacity	Total (0)	Total (7)
Total (7)	10141 (0)	Brave (4)
10111 (7)		Courage (2)
		Courageous (1)
SOCIAL SANCTION		
Total (140)		
Veracity	Total (0)	Total (12)
Total (12)		Not the truth (5)
		Not honest (1)
		Unfounded (1)
		Untrue (1)
		Absurd (1)
		Illogical (1)
		Baseless (1)
		Rubbish (1)
Propriety	Total (0)	Total (128)
Total (128)		Transphobic (26)
		Transphobe (18)
		TERF (11)
		Not inclusive (9)
		Cruel (8)
		Shame (7)
		Awful (5)
		Disappointing (5)
		Respectful (4)
		Wrong (4)
		Bad (4)
		Sexist (3)
		Sexist (3)

	Bigot (3)
	Moral (2)
	Evil (2)
	Hostile (2)
	Hypocrite (2)
	Villain (2)
	Miserable (2)
	Flawed (2)
	Fraud (2)
	Kind (1)
	Blame (1)
	Disgraceful (1)
	Weirdo (1)
	Callousness (1)

APPRECIATION	Positive	Negative
Total (66)		
REACTION		
Total (65)		
Impact	Total (0)	Total (23)
Total (23)		Discriminatory (3)
		unforgivable (3)
		offensive (2)
		insulting (2)
		Excited (1)
		Supported (1)
		Impact (1)
		Worrying (1)
		Unsettling (1)
		Dismayed (1)
		Pointless (1)

		Irrational (1)
		Trauma (2)
		Stereotypical (1)
		Detestable (1)
		Disrespectful (1)
Quality	Total (0)	Total (42)
Total (42)		not good (5)
		exclusionary (4)
		bad (4)
		trash (3)
		fake (3)
		disgusting (3)
		nonsense (2)
		great (2) (irony)
		not fine (2)
		mocking (2)
		unbearable (2)
		weird (2)
		revolting (2)
		joke (1)
		repulsive (1)
		yucky (1)
		disgraceful (1)
		abhorrent (1)
		unhelpful (1)
		bullshit (1)
		blatant (1)
COMPOSITION		
Total (1)		
Balance	Total (0)	Total (1)

Total (1)		Not balanced (1)
Complexity Total (0)	Total (0)	Total (0)
VALUATION  Total (0)	Total (0)	Total (0)

# 3.1.3 Qualitative Analysis

All the results of the quantitative analysis will be now observed from a qualitative perspective, that is examining the findings for each sub-system of Attitude by considering what type of rhetorical language is employed, on what the authors mostly focus their attention, along with the purposes and rhetorical meanings of the expressions used.

The category of Affect, expressed in anti- Rowling posts, is the most impactful one since it is represented with a total of 218 expressions. Among the three sub systems forming Affect, the category of un/happiness is the prevalent one, with a huge gap between negative (109) and positive (16) expressions. The most widely used negative expressions are hate, sad, disappointed, hurt, and hatred, which suggest that the authors wanted to arouse in the putative readers feelings of contempt and detachment towards J.K. Rowling's positions and figure, and the size of disdain is conveyed by the power possessed by the word hate (see, for example, Aristotle's notion of hatred in Rhetoric). Since the vast majority of authors that used this verb (always associated with the pronoun you) were Harry Potter fans in their childhood, I suppose that the word chosen to express their feelings actually reflects all the disillusionment and disenchantment felt reading Rowling's post. At the same time, many authors decided to use expressions such as hurt, pain, suffer, and even to feel sick, therefore driving the attention to the victims of this discrimination, i.e. transgender people and their feelings, pointing out the suffering and hurt provoked by the writer's comment. It is also important to highlight the fact that many people resorted to irony and sarcasm using terms such as happy, confident and glad (see, for example, the role of irony in Cicero's *De Oratore*). An interesting result is represented by the fact that the vast majority of positive expressions do not address J.K. Rowling but rather the transgender community, thus responding indirectly to the writer's comment, in a sort of invitation to ignore these intolerant voices and expressing their support "simply" by using the word *love*.

The sub system of *in/security* is equally important even if it is less rich than the un/happiness one. With a total of 81 expressions, here too there is a strong disparity between the negative (64) and the positive ones (17). Notably, violence is one of the most common negative expressions used with reference to the transgender community with the clear intention of highlighting the difficult situation in which this community already finds itself and the fact that Rowling's comment could bring more violence to an already mistreated community. As a matter of fact, if we look at the collocations, the most frequent ones are experienced violence, sexual violence, physical violence and even domestic violence. In many comments, the word violence is also associated with another one which is suicide, clearly referring to and focusing on the psychological aspect and potential consequences of intolerance. Other two recurring words are safety and safe, which in this case too, make a precise reference to the lack of this condition for the transgender community. Every comment, however, invokes the right to safety for this community (e.g. with collocations a sense of safety, should have the safety, should find safety, should be safe and make a safe place). In other cases, authors preferred to use very impactful words that evoke limpid images in the minds of readers, such as marginalized, exclude(d), demonizing and discrimination (see, for example, the role of invetio in Cicero's De Oratore). Out of 81 total expressions, only 17 are positive and all refer to victims of this intolerance with words such as freedom, defend, solidarity and together, while others decide to defend the public image of people belonging to this "demonized" community by specifying that they are not a threat. Finally, as far as dis/satisfaction is concerned, we can find a total of 19 expressions, 7 of which are represented by the term care used to refer both to personal positions in contrast with the one expressed by Rowling, actually expressing support for the community, and also in a kind of invitation to support and *care* for the community. At the same time, this term is used in a negative form, don't care, by others referring this time to Rowling's position to underline the total indifference of the writer, while some others use words such as bored or sick of in relation to intolerance.

Judgement, the second sub system of attitude, is as rich as Affect, with a total number of 216 expressions, of which 76 pertain to social esteem and 140 to social

sanction. As concerns social esteem, Rowling was harshly criticized from the viewpoint of *capacity*, which, with 51 instances, is the richest one. Along with the references to the discriminating figure of Rowling, a very frequently used word to refer to her capacities is *ignorance*, which assigns an unequivocal label to the author's opinion (according to the Sophists, for example, evil is generated by ignorance), and the power of the word is accentuated by the contrast with other words which refer to the famous novels of the writer, and which have brought her fame and earned her epithets such as genius or hero which, however, here are used with a negative meaning, referring to what she no longer represents for her numerous fans. In fact, the expressions not a hero or a hero anymore are often used, as if to underline the rupture of the relationship (of idolatry or admiration), indirectly suggesting that she is no longer a public figure to admire. Some authors labelled her position as close-minded, narrow-minded, sick, stupid or insane, conveying the thought that her positions are obsolete and outdated. As concerns positive expressions, actually these are used to make a contrast: for instance, the words power, influence, successful, talented and creative are linked to the abilities of the famous writer who, instead, used them to share negative notions and discrimination (e.g. you have such power, yet you choose to wield it to attack people or a powerful voice that extinguishes our hope), often accompanied by suggestions to use that power in a different way.

The other sub system of judgement, *social sanction*, is the most prosperous one with 140 expressions: 12 referring to *veracity* and 128 to *propriety*. What stands out in both categories is the absence of positive expressions. Specifically, her opinions are labelled as *not the truth, not honest, unfounded* and *untrue* in the less sharp comments, and as *absurd, illogical* and *baseless* by authors who prefer to appeal to reason to question the truthfulness and the lack of logic of Rowling's statement (see, for example, Campbell, according to whom persuasion, in order to be effective, must combine reason and emotions). As concerns the expressions that are part of the category of *propriety*, the most used are the words related to transphobia such as *transphobic, transphobe* or the acronym *TERF*, which evidently point at the non-inclusive morality of the writer, very often accompanied by the expression: *shame on you*. Yet, if some people concentrated on the evaluation of the morality of this comment, some others, defining her as *miserable*, *disgraceful, bad, cruel, awful* and even *evil*, express a general and overall judgement on the person, thus, effectively, branding the Rowling as an evil person in her entirety.

Among these comments there are some which contain the word *hypocrite*, referring to the inconsistency between what the writer has written in her novels and her real thoughts.

The last category, appreciation, is the least impactful one with a total of 66 expressions. Even in this case, out of 66 expressions, 0 is the number of positive ones. Undoubtably, reaction is the most prosperous since neither composition nor valuation contain any term, but this is quite predictable (and will be quite the same in all the following analysis), since the elements of analysis are posts rather than, for example, newspaper articles or essays for which it is more common to evaluate the composition and readability. Therefore, *impact*, the first subcategory of reaction, is made up of 23 expressions which are almost never repeated. The only ones which are used more than once are: discriminatory and unforgivable, words with a very peremptory meaning, as well as offensive, insulting, and disrespectful. The quality instead is considered as trash, fake, nonsense, bullshit, which, in my opinion, are very evocative words to evaluate the quality of a content, especially today, when the adjective *fake* recalls the great problem of disinformation and digital literacy. Some authors use words with harder meaning, such as mocking, unbeatable, revolting, repulsive, yucky and abhorrent, words that well convey the idea of a psychophysical reflection of the negative emotion derived from reading the writer's statement (see, for example, Cicero's De Oratore).

# 3.2 Analysis of rhetorical and evaluative language in pro-Rowling posts

In this third section I will analyse the corpus containing pro-Rowling posts, as I did for the anti-Rowling one. This corpus too, is made up of 250 posts which, more or less explicitly, share or at least support Rowling's position.

# 3.2.1 Quantitative analysis

As I did in the previous section when analysing anti-Rowling posts, here I have examined the corpus from a quantitative point of view, by using AntConc and by taking into consideration the rhetorical words proposed by the Appraisal Theory, and I have organized the results in the table in the following section.

# 3.2.2 Attitudinal patterns

Table 2: Attitudinal pattern in pro-Rowling posts

AFFECT	Positive	Negative
Total (227)		
UN/HAPPINESS	Total (50)	Total (49)
Total (99)	Love (23)	Down (15)
	Like (18)	Hate (12)
	Glad (5)	Sad (3)
	Proud (2)	Sick (4)
	Gratitude (2)	Angered (1) (others)
		Delusion (2)
		Outraged (2)
		(others)
		Haters (2) (others)
		Hateful (2) (others)
		Hurt (2) (others)
		Shocked (2) (others)
		Worries (2)
IN/SECURITY	Total (80)	Total (45)
Total (125)	Stand up (22)	Cancel (12)
	Support (15)	Attack (7)
	To voice (11)	Erase (5)
	Freedom (9)	Bullied (5)
	Speak up (6)	Bullies (4) (others)
	Defending (4)	Threaten (3)
	Call out (3)	Fear (1)
	Womanhood (2)	Insecure (1)
	Friends (2)	Censor (1)
	Protect (1)	To silence (1)
	Faith (1)	Suppression (1)
	Bold (1)	Vulnerable (1)
	Together (1)	Dehumanisation (1)

	Ally (1)	(others)
	Defend (1)	Dehumanized (1)
		(others)
		Crucify (1)
DIS/SATISFACTION	Total (1)	Total (2)
Total (3)	Interest (1)	Sick of (1) (others)
		Don't care (1)

JUDGEMENT	Positive	Negative
Total (311)		
SOCIAL ESTEEM		
Total (216)		
Normality	Total (23)	Total (19)
Total (42)	Common sense (12)	Crazy (5) (others)
	Admired (3)	Madness (4)
	Sane (2)	(others)
	Normal (1) (others)	Insanity (3)
	Sanity (2)	(others)
	Familiar (1)	Mad (2) (others)
	Unique (1)	Nuts (2) (others)
	Beautiful (1)	Insane (1) (others)
		Troubled (1)
		(others)
		Weird (1) (other)
Capacity	Total (67)	Total (83)
Total (150)	Courage (11)	Idiots (29) (others)
	Successful (10)	Woke (11)
	Strong (8)	Sick (9) (others)

	Model (5)	Misogyny (8)
	Leaders (4)	(others)
	Amazing (3)	Sensitive (4)
	Deserve (3)	(others)
	Adult (3)	Stupid (4) (others)
	Intelligent (2)	Morons (3) (others)
	Powerful (2)	Naïve (1) (others)
	Success (2)	Misogynistic (3)
	Genius (2)	(others)
	Fearlessness (1)	Misogynists (3)
	Brilliant (1)	(others)
	Integrity (1)	Immature (1)
	Attentive (1)	(others)
	Fortitude (1)	Illiterate (1)
	Dedication (1)	(others)
	Fearlessness (1)	Uneducated (1)
	Integrity (1)	(others)
	Courageous (1)	Criticism (1)
	Star (1)	Hypocrites (1)
	Awesome (1)	(others)
	Incredible (1)	Brainwashed (1)
		(others)
		Aggressive (1)
		(others)
		Hysterical (1)
		(other)
Tenacity	Total (24)	Total (0)
Total (24)	Strong (8)	
(= ·)	Brave (5)	
	Fight for (4)	
	Bravery (3)	
	-5 (-)	

SOCIAL SANCTION	Constant (1)	
SOCIAL SANCTION		
BOCHE BRITCHOIL		
Total (95)		
Veracity	Total (27)	Total (3)
Total (30)	Truth (14)	Lie (1)
10ta (50)	True (4)	Superficial (1)
	Irrefusable (2)	Bogus (1)
		Dogus (1)
	Valid (2)	
	Honest (2)	
	Truthful (1)	
	Reliable (1)	
	Reasonable (1)	
Propriety	Total (44)	Total (21)
Total (65)	Right (14)	Wrong (10)
	Respect (9)	(others)
	Good (9)	Bad (8) (others)
	Reason (5)	Toxic (1) (others)
	Morality (2)	Confused (2)
	Moral (1)	(others)
	Fair (1)	
	Sensitive (1)	
	Maturity (1)	
APPRECIATION	Positive	Negative
Total (37)		
REACTION		
Total (26)		
Impact	Total (2)	Total (0)
Total (2)	Impact (2)	

	T	
Quality	Total (22)	Total (2)
Total (24)	Good (6)	Joke (1)
	Important (4)	Garbage (1) (others)
	Ok (2)	
	Okay (2)	
	Well-meaning (2)	
	Fine (1)	
	Rational (1)	
	Grotesque (1)	
	(other)	
	Logic (1)	
	Legitimate (1)	
	Uncontroversial (1)	
COMPOSITION		
Total (5)		
Balance	Total (1)	Total (1)
Total (2)	Nuanced (1)	Flawed (1)
Complexity	Total (3)	Total (0)
Total (3)	Pure (2)	
	Simple (1)	
VALUATION	Total (6)	Total (0)
Total (6)	Important (4)	\ /
	Priceless (1)	
	Incredible (1)	

## 3.2.3 Qualitative Analysis

In this section I will examine the results of the previous analysis from a qualitative point of view, in order to detect the rhetorical language used by interactants to exercise persuasion and in order to understand which effects this language may have.

As far as affect is concerned, the domain of in/security plays an important role with a total of 311 expressions, while the dis/satisfaction domain contains just 3. The un/happiness domain is also quite prosperous, with a total of 99 expressions, but the unexpected thing is that negative and positive realizations here are almost the same number: 49 negative expressions and 50 positives. The majority of negative expressions are used either to refer to others' feelings (e.g. hurt and angered used with the collocation people are hurt and angered by the truth, or outraged such as they can play the outraged victims) in an attempt to discredit and diminish them, or to label Rowling's "critics", for example, by calling them haters, to support her by making what technically is called juxtaposition, defined by Collins Dictionary as: "the juxtaposition of two contrasting objects, images, or ideas is the fact that they are placed together or described together, so that the differences between them are emphasized."41 We can find juxtaposition, for example, in expressions such as: let haters stand in the darkness (darkness stands for ignorance, indirectly suggesting that Rowling is on the side of truth), or don't get discouraged by hateful comments, or again, the verb sick used to refer to negative feelings caused by negative comments towards Rowling such as people who backlash against Rowling make sick. Another very commonly used word is hate, used for different purposes: once again, it is used with juxtaposition to express support (e.g. with all the hate directed at you, I want you to know that I support you, or I'm sorry for the awful amounts of hate you receive), or to clarify what the real truth is (e.g. I'm sorry if you all hate the truth, or it isn't hate to speak the truth), or again, it is used as if it was an adjective to indiscriminately describe people with a different opinion (e.g. those who scream hate and judgement based on emotion, hate worriers, the rabid hate of the woked up people, or people who only know hate) (see, for example, the Sophists and their notion of dialectics) . The positive realisations, instead, are mostly made up of single words, such as love, like, glad, proud and gratitude, which are all referred to Rowling in general (both as a woman and a writer) (e.g. love you Rowling, love you to life, love Harry Potter, I love

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/juxtaposition

her more and more, love you and I'll always do, lots of love), as well as in particular to her actions, statements and opinion such as: I love you so much you spoke straight, I love the fact that women fight to keep our rights equates, I love her for telling the truth, I just love you so much for this, I love that you give people hope. Words like, glad, proud and gratitude are employed for the same purposes, such as: I'm gonna like your tweet, I'm glad she has the courage, I'm proud of her or boundless gratitude to you.

Then, the *in/security* domain is the richest one with a division into 80 positive expressions and 45 negatives. Among the most negatively used terms there is the word to cancel with all its declinations. It is mainly used to criticize the cancellation attempts towards Rowling, such as cancel culture is out of control, cancel culture is toxic, the urge to immediately cancel people, everyone is cancelling you, or they want to cancel anyone who they cannot control. In all these sentences there is the concept that cancel culture is evil and, above all, is extreme, almost as if they wanted to reverse roles and make J.K. Rowling the victim. Another frequently used term is a synonym of to cancel, to erase. Unlike the term to cancel, this term is used in reference to women to encompass the idea that those who are really losing from this cultural awakening are women and their identity, by stating, for example, that women are being erased, this cult of woke bullshit erases women bit by bit. They are trying to erase born women, trying to erase real womanhood. Some authors, in order to defend what they call "a loss of identity of women", chose to use very strong words in reference to transgender people such as dehumanisation and dehumanized (e.g. the dehumanisation is grotesque). Many others used terms such as to silence, suppression, or to crucify which, in people's minds, recall the idea of censorship, thus denouncing the freedom of opinion and speech denied to the Rowling (see, for example, the notion of rhetoric according to Isocrate).

The same idea is conveyed in comments containing the term bully: I stand with you so don't be bullied, not letting the delusional bullies bringing you down, hope bullying is not having any impact on you, standing up in the face of bullies or I support you against those bullies, i.e. the concept that Rowling clearly represents the victim in this situation, as the word bully conveys only and exclusively a negative meaning. As concerns positive expressions, the most frequently used is the word to stand and all its declinations, used to say thanks and to show gratitude towards Rowling, such as: thank you for taking a stand, thank you for voicing and standing, for standing up for women,

glad you have the strength to stand up for us or even for standing up for sanity or we sane folk will stand by you. Almost as a natural consequence, the term support is the second most used one. The term voice too (both as a verb and a noun, and equally the verb call out), is used to express gratitude, but, unlike the other terms, this passes down the idea that the injured party (in these comments are women) recognized Rowling as the person who gives voice to their problems, linked to the loss of identity, to the community, as if she were their spokesperson.

Another term related to what Rowling supporters define as a violation of rights is free (and freedom). In some comments, it is used in an ironic way (see, for example, Cicero's De Inventione), such as: freedom of speech at its finest, or more simply, it relates to the bigger discussion concerning the fine line between tolerance and freedom of speech, such as freedom of opinion and discourse is so important, you are a beacon for free speech and free thought!, you cannot censor her freedom of writing. For some people, freedom of speech has been so harmed that they make a parallel with the Orwellian world, such as: you want to live in an Orwellian world without freedom of speech or all this is purely Orwellian. I think that the appeal to such a parallelism is quite summoning, since the world described by George Orwell in 1984 is all based on censorship and is used as a synonym of authoritarian. Unlike the other two domains, the one of dis/satisfaction is less remarkable as it contains just 3 expressions: one positive (interest), referring to Rowling's statement, and two negatives (sick of and don't care) in reference to others' comments.

Secondly, the category of *judgement* is the richest one with 311 expressions. As we have already seen, this category is divided into *social esteem* and *social sanctions*. As concerns *normality*, the most used expression is *common sense* in reference to Rowling's statement, used to underline that she is the rational one, precisely, speaking common sense, while the ones who criticize her lack of reason (*you give me back my faith in the logic and common sense of humanity, the world need people defending common sense* or *finally speaking some common sense*). This kind of consideration of J.K. Rowling is what makes her *admired: much respect and admiration for your courage, I admire you a lot/so much, I admire you as a woman* or *your courage J.K. Rowling in the war on free speech has made me admire you even more*. Therefore, if her supporters think she has common sense, they also thank her for her sanity, tagging, as a consequence, everyone who does not share her positions as insane on the basis of juxtaposition (e.g. *thank you for standing* 

up for sanity, you stood to the side of sanity, you are an inspiration to the sane, we sane folk stand by you) (see, for example, Plato's Phaedrus or the Sophists). Obviously, Rowling's critics are defined as crazy and mad. Yet, this term is not only used to identify critics, rather its meaning expands, and it concerns the world and this historical period as a whole. For instance: it's a crazy world, the world is going crazy or crazy times (or using the term mad: thank you for standing in the face of this madness, the world has gone mad).

Capacity is the most impactful category with 150 expressions. The most frequently used term is *courage*, used to admire the writer's statement and opinion, such as: you are the most important and courageous woman in history, a role model for courage, speaking the truth takes courage and inner strength. On the other hand, the most frequently used term to refer to critics is idiots (the leftist idiots and there are still idiots out there). The use of these words makes clear who one should stand with and who should be ignored, and this contrast is also underlined by other words such as sick (e.g. your sick minds), stupid (don't let stupid people break you down), and morons (naïve morons). Yet, woke is the second most common epithet in these comments. As I previously pointed out, the term woke (and wokeism) is used in a negative sense to address those people taking part in movements that focus on social and other communities' matters, injustices, and discrimination. Yet, the bizarre thing is that this expression is never used (in these corpora) with reference to a single person, but rather to address a group of people (aggressive woke crowd, the woke herd, the woke muggles, the woke mafia, the woked up minority, this woke schizo circus), marking the net difference between "us" and "they", between "sanity" and "insanity", between "truth" and "lie" (see, for example, Aristotle's Rhetoric and his subdivision of persuasive arguments). As far as tenacity is concerned, we can find only positive expressions that underline Rowling's tenacity in this cause. Most people see her as strong and brave, but these terms are also used as an encouragement, with the collocation stay strong.

The second category of judgement, *social sanction*, is not as rich as the first one (95 expressions). As concerns *veracity*, positive expressions (27) far outweigh negative ones (3). In particular, the terms *truth* and *true* are the most common, and they refer to Rowling's statement, thus automatically defining everything else as untrue. In fact, these comments leave no room for alternatives such as: *the truth is the truth*, *I admire the fact* 

that you're not afraid to tell the truth, everyone hates the truth, one really cannot speak the truth anymore in the UK. In a few comments, the authors even use the term irrefutable (e.g. a biological, irrefutable fact), which is even more peremptory and totally blind to alternatives. In this domain, negative expressions are used not in reference to Rowling but to others' comments. So, the term superficial is used to indicate transgenders' truths and requests: they show just how superficial and misogynistic the TRA movement is. Furthermore, the author of this comment reveals all his contempt in the use of the word TRA. TRA is the acronym of *Trans Rights Activist* and, just like the term *TERF*, is used in a negative way "for those who are perceived as the most demanding or politically extreme among trans folk"42.

The third and last category of attitude, *appreciation*, is made up of 37 expressions. The richest one is *reaction* with a preponderance of terms in the *quality* category. In fact, here we can find the terms assessing Rowling's statement such as *good* or *important* (e.g. you have no idea how important your voice is, or your opinion is so important). Other comments contain a more precise valuation as well-meaning or uncontroversial (e.g. a simple well-meaning statement, or there are uncontroversial statements). As concerns composition, this is almost an irrelevant domain, as it is made only of 5 expressions, and the same thing is true for the category of valuation in which has mainly been judged the importance of Rowling's voice and courage, defined as priceless and incredible.

#### 3.3 Analysis of the rhetorical language in anti-Columbus posts

In this section I will conduct the same analysis as I conducted on the Rowling corpus, on that of Christopher Columbus. This corpus, too, is made up of five hundred posts divided into two further corpora: one with posts in favour of Columbus and the other one with the posts against him and which, more specifically, call for the demolition of his symbols.

#### 3.1 Quantitative analysis

As I did for the Rowling posts, I first conducted a quantitative analysis on the anti-Columbus corpus by applying the Appraisal Theory using the software AntConc. The results have been organized in a table reported in the next section.

<sup>42</sup> https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Tra&page=2

# 3.3.2 Attitudinal patterns

Table 3: Attitudinal pattern in anti-Columbus posts

AFFECT	Positive	Negative
Total (166)		
UN/HAPPINESS	Total (15)	Total (11)
Total (26)	Happy (8)	Harm (3)
	Love (4)	Hurt (2)
	Glad (2)	Suffer (1)
	Thankful (1)	Love (1) (irony)
		Happy (1) (irony)
		Offended (2)
		Upset (1)
		Ashamed (1)
IN/SECURITY	Total (25)	Total (107)
Total (132)	Recognized (8)	Genocide (15)
	Cancelling (5)	Disease (8)
	Freedom (2)	Tear down (8)
	Cancelled (2)	White (8)
	Defend (2)	Hitler (6)
	Surprised (1)	Enslaved (6)
	Together (1)	Pull down (5)
	Benefit (1)	Raping (5)
	Brothers and	Genocidal (5)
	sisters (1)	Stole (4)
	Free (1)	Stolen (3)
	Fellow (1)	Murdered (3)
		Murdering (3)
		Destroy (3)
		Violence (2)

		War (2)
		Murder (2)
		Despised (2)
		Enslavement (2)
		Oppression (2)
		Raped (2)
		Abuser (1)
		Abusing (1)
		Appeased (1)
		Colonization (1)
		Enslaving (1)
		Exploitation (1)
		Feared (1)
		Murderous (1)
		Slaughtering (1)
		Slaughtering (1)
		Stealing (1)
DIS/SATISFACTION	Total (7)	Total (1)
Total (8)	Care (6)	Surprised (1)
	Interested (1)	
JUDGEMENT	Positive	Negative
Total (126)		_
SOCIAL ESTEEM		
Total (37)		
()		
Normality	Total (3)	Total (7)
Total (10)	Lucky (2)	Odd (2)
	Luck (1)	Stupid (2)
		Crazy (1)
		Ill-fated (1)

		Problematic (1)
Capacity	Total (1)	Total (22)
Total (23)	Awesome (1)	Learn (8)
		Great (6) (irony)
		Learned (4)
		Educate (2)
		Genius (1) (irony)
		Educating (1)
Tenacity	Total (1)	Total (3)
Total (4)	Courageous (1)	Brave (1)
		Honorable (1)
		Vile (1)
SOCIAL SANCTION		
Total (89)		
Propriety	Total (6)	Total (50)
Total (56)	Innocents (2) (others)	Bad (6)
	Courage (2) (others)	Murderer (5)
	Courageous (2) (others)	Terrible (5)
		Rapist (4)
		Brutal (3)
		Colonizer (3)
		Disgusting (3)
		Brutality (2)
		Paedophile (2)
		Cruelty (2)
		Treachery (2)

		Heinous (2)
		Abuser (1)
		Cowardice (1)
		Criminal (1)
		Cruel (1)
		Heartless (1)
		Inhumane (1)
		Insecurity (1)
		Idiot (1)
		Mean (1)
		Trash (1)
		Treacherous (1)
Veracity Total (33)	Total (27)	Total (6)
	Truth (14)	False (3) (others)
	True (5)	Lie (2) (others)
	Right (5)	Joke (1) (others)
	Correct (3)	

APPRECIATION	Positive	Negative
Total (59)		
REACTION		
Total (59)		
Impact	Total (12)	Total (0)
Total (12)	Nice (3)	
	Well done (3)	
	Welcome (2)	
	Finally (2)	
	Bravo (2)	

Quality	Total (44)	Total (3)
Total (47)		
	Good (22)	Ugly (2)
	Great (11)	No accurate (1)
	Accurate (3)	(other)
	Ok (2)	
	Fine (2)	
	Okay (1)	
	Beautiful (1)	
	Food for thoughts (1)	
	Conscious thoughts (1)	
COMPOSITION		
Total (0)		
Balance	Total (0)	Total (0)
Complexity	Total (0)	Total (0)
VALUATION	Total (0)	Total (0)
Total (0)		

## 3.3.3 Qualitative analysis

In this section I will conduct a qualitative analysis of the corpus on the basis of the results of attitude, with the aim of detecting the rhetorical expressions used by the various authors and the intensions hidden behind them. First of all, the category of *affect* prevails over *judgement* and *appreciation*, with a total of 166 expressions, further divided into: 26 expressions for *un/happiness*, 132 for *in/security*, and 8 concerning *dis/satisfaction*. As far as *un/happiness* is concerned, the most common positive expression is *happy*, which is used to refer to Indigenous people as a wish for a happy holiday, as in *happy Indigenous day to you sir! Happy indigenous peoples day to all (the word <i>glad* is used with the same meaning). *Glad the Native Americans are finally getting their recognition*), sometimes

used in a sarcastic way, such as happy Columbus got lost day! which clearly encompasses the author's opinion concerning Columbus and his historical irrelevance (see, for example, the concepts of irony and sarcasm in Cicero's De Inventione). Along with the term *happy*, another frequently used word is *love*, which is also used in a sarcastic way in some comments, such as: I always love celebrating a guy who never made it to what would become the U.S. referring to the fact that Christopher Columbus actually landed on the Caribbean islands rather than in North America, which is one of the most widespread arguments in favour of the cancellation of Columbus' memory, and which has brought to define him as a foreigner. In other posts, love is used to express support for Natives, especially when writers show love for establishing a holiday in their honour, (e.g. love remembering our native Americans, I love that the city of Philadelphia has chosen to celebrate this day as Indigenous Peoples Day!). Once again, in other posts, the objects of love are the demolished Columbus statues in various cities. Therefore, the authors share the idea of the destruction of all the symbols connected to the explorer, such as in: I love it when we watched American troops pull down an equally disgusting statue of a person in Iraq with a tank. Saddam, concluding with an explicit request for American troops to do the same with Columbus statues. Thus, in this case, this verb is related to quite a strong image in readers' memory, since the toppling of the Hussein statue in Baghdad, which occurred in 2003, received global media coverage and it was the symbol of the end of Hussein's rule in the country, thus the end of an epoch. The parallelism between Columbus and Hussein is therefore extremely loaded with meaning, given that the Western world does not have a good opinion of Hussein, as he is considered a dictator (here, for example, we can refer to the types of argumentation proposed by Aristotle in the Rhetoric, and in particular those arguments that realize persuasion by predisposing the listener in a certain way).

Negative expressions are mostly used to display the feelings of native people caused by the presence of Columbus symbols, such as the term *harm* in: *it harms people*, or to refer to his actions towards this community in: *he manifested incredible harm to the indigenous people of the Americas*. With the same intentions, the term *hurt* is used: *this statue hurts people and they can't stand the pain any longer*, along with the word *suffer (so many of them still suffer)* and *offend (some are offended by what the statue represents)*. This last term is also used as a synonym of Native people or Indigenous people: *the* 

Perpetually Offended Cult, which, focusing on the feelings of these populations, gives an idea of how much suffering and damage they have suffered throughout time, also encompassing, in my opinion, an idea of exasperation about this situation. Thus, people who chose to make positive expressions and who showed compassion and support for these "offended" people, did it as a justification for the demolition of Columbus' statues and symbols. The last thing concerning the category of un/happiness, is the feeling of shame expressed by some "white people", who, in their comments, apologized on behalf of their ancestors for the brutalities committed on Native people (e.g. I'm ashamed of my ancestors). Thus, employing different types of rhetoric, some authors decided to demonize and condemn Columbus for his atrocities, some others concentrated on Indigenous people's feelings as a legitimization of demolitions of statues, and others showed support by manifesting repentance and metaphorically assuming the weight of the ancestors' actions (see, for example, the list of feelings in Aristotle's Rhetoric and in particular his conception of shame).

The domain *in/security* has a dominant position in the category of affect with 132 total expressions characterized by a strong imbalance in favour of insecurity (107 and security 25). At the top of the most used terms list there are words which also represent the most important accusations towards Columbus: genocide (e.g. we don't celebrate genocide, 4 centuries marked by genocidal acts, he perpetrated genocide, genocide=Columbus, this man committed genocide, he is responsible for the genocide of Native Americans, Columbus led the enslavement and genocide of the Taino people, people and instruments of genocide shouldn't be celebrated or it had a history of genocidal violence) or disease (others succumbed to diseases, entire communities here were affected by his diseases, most of the Natives of North America died from disease or he brought tons of diseases that killed the majority of Indians). The words chosen to describe Columbus and his actions are strongly rhetorical, since they recall concepts and actions that are strongly condemned and rejected in advanced societies (see, for example, Campbell and the importance of reason). What is more, the concept of genocide is closely associated with the images and memories connected to the extermination camps and the holocaust, actually recalling the darkness into which society can fall when one population claims to prevail over another. In this case, the prevailing population is the "white" one, as shown in many posts such as: the genocide committed by Europeans and white

Americans, the history told by a white teacher, the logic that many white men actually use to cope with being a descendent of murderers, it perpetrates a false narrative to make white people feel good. Therefore, the appeal of these words is very symbolic and is used to move readers' feelings and create compassion towards native people, which in many posts are compared to the terms (see, for example Cicero's De Oratore, or Aristotle's Rhetoric). For instance, we can find comments such as: to celebrate Columbus Day, you might as well just celebrate Hitler Day or I'll remember this next time I'm in Germany starring at the great statue of Adolf Hitler, which is clearly ironic since there are no statues of Hitler, neither in Germany nor elsewhere (see, Cicero's De Inventione). Here, in fact, the author wants to make a parallelism through irony, which is better explained by another comment: you look at Germany and you don't see statues of Himmler, or Hitler or Goebbels. No, you see a strict legislative policy preventing that, and monuments to the victims. Thus, these authors have a clear opinion of the explorer: he was as evil as Hitler was and, since there are no symbols of Hitler anywhere, there should not any for Columbus. Thus, once more, while negative comments are focused on the figure of Columbus, the positive ones are centered on native people and their rights, by using words such as recognize and all its declinations (e.g. today we should just recognize it as being Indigenous Day, the recognition of numerous tribes of Indians or the people indigenous to the new world need to be recognized with more than just a day) or by expressing inclusivity with words as brothers and sister, we are fellows or we are a melting pot. The last domain of in/security is the one of dis/satisfaction which is formed by one negative expression, which is *surprised* used to refer to people's "ignorance" about "real history", and seven positive expressions represented by the word care used with reference to the discussion, which instead, for other people is irrelevant.

The category of judgement is equally rich with 125 total expressions, further divided into 36 expressions concerning social esteem, and 89 for social sanction. As far as social esteem is concerned, the most relevant domain is the one of *capacity*, with a total of 23 realisations. The vast majority of the comments are directed at the people who support Christopher Columbus and, in particular, these posts contain a more or less direct invitation to *educate oneself* on the true history and nature of the explorer. Thus, the most frequently used word is *to learn* (as well as *to educate*), such as: *we need to learn the TRUTH about him, today is indigenous peoples day. Use it to learn and educate yourself* 

on the real history of this land and country, or again: you need to educate yourself before you open your mouth, KEEP EDUCATING YOURSELVES! The only two words directed at Columbus among the negative expressions of capacity are used in a sarcastic way and are: genius(he was a marketing genius: an Italian that got the Spanish to pay for three trips to India, which he never found) and great (he was great! Now let's adore Hitler's statues). On the other hand, the only positive expression is awesome and it is used in a moderate post with reference to Columbus' adventures and courage, suggesting that maybe the solution does not rely in the complete destruction of all symbols but instead leaving them there and drawing a historical lesson and learning not to repeat the same mistakes. This category conceals the same idea of truth encompassed in the previous corpus: that of considering one's own knowledge and truth as THE truth, automatically labelling who holds a different one as ignorant or, in this case, as uneducated (see, for example, Plato's *Phaedrus* or the Sophists' notion of *ignorance*). The first category of judgement, normality, is not so rich (10 expressions) and the vast majority are negative realizations directed towards Columbus (e.g. odd, stupid, and crazy). Instead, with the positive expressions, the only one used is *luck* and *lucky*, with reference to Columbus' adventure and in a negative way, such as: only sheer luck saved him. The last domain is tenacity, in which only four terms can be found: brave, used in reference to the judge's decision to destroy Columbus statues' honorable, used in a negative way to refer to the perception that "normal people" have of Columbus', and lastly the term courageous, referred to Columbus' exploration (the discovery of the unknown).

The category of *social esteem* is, instead, quite rich, amounting to 89 expressions, further divided into 56 expressions for *propriety* and 33 for *veracity*. The domain of *propriety* is characterized by a clear prevalence of negative expressions and, among these, the most used ones to define Columbus are *bad* and *terrible*: *even for his time he was bad*, *he was really bad*, *put it (the statue) in a museum and name that museum "bad people of history"* or, *he made some terrible choices, Columbus was a terrible man, a terrible person*, followed by the term *murderer* which is often accompanied by other terms such as *paedophile* and *rapist*. These epithets (along with many others such as *abuser*, *criminal*, *heinous*, *inhumane* and *treacherous*) define in an unmistakable way what Columbus represents for his opponents, who opt for very semantically loaded words which recall non socially accepted behaviours (see, for example, Cicero's *De Oratore*).

Thus, simply defining him as a paedophile instils in the listener or reader a deep sense of disgust. Meanwhile, the most important positive expression is linked to the indigenous people who are given the epithet of *innocents*, indirectly recalling a sense of purity and candour, making Columbus' actions appear even more heinous (see, for example, the Sophists and their notion of *Dialectics*). The domain of *veracity* is instead made up of 33 expressions which are mostly positives and serve the purpose of confirming anti-Columbus truth: *it is a hard truth; this is not cancelling history, it is simply the truth; to teach kids the truth about Columbus; student should know the truth about him; tell the kids the truth about the colonies; finally the truth has been uncovered.* 

In these posts, reference to the children and their education is very frequent and, in some of these, it becomes an almost desperate appeal (see, for example, Plato's *Phaedrus* or Cicero's *De Oratore*): young people must be taught the truth about Christopher Columbus and Indigenous people, indirectly stating that the educational system relies on a fallacious truth, which explains history only from the point of view of the winners, i.e. the white race (e.g. *it perpetuates a false narrative to make white people feel good*). This technique, however, in order to be effective, needs to debase the other truths and sources to affirm one's own as the one and only valid and allowable. Thus, negative expressions are *false narrative, false monuments*, or the celebration of a *lie*, or again, *everything I've learnt about Columbus feels like a sick joke* (see, for example, the Sophists and the notion of *dialectics*).

The last category of attitude is *appreciation*, which, unlike in the other corpus, is quite a rich one. It has a total of 59 expressions which are all included in the category of *reaction*, since composition and valuation are void. As we have already seen, the category of reaction is further divided into *impact* and *quality*. The expressions included in the first category are all positive and represent a judgment regarding the demolition of the statues which, therefore, is approved by everyone: *nice work! Well done!* or in sentences like *I'm glad the native Americans are finally getting their recognition* and *finally they are being honoured*. Instead, in the category of *quality*, we can find terms assessing the quality of comments related to Columbus' true nature. Thus, the new truth concerning the explorer is judged as *good* by the vast majority of supporters or even *great*. Some authors define it as *food for thoughts* and even *conscious thoughts*, while the negative expressions are

just two: *ugly*, in reference to history as we know it, and *not accurate* in reference to comments of people who do not share the same view.

#### 3.4 Analysis of rhetorical and evaluative language in pro-Columbus posts

This section is devoted to the analysis of the remaining half of the corpus concerning Columbus. This part, too, is made up of 250 posts in which a positive attitude towards Columbus and what he symbolizes is expressed.

## 3.4.1 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis will be conducted as in the previous sections. Thus, the application of the principles of the Appraisal Theory to the corpus of Columbus using AntConc has provided results from the quantitative point of view, which I have subsequently reported in a table included in the next section.

#### 3.4.2 Attitudinal Patterns

Table 4: Attitudinal pattern in pro-Columbus posts

AFFECT	Positive	Negative
Total (222)		
UN/HAPPINESS	Total (32)	Total (17)
Total (49)		
	Like (13)	Sad (4)
	Happy (11)	Hurt (3)
	Love (6)	Haters (2)
	Glad (1)	Ashamed (2)
	Thankful (1)	Offended (2)
		Suffered (1)
		Offend (1)
		Upset (1)
		Shame (1)

IN/SECURITY	Total (43)	Total (98)
Total (141)	White (10)	Cancel (23)
Total (141)	Western (7)	Change (17)
	Civilization (6)	Destruction (8)
	Protect (5)	Erasing (6)
	West (4)	Erase (5)
	Freedom (4)	Illegal (5)
	Together (1)	Immigrants (5)
	Benefit (1)	Eliminate (4)
	Friends (1)	Criminals (3)
	Trust (1)	(others)
	Comfortable (1)	Wipe (3)
	Advancement (1)	Replaced (3)
	Advance (1)	Rewrite (3)
		Attack (3)
		Vandalism (2)
		Replace (2)
		Replacement (1)
		Abolish (1)
		Unlawful (1)
		Vandals (1)
		Vandalized (1)
		Sanitize (1)
		,
DIS/SATISFACTION	Total (27)	Total (5)
	` /	` ,
Total (32)	Celebrate (27)	Anger (1)
		Fed up (1)
		Protest (1)
		Protestors (1)
		Interesting (1)
		Protestors (1)

JUDGEMENT	Positive	Negative
Total (163)		
SOCIAL ESTEEM		
Total (100)		
Normality	Total (0)	Total (5)
Total (5)		Crazy (3) (others)
		Predictable (1)
		Nutty (1)
Capacity	Total (40)	Total (38)
Total (78)	Great (12)	Savage (5)
	Contributions (7)	Educating (5)
	Amazing (3)	Woke (3)
	Leader (3)	Weak (3)
	Win (2)	Lost (3)
	Learned (2)	Educated (2)
	Accomplished (2)	(irony)
	Leadership (2)	Useless (2)
	Victory (1)	Idiots (2)
	Genius (1)	Moron (2)
	Bold (1)	Ignorance (2)
	Courage (1)	Dolt (1)
	Winners (1)	Hateful (1)
	Indomitable (1)	Freaky (1)
	Architect (1)	Gutless (1)
		Stupid (1)
		Defeated (1)
		Wokeism (1)

		Inferior (1) Savagery (1)
Tenacity Total (17)	Total (9) Strong (2) Determination (2) Brave (1) Heroic (1) Constant (1) Courageous (1) Perseverance (1)	Total (8) Coward (3) Weak (2) Seriously (2) (mocking) Cowardly (1)
SOCIAL SANCTION  Total (61)		
Propriety Total (40)	Total (10) Good (8) Morality (2)	Total (30) Bad (8) Pathetic (3) Brutal (2) Disgrace (2) Thugs (2) Corrupt (2) Evil (2) Guilty (1) Blame (1) Filthy (1) Shame (1) Repressive (1) History -adverse (1) Ridiculous (1)

	Weasel (1)
	Peaceful (1)
	(irony) (others)
Total (2)	Total (19)
Truth (1)	Wrong (8)
Credible (1)	Lie (3)
	Joke (2)
	False (1)
	Dishonest (1)
	Idiocy (1)
	Invalid (1)
	Ridiculous (1)
	Inaccurate (1)
	Truth (1)

APPRECIATION	Positive	Negative
Total (3)		
REACTION		
Total (3)		
Impact	Total (0)	Total (1)
Total (1)		Predictable (1)
Quality	Total (0)	Total (2)
Total (2)		Dissention-causing
		(1)
		Wonderful (1)
COMPOSITION		
Total (0)		
Balance	Total (0)	Total (0)

Complexity	Total (0)	Total (0)
VALUATION	Total (0)	Total (0)
Total (0)		

# 3.4.3 Qualitative analysis

As for the previous corpus, the results of the quantitative analysis will now be observed and interpreted from a qualitative point of view, in order to understand the rhetoric used by the various authors of the posts either to influence and persuade others or to express support for Columbus. Among the three sub-systems of Attitude, the most prosperous one is undoubtedly that of Affect with a total of 415 expressions. The domain of un/happiness has 49 expressions further divided into 32 positive and 17 negative ones. Among the positive ones, the terms *like* and *happy* are the most frequently used ones to show support for Columbus and declare the authors' position. In particular, these are mainly placed at the end of sentences in which the initial part provides reasons to support Columbus, such as: Christopher Columbus displayed courage, determination, and perseverance when he sailed the ocean blue more than 500 years ago. Happy Columbus Day! Or We came and we conquered. That is the way if the world. We are victors! Happy Columbus Day. Or again: is Columbus Day still celebrated? I definitely like it! or Columbus Day is an important holiday for Italians in America, and I like to celebrate it! Thus, in these cases, the wish happy Columbus Day, or the expression I like it point out a definitive position in favour of the explorer, a position which is almost unquestionable. Another frequently employed term is *love*, which, however, is mainly used in an ironic and sarcastic way, such as: Italians and Italian Americans must love that idea...f\*ck LA City Council! Or I love to see the past being erased (2) (see, for example, Cicero's De Inventione). Therefore, in both cases, the term is used to convey exactly the opposite idea: Italians, for whom Columbus represents a symbol, will not be happy with the news of the demolition of the statue, while the author of the last comment definitely does not approve of the demolition and the general cancellation of the memory of Columbus.

Since irony is a tool which can be used to express a great range of different emotions, as Cicero demonstrated in *De Inventione*, in these cases the ironic comments emphasize their aversion, disappointment, and the emoji employed in particular underline the sense of sadness embedded in irony. Among negative emotions, the most frequently expressed one is *sadness*. Sometimes it is embedded in simple expressions (e.g. *really sad!*) and some others it is accompanied by explanations of the feeling (e.g. *so so bad! History is what makes us smarter* or *so sad people are ruining our statues and history!! I wish there was a way to stop that crazy stuff*) and, in other cases again, it is transmitted through irony (e.g. *you ready to burn books? Should we go and blow up every castle art piece in Europe, Egypt? Holocaust museums sites let's burn those also! Nutjob!*). In these cases, too, the feeling of sadness is presented either as a simple and natural reaction to the news of the demolition of the statues, or it is linked to a sense of loss of history which, in some cases, is considered a teacher or, at least, a source of teachings and progress, since *it makes us smarter* (see, for example, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*).

In the last example, the feeling of sadness is embedded through irony and this irony transmits the frustration and anger experienced by the author who, seized by the desperation of destruction, uses irony to take the consequences of this cancellation to the extreme, actually painting a borderline scenario that brings with it a sense of anguish. With similar functions, the term *hurt(s)* is employed. Thus, this feeling of sorrow (referred to others) is conveyed through irony (e.g. Good thing there aren't any statues of me that I'm aware of. If I got cancelled, someone could get seriously hurt! I've fallen on countless infants and toddlers, so I can only imagine the damage a bronze version of me could do...) and in this particular case, the opinion of the author is unabashed: he does not believe that a statue can cause (emotional) harm to anyone but, he expresses this idea by dismissing and ridiculing others' feelings, underlining how a statue cannot actually harm anyone (see, for example, Campbell). In another case, the term *hurt* is used in reference to the future: this based reimagining of the past only hurts our future. In this case, a sort of warning is expressed about what the historic cancellation of Columbus could lead to, actually appealing to the feeling of anxiety and fears of people concerning the future (see, for example, Aristotle's notion of *pathos*).

Another common word is to hate with all its declinations. It is used in connection to a desire (e.g. wish our coward mayor would have guts and stand up to Columbus

haters) and in particular to categorize all the people who are against Columbus and who are labelled as haters, without distinction. It is used with the same purpose, that of categorizing people, also in another sentence: let's not forget the Indians were warriors who themselves fought for resources and power and wore human scalps and teeth as trophies.... Although, some self-hating Americans like to romanticize their culture. In this case, the term *self-hating* is used to refer to all the Americans who support the cancellation of Columbus in favour of the indigenous people who, however, as the author of the post points out, also committed atrocities. Therefore, the author thinks that those against Columbus are actually self-hating and destroying their culture by romanticising it. In another comment, again, we can read a sort of explanation given by the author for all the destruction: so many people hate Italians that's why they hate Columbus Day. Jealous to the point of criminal action. Very disturbed haters of the human race. real bad people who have no idea why we here in the US celebrate this day. The explanation is that Columbus is hated by people because he represents the Italian people and this, in turn, is not well seen. These group of people, labelled as haters, or better, disturbed haters, do not even know the reason why Columbus is celebrated. Thus, the author provides a very strong judgement of people against Columbus by calling them haters, since this rhetoric gives an idea of disorder, undermining the sense of security and safety of people and, furthermore, also contains the idea that haters are creating havoc out of jealousy, with ignorance concerning the importance of the figure they are destroying (see, for example, both Sophists' notion of ignorance and of eristics). We can find the same sense of scaremongering in another comment: Stop to put more hate in people's heart!! We have enough now. The choice of the word hate in this sentence is very emblematic, since it conveys the strong sense of instability and exasperation felt by the author (see, for example, Aristotle's notion of *ethos*). In fact, the implied idea is that these social battles only increase divisions and instil hatred in people. Finally, the term offended, in particular, is used in a comment to make an appeal to all Italian Americans: that of boycotting Los Angeles (the city of Los Angeles observes Indigenous Peoples Day instead of Columbus Day since 2017). As an Italian American, I am deeply offended by this. I call on all Italian Americans to boycott LA. Thus, by exposing his feeling of offense (being an Italian), he appeals to the other Italians who, as such, feel the same emotion. In this case, the rhetoric used is thus explicit (see, for example, Aristotle's *pathos*).

The second domain of Affect, in/security, is the richest one. The most frequently used term among the positive ones is white. It clearly refers to white people and it has been located among the positive ones, since it is mainly used by authors to instil a sense of security, and, of course, this sense of security is generated by the contraposition with the Indigenous people, according to this vision of world distinction, not white (see, for example, the Sophists' notion od dialectics). For instance: so, the Indians have a day. When do white folks get a day or a month? White Europeans immigrants are the ones responsible for all the freedom we have. Everywhere else in the world there has been chaos. White people founded America and it became the greatest nation ever. Here, the rhetoric of white supremacism shows all its irreverence and is used to mock indigenous people' requests. The choice of the term freedom linked to the white European immigrants is loaded with meaning, and it is made even more evocative by the following sentence which hides the ill-concealed parallelism: white people equals freedom/order on the one hand, and as a logical consequence, non-white people equals chaos, thus, it is thanks to white people if America is the greatest nation ever (see, for example, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* the types of arguments).

The same kind of rhetoric can be found in other sentences such as: They want to rid history of white males. You know, the guys responsible for all the great stuff the illegal immigrants want a piece of. In this case, the type of rhetoric used is a supremacist one, with, however, a nuance of victimhood. In fact, the author of this comment conveys an idea of danger and the thing in danger is the history of white males, who are defined as the guys responsible for all the great stuff, thus providing a very unabashed idea of whom has the merits of progress. This aspect of victimhood is heightened in one comment in particular: Ahhh go old anti-White racism hard at work erasing history. The whole situation is conceived by the author as an attack on white people by anti-white racism. The choice of the term racism is again very symbolic, since it includes the idea of hate and intolerance, two characteristics that are the opposite of safety and harmony (see, for example, Aristotle or Cicero). Other common terms are Western and civilization, which are sometimes used together and other times alone. The former is usually used with irony, such as: Gotta perpetuate that "noble savage" mythos and the lie that Western Civilization is the source of all evil. The message the author here wants to give is the opposite, i.e. the destruction of the symbols related to Columbus, who in this case is

represented by western civilization, perpetuates both false ideas concerning savages and their behaviours which were not noble at all, and the one that Columbus (and the western civilization represented by him) was nothing but evil. Therefore, the rhetoric of this comment resides in denouncing the danger that this movement entails for Western values (see, for example, Campbell). The term civilization, on the other hand, is used as a synonym of security, safety, stability, etc, as, for example, I'm grateful for the civilization brought to the world by Europeans. I don't want to live in a hut with a dirt floor. The meaning given to the word civilization by the author becomes clear in the description of its opposite: the hat with a dirty floor. The desolation of this description clearly gives an idea of everything that is not civilization and, at the same time, the rhetoric of the message is also hidden in the danger that the cancellation of Columbus (and of civilization) brings: a miserable life (or at least a miserable life for those who are used to living in Western comforts).

As far as negative expressions are concerned, the most frequently used term is cancel (frequently associated with culture), sometimes used to indicate that the cancellation of Columbus stands for the cancellation of something bigger than an historical figure, as for example: cancelling Columbus Day is just an attack on all European-American Heritage. In other comments, the expression cancel culture is treated almost as a physical entity which metaphorically represents all the people who do not want to celebrate Columbus (see, for example, the notion of metaphor in Aristotle). The identification of these people with the general term cancel culture uses a rhetoric that tends, first of all, towards the anonymity and the expropriation of people's identities, eliminating the possible nuances within the movement itself. Secondly, in this case, the expression cancel culture is employed in a pejorative way, almost indicating a movement that has as its sole purpose the unconditional destruction of everything it considers inappropriate, for example: this #CancelCulture is out of hand along with the destruction of monuments, defunding police and rioting. I don't recognize our country anymore, or we need BALANCE, not #CancelCulture (which implies that cancel culture is the opposite of balance, thus, chaos), or again how long until #CancelCulture deletes MORE #AmericanHistory?, The #CancelCulture has stolen my #Italian American celebration on #ColumbusDay, So the #CancelCulture is now attacking Italians again in America!!.

Other common terms associated with the activity of cancel culture are *destruction*, to erase, to eliminate, to wipe, to rewrite, to vandalize, and to sanitize. These are all used to describe the actions of anti-Columbus people and are used with words such as: history, monuments, and past. The last domain of attitude, dis/satisfaction, is not so rich. In particular, there is only one positive expression, to celebrate, which is used to convince others precisely to celebrate Columbus and Columbus Day, or, in other cases, it is used to confirm the fact that the author will continue to celebrate him, and in other comments again, it is used to underline the fact that he deserves to be celebrated for the progress he represents. Negative expressions, on the other hand, are very few and, for the most part, they indicate the feelings expressed by people regarding the statues and their vandalization.

The second category of attitude, *judgement*, is divided into *social esteem* and *social sanction*. *Social esteem* is the richest category, with a total of 110 expressions. As far as *normality* is concerned, there are no positive realizations. Whereas, concerning negative expressions, we can find the term *crazy* referring both to the ones who are against Columbus and destroy his statues, and to the actions implemented by the opponents which, according to one of the authors, will ensure that these years will be remembered as "the crazy years". Another negative term used in reference to Los Angeles and the decision made to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day, is *nutty: I was trying to figure that out. Los Angeles have finally done it. Gone completely nutty*.

The category of *capacity* is the richest among the subdomains of *judgement*. With a total of 78 expressions, it is further divided into 40 positives and 38 negatives. Among the most used words there is the term *great*, used in comments to describe Columbus' figure and gestures (e.g. *Christopher Columbus was a great great world explorer!!!* Or *if* it wasn't for this this great man this country would still be in the Stone Age or, again, Columbus was a Great Man & deserves to be honoured). Another often used word is contributions, which has a positive meaning and is linked to the *significant contributions* (of Columbus) to the entire world.

According to one author, Columbus is a man of entrepreneurial genius, a marine without rival, a leader of indomitable spirit and the architect of the modern world. Columbus is also admired for his courage, determination, perseverance and bold spirit

of exploration (see, for example, Aristotle's deliberative rhetoric). The positivity of the adjectives and expressions associated with Columbus is at odds with the harshness of the words used for the Indigenous people. The most common word is savage (along with the plural form savages and the correspondent noun savagery), used both to express a simple and concise judgement of the people who toppled the statues, and to describe and more or less explicitly to judge the actions committed by indigenous people in an attempt to justify Columbus' actions by explaining that the indigenous people have carried out the same "savage" actions of which Columbus is accused (see, for example, Campbell). In many posts, the authors underlined that the myth of the *noble savage*, according to which the true nature of man was originally good, but then society and progress have corrupted this goodness, is, precisely, a myth and a lie. Other authors wrote that they are telling us Columbus was a ruthless killer but never say a word about the savagery perpetuated by Native Americans and we can talk about the savages that killed black & white women & children and put their scalps on their war stick another day. Hence, here the attempt to make Columbus' actions appear less brutal is unabashed, by claiming that the natives have done worse. Another very used word is woke (and wokeism), which is a pejorative term, in this case used to refer to the people who are against Columbus. For instance: It amazes me how suddenly, all the woke became experts on Columbus or quit #ErasingThePast just because you don't like it. ISIS did the same thing. This #woke #CancelCulture movement is no different, or, again, we must never allow the neo-Marxist #woke left to #cancel our history. The first sentence is clearly ironic and it mocks the fact that suddenly everyone has become expert on Columbus, which is clearly not possible, but, most important, is that those referred to as "experts on Columbus" are defined as the woke, a term which itself indicates the author's negative conception of the people he is writing about. However, the comparison contained in the second sentence between cancel culture and ISIS is symbolic and clearly negative (see, for example, the Sophists or Cicero). This association refers to images of violence and devastation which is exactly how the world conceives ISIS. Other frequently used terms refer to the people who destroyed the statues or who, in general, are on the side of the natives are idiots (e.g. the Los Angeles city council are a bunch of idiots), dolt (e.g. you old dolt), stupid (e.g. Yet another stupid/useless thing to come from the LACC), gutless (e.g. This weak weasel, gutless anti American) and moron (e.g. you are truly a moron who has no conception of reality!). In the last sub domain of judgement, we can find terms describing and defining Columbus' tenacity (among the positive expressions), such as his determination, perseverance, his brave journey and courageous and heroic gestures. Whereas, politicians who do not react to these violent actions are defined as cowards.

The last domain of judgement is social sanction, which is further divided into propriety and veracity. As far as propriety is concerned, the negative expressions are the most numerous ones and are all directed to other people who are judged as pathetic, such as the mayor, who is considered pathetic because of the abolition of Columbus' Day which, according to the author, will not solve the problem of racism; or today's pathetic Western society which, in the author's opinion, wants to celebrate the losers; or again, pathetic is the situation of many Italians who have (already) faced massive racism. Seeing that in Collins' dictionary it can be read that "if you describe someone or something as pathetic, you mean that they make you feel impatient or angry, often because they are weak or not very good"<sup>43</sup>, it is clear what is the feeling that the authors of these comments wanted to express: the feeling of weakness and inability associated with the mayor, the feeling of anger towards society which, in the author's opinion, pursues the "all cultures are equal" nonsense, and lastly, the feeling of anger and disappointment by those who have already suffered a lot. The last comment is the most rhetorical one since its author appeals to a personal family background, and the same technique can be observed with another term, brutal, used by an author who comes from an indigenous family, to describe the nature of the actions committed by her family to other Native Americans, as to counterbalance Columbus' brutality accusations (see, for example, Aristotle's arguments that achieve persuasion thanks to the speaker's character). Another loaded with meaning term used in the corpus is *corrupt*, a word that encompasses dishonesty and which is used either with reference to Latin American governments to which, according to the author, the city of Los Angeles looks more and more like, and with reference to history which is being corrupted by Cancel Culture. Therefore, in both cases, there is a sense of wrong and amorality linked to this movement. The positive term good and the negative bad can be found many times throughout the corpus and they are used by authors as a balance, i.e. taking into account, thus, not denying, that Columbus did bad actions but, at the same

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup>https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pathetic#:~:text=annoying%20If%20you%20desc ribe%20someone,weak%20or%20not%20very%20good.

time, not denying either the positive ones. For instance, this symbol was a reminder of good and bad actions done in the past. If we are going to put to the torch everything in the past that is not representative of today's values that we would have to tear down nearly all statues and monuments of the past; all of our history good and bad has helped to make us who we are today; History whether good or bad contributed to what we have now. The aim of these posts is a diplomatic one, given that they contemplate both the strengths and the defects of Columbus, suggesting, however, that history is made of precisely this, good and bad, and to deny this means to cancel part of history (see, for example, Plato).

The last domain of judgement is *veracity*, which, as expected, is mainly made up of negative expressions. *Wrong* is the most used word in reference to the destruction of statues or the abolition of Columbus' day in general: *history is history*. *Tired of having a few individuals deny world history*. *So wrong!* In this case, the word is used to convey a sense of exasperation and, meanwhile, to underline the wrongness of the situation. In another sentence, it is used with the same meaning: *this is wrong! Keep Columbus Day and stop pandering to the radicals!* while it is used with irony in another one: *What's wrong with our government allowing these things to happen?* As concerns the change of Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day, it is defined as a *bad joke, intellectually dishonest, total idiocy*, and even *ridiculous*. Thus, all these expressions convey a sense of insincerity, even of absurdity.

The last category of attitude is *appreciation*, which is further divided into *reaction*, *composition* and *valuation*, and it is the least rich category, with a total of 3 expressions. The first expression is a negative one and is included in the sub domain of reaction, *impact*, and the term is *predictable*, which is used with reference to the Cancel Culture movement in general as, according to the author, it was foreseeable that even Christopher Columbus would become an object of investigation. The other two expressions are negatives as well, but this time these are included in the sub domain of *quality*. In fact, the author of a comment thinks that this discussion concerning Columbus is *dissension-causing* since it provokes intolerance. The other term, *wonderful*, is used ironically, thus, meaning the exact opposite.

## 3.5 Comparison of the corpora

# 3.5.1 Comparing Rowling's corpora

The comparison between the two corpora, made up of comments in favour of or against J.K. Rowling and her positions concerning the transgender community, allows us to observe the kind of rhetorical strategies and techniques supporters and detractors use to persuade others.

The first category of attitude, affect, has a very similar number of expressions in both corpora (227 pro and 225 against). Positive expressions that fall into the category of un/happiness of her supporters relate to very explicit feelings such as love or like, which are used to express support and share Rowling's opinion. This support is even more emphasised by the feelings of hate conveyed by negative expressions directed at those who are trying to cancel her, together with invitations not to be disheartened by the hatred that is growing around her. Among Rowling's supporters there are also people who support her, even though they were not fans of her books previously, because they see in her a sufficiently charismatic and courageous figure to defend the position and identity of the woman, who, here, is perceived as threatened by the transgender community. Therefore, in many comments, a feeling of *pride* and *gratitude* appears. Whereas, those who are against Rowling feel hate for her and this feeling of hate, in many cases, is the antithesis of the feeling they felt before, that is, inspiration and admiration for her works and figure. Therefore, we could say that this is an even more vivid and strong feeling as it has resulted from disappointment. Many authors feel sadness both for Rowling's opinion and for the transgender community, as it is still considered a fragile category, which is already a victim of discrimination.

As far as *in/security* is concerned, Rowling's supporters express their sense of security provided by the fact that such a famous person is fighting for the female cause, and they do it by thanking her *for still standing for women's rights in the face of this madness*, or *for your courage in standing up for what is right*, and for this she is defined an *ally*. By explicitly supporting Rowling, her supporters convey a feeling of security to anyone who is a cisgender woman and perceives her identity as threatened by the transgender community (or any other community). This security is provided by the fact that such a famous and important person has the possibility of giving voice to the thoughts of these people. This type of security, based precisely on the fact that the movement is

backed by Rowling, relies on what is called an appeal to authority which consists in considering something as true because it is supported by a famous person. Negative expressions formulated by supporters, on the other hand, focus on the attempts to cancel the writer, criticizing the attacks, the attempts of censorship and silence, appealing to freedom of speech and expression. Therefore, many supporters use a rhetorical strategy called argumentum ad metum (appeal to fear) and the fear to which they appeal is that of the denial of free speech. Indeed, this technique relies on the fact that thoughts that provoke fear can lead an individual to consider the situation worse than it actually is, thus, in fact overestimating the danger. And the argumentum ad metum is one of the most frequently used techniques by those who are against the cancel culture movement in general. Meanwhile, some authors provide their own definition both of transsexual people who undergo surgery and of the surgery itself, defining them as dehumanized and dehumanization. The deprivation of humanity associated with these figures (and the process) transmits a totally negative feeling, almost of disgust and fear, which as a consequence could lead to an increase in support for Rowling and her position of safeguarding women. At the same time, we can consider this strategy as the application of the argumentum ad hominem, since it is not words but the people themselves to be criticized. This fallacy (see Aristotle's Rhetoric), argumentum ad hominem, is almost constant in Rowling's corpus, that is, there is a fairly widespread tendency to shift the focus of the criticism from the sentence at hand to the person who uttered that sentence, or, as in this case, to transgender people in general. Moreover, here, another tactic can be observed called *appeal to nature* which relies on the fallacy according to which something can be considered good because it is natural (such as, in this case, detractors lean on the fact that, in their opinion, the sex reassignment surgery is not natural, meaning not good, and in fact they define this process as *dehumanization*). Rowling's detractors, on the other hand, focus on freedom as well, but that of transgender people, supporting their rights and the freedom of expression of their identity, affirming that they are not a threat to anyone. Furthermore, many authors point out that transgender people have already been victims of threats many times and continue to be repeatedly threatened. Actually, it can be said that Rowling's detractors apply the technique of argumentum ad misericordiam, i.e. by specifying that they do not represent a threat and that they have suffered a lot, these authors appeal to readers' sense of pity. This appeal to pity is even more clear in the

negative expressions made by detractors. As a matter of fact, they use words such as *violence* in reference both to the violence experienced by the transgender community and Rowling's verbal violence. In fact, many comments contain a negative judgement concerning Rowling's choice to use her power to express violence. Other recurrent expressions used to lean on pity are *marginalized*, *discrimination*, *exclusion*, *demonization* and *not safety*.

As far as *dis/satisfaction* expressed by supporters is concerned, this is almost absent. On the other hand, we can detect the *interest* of some authors, who are against Rowling, towards the discussion at hand and the rights of the transgender community in general.

The second category of attitude is *judgement* and, from the comparison of the two corpora, a difference between the two sub domains can be observed: the category of social esteem is richer in the pro-Rowling corpus, while the quantity of expressions embedded in the anti-Rowling corpus in the category of social sanction is higher. In particular, the sub-category of *normality* in the pro-Rowling corpus expresses support for the writer by thanking her for speaking common sense or for defending common sense. This way of thinking hides a fallacy which is the appeal to common sense fallacy. This fallacy happens when something is considered true just because it is common sense or obvious. Thus, this technique can be very persuasive since it relies on a feeling of fear of change experienced by many people and taking refuge in the common-sense means finding shelter from insecurity and, above all, finding support. Almost as if to confirm the truth contained in the common sense, the totality of supporters' negative expressions are epithets for those who do not share their opinion. As a matter of fact, Rowling's detractors are depicted as crazy, mad, nuts, insane, troubled and weird. All these terms, which are clearly the antithesis of what is normal, common and sane, reinforce the logic of social inertia inherent in supporters. On the other hand, also detractors use the word common, but in reference to Rowling, meaning that being an ordinary person, Rowling too can make mistakes, clearly asserting that what she affirmed is an error. To the contrary, positive expressions by detractors imply both the use of the argumentum ad hominem and the juxtaposition. The comments focus on her mind: authors wonder why such a beautiful mind can at the same time be so *closed*, and the backwardness of thought is even more accentuated by the contrast with the adjective beautiful. A sentence structured in this way,

suggests that previously there was a certain admiration for the author's works, and it is precisely because of this previous admiration that many people are torn between the love for Rowling's works and the disappointment caused by her sentence.

As far as *capacity* is concerned, Rowling's supporters underline her *courage*, fearlessness and strength in expressing the opinion of many people, define her as a model for courage, dignity and sense and a model to all women. These expressions make great use of the writer's authority and fame, whose words are considered true, to exercise persuasion, therefore relying on the appeal to authority once again. Whereas, among the negative expressions used by supporters, we can find the term *misogyny*. Since the term indicates a person who hates women, the accusations of misogyny addressed to Rowling's detractors are very strong accusations. In fact, these accusations implicitly affect women, undermining their sense of security and suggesting that anyone who does not agree with them is actually misogynist, as, for example, we can read in a sentence: and the misogynists hate the truth or the misogyny of the woked up minority. Furthermore, the term woke, being a recurrent expression used by detractors of the cancel culture in general, can be found even in these comments, such as: this cult of woke bullshit erases women, or the aggressive woke crowd. Moreover, the term woke, which is already negative in itself, is often accompanied by other expressions which aggravate it even more and underline the sense of erroneousness of this movement and the damage it potentially could cause. In fact, it is accompanied by words such as crowd, herd, mafia, circus, which are words that first of all establish a semantic distance between the speaker and the rest, which, being defined as *circus*, *herd* or *mafia*, the single individual who composes it has no identity. Another frequently used way to persuade readers of the inconsistency of the detractors' thesis is to define them as immature, illiterate or uneducated.

Those who are against Rowling, on the other hand, recognize her merits and abilities, but with the sole purpose of reproaching her for the fact that such influence was used to discriminate. In fact, many commenters accuse her of closed mindedness and ignorance. In both cases, these mutual accusations of ignorance appeal to a rhetoric that we can define as *exclusionary* because the goal is precisely to make people feel excluded if they do not share the same idea.

The last subcategory of judgement is *tenacity* and it is very scarce, in particular as concerns the expressions in anti-Rowling corpora, whereas, her supporters underline her abilities and qualities.

The second category of judgement is *social sanction*, and here we can observe a prevalence of expressions in anti-Rowling corpora, which, however, are all negatives. As far as *veracity* is concerned, Rowling's supporters affirm the *irrefusable truth* of her words, and in particular, they use a rhetorical tactic called *appeal to nature* according to which something is considered good or true because it is natural (and the contrary). Thus, those who share Rowling's opinion, obviously not considering transsexuality as a natural fact, consider *true* the association: person who menstruates=woman because it is considered *natural*. On the other hand, Rowling's detractors use the rhetorical fallacy of the *appeal to ridicule* by presenting opponents' arguments as *absurd*, *illogical*, *baseless and unfounded*. This technique makes the person or object (in this case Rowling's statement) appear foolish and contrary to common sense in the eyes of the reader, and as a result, s/he or it loses credibility.

The most consistent part concerning *propriety* is negative expressions in anti-Rowling corpora. In fact, while Rowling's supporters accuse those who do not share their same opinion as misogynists, Rowling's detractors accuse her and her followers of being *transphobic*, also in this case resorting to the technique of *argumentum ad hominem* and judging the author herself rather than her words. She is also called a *TERF* (*trans exclusionary radical feminist*), which is a pejorative term which underlines the non-inclusive nature of Rowling. Once again, these accusations appeal to people's sense of pity, especially if the people in question (i.e. transgender people) are portrayed as victims who have suffered and struggled a lot to assert their identity, thus using the *argumentum ad misericordiam*.

The last category of attitude is *appreciation*, which is divided into *reaction*, *impact* and valuation, but, the last two sub-categories do not contain any expressions. Whereas, as far as *reaction* is concerned, the vast majority of expressions are negative and included in anti-Rowling corpora. Here the reactions of Rowling's detractors are very vivid. Transgender people who answered to her post had reactions of *surprise* and all of them felt both *offended* and *insulted* by her words. Others expressed *dismay*, and others again affirmed to be *worried* about the hatred and intolerance towards the transgender

community and the *disastrous* consequences this could lead to, and this is called *parade* of horribles, which is a rhetorical device consisting in arguing against something by referring to the undesirable events that could result from it. As far as *quality* is concerned Rowling's supporters highlight the *importance*, well-meaning, rationality and logic of her statement, while her opponents define it with a series of negative adjectives as disgusting, revolting, unbearable, repulsive.

## 3.5.2 Comparing Columbus corpora

This section is dedicated to the comparison of the corpora concerning Columbus (pro-Columbus and anti-Columbus) in order to observe the differences and similarities in the rhetorical strategies and expressions used by various authors. Thanks to both the quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted in the previous sections, and thanks to the results it produced with respect to the three domains of *attitude*, I now have all the necessary data for a complete and detailed comparison.

In particular, with respect to the category of *Affect*, a difference in the number of realizations can be observed in favour of Columbus, which, however, is not very marked (222 pro and 166 against). More precisely, in the category of *un/happiness*, those who are in favour of Columbus use far more positive expressions than the ones who are against him by using the hashtag #HappyColumbusDay to remark their position accompanied by feelings of gratitude for the progress he brought to the world. As far as negative expressions are concerned, those in favour of Columbus express a mixture of feelings ranging from sadness to anger about the destruction of the statues, both as a representation of Columbus and everything he symbolises, and, in more general terms, as the destruction of history. In this case, it can be observed what is called *chronological snobbery*: a fallacy that relies on the belief that the thinking, art, or science of the past is inferior to that of the present "simply by virtue of its temporal priority or the belief that since civilization has advanced in certain areas, people of earlier periods were less intelligent". On the other hand, those against Columbus focus their attention on the feelings of the Indigenous people, on their pain and suffering which were caused by Columbus' arrival, thus applying the rhetorical tactic of argumentum ad misericordiam. Therefore, in both cases, the type of rhetoric used is aimed at creating empathy: on the one hand, supporters of

.

<sup>44</sup> https://www.theodysseyonline.com/chronological-snobbery

Columbus appeal to the importance of history and the damage that its rewriting could cause, while on the other hand, Columbus' detractors appeal to the feelings of the people who were sacrificed for the progress symbolized by Columbus. This technique of rhetorical empathy is an ancient one which can be found in a famous book, "Rhetoric" by Aristotle, who identified *pathos* as one of the three rhetorical techniques. An interesting aspect, yet, that stands out among Columbus' detractors is the fact that some of them try to evoke empathy in others by expressing closeness to the Indigenous people and taking the blame for the actions of their ancestors, even expressing apologies and feelings of repentance.

As far as *in/security* is concerned, the expressions of those in favour of Columbus which are linked to security have the purpose of justifying and legitimizing the figure of Columbus and to do so they appeal to everything positive and advanced that can be found in today's society, with which they associate a feeling of security and stability. Many people interpret the issue concerning Columbus as a racial issue, and for this reason, the term white (understood as the colour of the skin) is widely used, associated with progress, safety and fair living conditions. Using the technique of juxtaposition, by elevating white people and their contributions to history and progress, they belittle Indigenous people and their way of living. Thus, also in this case, Columbus' supporters resort to the fallacy of chronological snobbery to instil a sense of security: today's world is better simply because it is advanced, and it is advanced thanks to Columbus. A similar technique is used by supporters in negative expressions. Thus, for example, the rhetorical-linguistic process of deprivation of Indigenous people's identity, who are defined as illegal *immigrants*, instils a great sense of turmoil and insecurity in people's minds. This is true, especially in American society which, according to McNeil (2020), is a nation which has always suffered with xenophobia, the fear or hatred of the other, and for this reason many people make use of it. The tactic of the *parade of horribles* can be seen in the use of words such as destruction, attack, elimination, etc, which in a much more explicit way create a sense of insecurity that in some cases is pushed to the extreme by the rhetoric of how much longer? or what else? These questions, remaining unanswered, feed the sense of insecurity and uncertainty concerning the future. Whereas, as concerns anti-Columbus posts, the vast majority of rhetorical expressions are negative. In fact, here a sort of rhetoric of victimhood, the so-called argumentum ad misericordiam, can be observed,

applied by the use of words with strong and unequivocal meaning, such as *genocide*, *disease*, *enslavement*, *rape*, *murder*, *violence*, *etc*. This kind of rhetoric, as Leake (2011:3) points out, is very powerful since it leads to compassion and sympathy. Thus, the strategy used by detractors of Columbus to persuade others of his guilt is that of using words with a clear and strong meaning which bring to mind scenes and behaviours now considered outrageous, thus relying on the morality and sensitivity of today's people to arouse in the putative reader a sense of compassion and pity for Indigenous people. In this case, in particular, we can also find another rhetorical technique called *reductio ad Hitlerum* (reduction to Hitler) which is "an attempt to invalidate someone else's position on the basis that the same view was held by Adolf Hitler or the Nazi Party". In fact, many detractors pointed out that since there are no statues of Hitler in the world, clearly associating Columbus to Hitler, there should be none of Columbus either.

The category of *dis/satisfaction* is the one with fewer rhetorical expressions of all three. However, those in favour of Columbus expressed more dissatisfaction than the ones against, and in particular, this dissatisfaction is linked to the destruction of statues, often included in sentences in which is implied the pointlessness of the destruction, since it will not solve the problem or racism.

The comparison of the category of *judgement* between the two corpora shows a marked difference in realizations concerning *social esteem* in favour of pro-Columbus posts, while the same marked difference can be observed concerning social *sanctions*, but this time in favour of anti-Columbus posts. The expressions contained in the first sub domain of social esteem, i.e. *normality*, regarding pro-Columbus posts are all negatives and focused on underlying the *craziness* of those who destroyed the statues. On the other hand, negative expressions made by detractors are focused on the same thing: insulting the figure of Columbus. Yet, if the category of *normality* results in being lacking, that of *capacity* is the richest one in both corpora even if there is a huge difference in favour of pro-Columbus comments. Once again, Columbus' supporters focus on exalting his skills, his *greatness*, and especially his *courage*, which resulted in today's society and the progress that characterizes it. As a consequence, the negative expressions used by supporters are aimed at belittling Indigenous people by emphasizing the fact that they are savages, their lack of education (understood in Western terms, in my interpretation) and, following the rhetoric of winners and losers, and even their inferiority. Other authors, on

the other hand, opt for a different strategy: that of considering the question in more general terms, and therefore, to place it within the broader movement of cancel culture. Therefore, in some comments, both the concerns about the movement and the line that separates freedom of speech from politically correct discourse, which seems to be thinning more and more, become obvious. In particular, the negative sides of the cancel culture movement, as Cowen (2022) highlights, are that it can be "alienating, preachy, overly concerned with symbols and self-righteous". This sense of boredom towards the uncompromising moralism of cancel culture appears with the terms woke and wokeism. Here yet another kind of rhetoric can be seen at work. This rhetoric is based on highlighting how everything today can be questioned by the wave of wokeism that has been generated within society and which, however, can harm fundamental rights, such as that of freedom of expression. This is the greatest example in the two corpora of the rhetorical technique of parade of horribles, whose power relies on the emotional impact of unpleasant predictions. The reference to a broader question is rhetorical as it involves people who are not strictly interested in the debate, but who will participate in the discussion in order to defend their right to freedom of expression. Columbus' detractors, on the other hand, lean on the concept of ignorance, in an attempt to persuade readers to inquire about Columbus and his actions. This technique of creating doubts in readers about the truth is particularly effective in the present era, which has been defined as "posttruth". This word was chosen as the word of the year in 2016 by the Oxford Dictionary, which defined it as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief<sup>2,45</sup>.

The last category of social esteem, *tenacity*, is not so rich in expressions and, in particular, it is very scarce in anti-Columbus posts, with a total of only 4 expressions. In general, Columbus' supporters concentrate on underlining his positive features, such as, for example, his determination or bravery, while undermining in negative expressions the weakness of the indigenous people.

The domain of *social sanctions*, as opposed to social esteem, registers many more expressions in anti-Columbus comments than in pro, and, in both cases, negative expressions far exceed positive ones. In particular, many Columbus' detractors resort to a rhetorical technique called *argumentum ad hominem*, which consists in attacking the

<sup>45</sup> https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/

person, or some attribute, rather than the argument itself. In fact, many authors use words such as murderer, terrible, brutal or heinous to describe Columbus, basing their arguments on his attributes rather than logic, and at the same time, these attributes given to Columbus are associated with negative and painful feelings that are reflected in a negative impression of the explorer in readers' imagination, which will therefore be influenced by these judgments. Together with the argumentum ad hominem, the opponents of Columbus also use the so-called wisdom of repugnance or appeal to disgust, according to which a negative reaction to someone or something should be interpreted as an evidence for the evil or harmful nature of the person or thing at issue. On the other hand, supporters of Columbus use the same technique, wisdom of repugnance, by assessing the behaviour of those who destroy the statues as brutal, evil, filthy and pathetic, implicitly suggesting that the people responsible for this destruction are also definable as such. As far as positive expressions are concerned, those against Columbus refer to Indigenous people as *innocents* in an attempt to make even more inhumane the actions carried out by Columbus towards people who, as innocents, are unable to defend themselves. This kind of rhetoric can be seen as a form of argumentum ad misericordiam, which is a fallacy according to which someone leans on the feeling of pity of someone else in order to win support for an argument, and this is the case, since the choice to identify indigenous people as innocents, which par excellence are children, creates a movement of tenderness and pity.

As far as *veracity* is concerned, Columbus' opponents in particular focus on the need to spread the truth about Columbus with the aim of re-evaluating the nature of his legacy, labelling, as obvious, statements from Columbus' supporters as *false*, *a lie* or *joke*.

The last category of attitude is *appreciation*, which is the poorest of the three categories, and is divided into *reaction*, *composition* and *valuation*. Both composition and valuation are without expressions in both corpora. Thus, the category of *reaction* is the only one of any relevance, yet, just as concerns the posts against Columbus. In fact, the pro-Columbus corpus includes just 3 expressions. Starting from *impact*, detractors of Columbus express positive emotions towards the toppling of the statues, welcoming the news with expressions like *nice*, *well done* and *bravo*. On the other hand, the only negative expression used by a supporter of Columbus is *predictable*, in reference to the cancel culture, which expresses a feeling of annoyance and boredom. Whereas, as far as

quality is concerned, those against Columbus express a favourable opinion on other comments that explain the *truth* about Columbus; therefore, this category refers to the evaluations provided by Columbus supporters of others' statements concerning Columbus, which in some cases are even defined as *conscious thoughts* and this process strengthens the dynamics of group consensus and group identity.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse the corpora concerning J. K. Rowling and Christopher Columbus, with the aim of observing the specificities of written communication on social networks and, in particular, the way in which this virtual communication uses emotional rhetorical techniques to persuade the interactants. In order to do this, I chose to apply Martin and White's *Appraisal Theory*, considering the degree of detail of the realm of emotions. This theory is "a particular approach to exploring, describing and explaining the way language is used to evaluate, to adopt stances, to construct textual personas and to manage interpersonal positionings and relationships". Thus, "it explores how speakers and writers pass judgements on people generally, other writers/speakers and their utterances, material objects, happenings and states of affairs and thereby form alliances with those who share these views and distance themselves from those who don't." Furthermore, "it explores how attitudes, judgements and emotive responses are explicitly presented in texts and how they may be more indirectly implied, presupposed or assumed." 46

In particular, in this thesis, the first category of appraisal has been taken into consideration, which is *attitude*. "In considering Attitude, we are concerned with those utterances which can be interpreted as indicating that some person, thing, situation, action, event or state of affairs is to be viewed either positively or negatively." The category of attitude can be conveyed either through "the use of individual words or phrases which overtly indicate the attitudinal position being taken by the writer or speaker" or it can be invoked by "by phrases or by the interaction of multiple elements of the utterance." Examples of this can be clearly seen within both corpora: from simple and direct emotional words expressing *happiness* or *love*, *sadness* and *hate*, to feelings of *insecurity* or *danger*, *security* or *stability* conveyed through irony, sarcasm or epithets. The persuasive power of these expressions or single words lies precisely in the appeal to the interlocutor's emotions. And the effectiveness and power of emotions to influence judgement and opinion is a well-established technique as it has existed since ancient times. Indeed, in the first Chapter, it was demonstrated how rhetoric, understood as *eristics*, therefore the art of winning arguments, was taught by the Sophists, or by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> http://www.languageofevaluation.info/appraisal/appraisalguide/framed/frame.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> http://www.languageofevaluation.info/appraisal/appraisalguide/framed/frame.htm

Isocrates, who claimed that rhetoric was the *only art* necessary to develop the skills to be successful in life. Or again, Plato in the *Phaedrus*, explains that rhetoric serves to enchant souls and guide them, through arguments, to truth and good. Yet, it is Aristotle the first to make an exhaustive treatise on rhetoric and to list the three means on which the speaker must rely: *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*. And it is precisely to *pathos*, that is, to the emotions, that the speaker must speak. In fact, emotions are defined as "all the affections which can cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements and are accompanied by pleasure and pain." Aristotle's importance, however, also lies in the fact that he was the first to introduce the concept of *fallacy*:

In logic an argument consists of a set of statements, the premises, whose truth supposedly supports the truth of a single statement called the conclusion of the argument. An argument is deductively valid when the truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion; i.e., the conclusion must be true, because of the form of the argument, whenever the premises are true. Some arguments that fail to be deductively valid are acceptable on grounds other than formal logic, and their conclusions are supported with less than logical necessity. In other potentially persuasive arguments, the premises give no rational grounds for accepting the conclusion. These defective forms of argument are called fallacies.<sup>48</sup>

Aristotle originally identified thirteen fallacies, divided into linguistic (or verbal fallacies) and non-linguistic (or material fallacies): the former concerns an error in the content of the speaker, the latter concerns instead an error in the way in which the speaker transmits the content. Over time, the number and types of fallacies have increased as new discoveries were made on language and the reasoning associated with it. In general, therefore, these developments in the sphere of rhetoric and its reasoning, can be found in the corpora analysed, for example, in the form of the *appeal to authority* used by Rowling's supporters, who leverage the admiration and love they feel for her to persuade others of the correctness of her views, accompanied by the *argumentum ad metum*, thus, the fear and danger that this discussion entails for cisgender women and the *appeal to nature* to emphasize that, according to them, this is not natural and leads to dehumanization.

The confirmation of the correctness of Rowling's position lies in the *appeal to* common sense and the technique of exclusion that aims to make anyone who thinks otherwise feel excluded. Thus, if, on the one hand, main emotions recalled by supporters are the love for the author, the fear of dehumanization, and the threat to the sense of

<sup>48</sup> https://www.britannica.com/topic/fallacy

security represented by an unnatural process, the detractors, on the other hand, appeal to the pity of readers towards a community that struggles to make its voice heard and to assert its rights. In many cases and on both sides, persuasion has been constructed by resorting to a more generic technique, which is that of the *argumentum ad hominem*, thus criticizing, also though the use of very significant epithets, Rowling herself or transgender people. The appeal to pity is also used by the detractors of Columbus, who try to persuade the reader by describing the injustices suffered by Indigenous people, also accompanied and strengthened by the reference to Hitler and his actions to leverage a sense of disgust towards Columbus (*reduction ad Hitlerum*).

On the other hand, Columbus' supporters, just like those of Rowling, appeal to the risks of questioning these figures, an argument supported by the use of chronological snobbery and therefore the sense of security and stability of the reader given by the progress of the world in which he lives, which is in contrast with the backwardness and all that it entails of Indigenous people. Another rhetorical device is the appeal to pity, or argumentum ad misericordiam, used in both corpora to direct the readers' compassion towards those who, depending on the corpus, are considered as the victims. Despite the enormous development in studies in this field, the importance of the Aristotelian contribution remains fundamental as an initial step to lay the foundations for subsequent studies, and the interest of this author in rhetoric and in the power that words have to shape the vision, opinion and perhaps even behaviour of the audience is then taken up by subsequent authors. For example, for Cicero, the importance of rhetoric was such as to lead him to argue that it has made human social life possible. For St. Augustine, instead, rhetoric was the means to discover the divine Truth at a time when ancient knowledge was considered pagan. Yet, in spite of everything, the historical period of St. Augustine is that of Gutenberg's printing press, which allowed rhetoric to evolve from the oral tradition to the written form, and it is precisely this invention which, together with the rediscovery of ancient knowledge, make rhetoric play a dominant role in the Renaissance. Subsequently, rhetoric continued to play a fundamental role, until the early twentieth century with the development of the first social media. If McLuhan's sentence "the medium is the message" is considered true, it is easy to understand how the introduction of new means of expression is reflected in a change in the way one expresses oneself and a change in language itself. This also means a change in rhetoric. An example of the communicative effectiveness of the new means of communication and the rhetoric associated with them is represented by the radio experiment by Orson Welles. Subsequent developments in science and technology have led to the birth of social networks, which are virtual spaces characterized by an expressiveness that is in some ways different from language understood in traditional terms. The way of expressing oneself and communicating on social networks is so peculiar that it is considered a real language as it is able to compensate for all those messages that, in a conversation in person, are conveyed through the body, for example, with the use of emojis and memes. Therefore, as an obvious consequence, even rhetorical techniques of persuasion have adapted to this new language and the analysis of the corpora of Rowling and Columbus is a demonstration of this.

In particular, from the analysis of these corpora it emerged that still today emotions represent a fundamental and founding element of rhetoric, and therefore, people's awareness of the enormous power that can arise from the combination of words with emotions. In fact, Averill (2001:13) argues that rhetoric and emotions have several points in common. The first one is persuasion, since "rhetoric has traditionally been defined as the art of persuasion and, as Aristotle well recognized, emotions are part of that art. Through emotions we cajole, assert dominance, offer praise, reproach misdeeds, warn of danger, cast aspersions, and many other things besides".

The other feature rhetoric and emotions share is the context and occasion on which they are used: "as traditionally conceived, rhetoric is a means of approaching truth in situations where certainty is not possible, and yet where decision or action is called for". Averill continues by stating that "a legal dispute is a paradigm case. Logical argument and empirical evidence are of primary importance in such cases. But if logic and evidence were conclusive, there would be no real grounds for dispute, and hence no need for rhetoric. Where logic and evidence are inconclusive or yield conflicting results, other kinds of appeals must be made". In general, the close relationship between language and emotions can be fully understood through the reformulation of a famous concept by Oatley (1992), who suggests that emotions are primarily human phenomena. In fact, "human intelligence is limited. We do not always know what we want, nor how to achieve what we want, particularly when our goals conflict; moreover, we must coordinate our

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/

actions with the often-competing goals of others. To help compensate for our inadequate knowledge and competing ends, we have emotions to guide our decisions and actions". These are probably the same reasons that led users of social networks to use the only weapons at their disposal in order to be persuasive, language and emotions, because, after all, "human beings are rhetorical beings" (Herrick, 2008).

## Summary in Italian

Paul Auster, nel suo libro *Invisibile* (2009), si chiede se non sia affascinante il fatto che il pensiero non possa esistere senza il linguaggio, concepito quest'ultimo come quel complesso di suoni, simboli e movimenti dotati di significato e così peculiari dell'uomo. Infatti, Langer puntualizza che ciò che distingue l'animale dall'essere umano è proprio la capacità di quest'ultimo di utilizzare simboli, dunque la sua capacità di parlare. Grazie a questa sua facoltà, l'essere umano è in grado di dar voce e forma ai propri pensieri e alle proprie emozioni, pemettondogli di entrare in interazione con il prossimo e costruire, sulla base di uno scambio reciproco, la propria identità e, in termini più ampi, una struttura sociale, una civiltà. Questo rapporto era chiaro già ad Aristotele che per primo definì l'uomo zoon politikon (animale politico), quindi coinvolto in una rete di legami sociali resa possibile proprio dal linguaggio. Le emozioni d'altro canto sono qualcosa di difficile definizione ma, al contempo, qualcosa di affascinante, il cui potere è conosciuto ed esplorato fin dai tempi antichi. Infatti, ancora Aristotele spiega che le emozioni, definite da Leonardo da Vinci i moti dell'anima, hanno l'abilità di condizionare il giudizio e l'opinione delle persone. Quindi, se è vero che il potere delle emozioni è conosciuto fin dai tempi antichi, è altrettanto vero che fin da allora si rivelò chiara la loro utilità per scopi persuasivi. Di conseguenza, negli anni sono state sviluppate svariate teorie e concetti inerenti alla retorica che si sono evoluti adattandosi di volta in volta ai cambiamenti interni ed esterni all'uomo, così come ai conseguenti cambiamenti della lingua. Il linguaggio e l'essere umano infatti hanno percorso lo stesso cammino evolutivo, sia dal punto di vista culturale che del suo sviluppo storico, perché così come la parola è il mezzo impiegato dall'uomo per dipingere il suo mondo interno, essa viene utilizzata anche per descrivere e riflettere i cambiamenti nel mondo circostante i quali a loro volta si riflettono in conseguenti mutazioni nella lingua affinché questa sia sempre in grado di descrivere la realtà circostante. L'uomo è così passato da una tradizione orale nella quale un ruolo fondamentale era svolto dalla memoria, alla conservazione delle opere e del sapere in generale in forma scritta grazie all'invenzione della stampa a caratteri mobili. L'invenzione della stampa è tra i cambiamenti di grande impatto sulla lingua, in quanto il passaggio alla forma scritta ha comportato una maggiore attenzione all'estetica e alla composizione del testo. L'incessante progresso tecnologico, di cui l'invenzione della stampa fa parte, ha portato, all'inizio del ventunesimo secolo, alla nascita dei social networks che, di fatto, rappresentano una realtà alternativa a quella fisica, caratterizzata da nuove regole e meccanismi. Anche la lingua, così come le tecniche di persuasione, si è adattata a questa nuova realtà. La realtà dei social networks e quella materiale sono, nonostante tutto, strettamente interconnesse e hanno effetti reciproci, il che significa che i cambiamenti che avvengono nel mondo materiale possono avere una grande risonanza nel mondo dei social networks e viceversa. Un esempio di questa interrelazione è rappresentato dal movimento sorto attorno al 2017 negli Stati Uniti e conosciuto come il movimento della Cancel Culture. Questo movimento è chiamato così in riferimento a delle forme di ostracismo nelle quali una persona viene estromessa dalla vita sociale o lavorativa, quindi "cancellata", estromissione che può avvenire sia nella realtà delle piattaforme online che nella realtà fisica. Questo movimento ha assunto negli anni una sempre maggiore importanza connessa a tematiche sociali di grande rilevanza che divengono oggetto di discussione come, per esempio, la tematica del razzismo o altre forme di intolleranza e violenza. In questa tesi quindi, vengono analizzati dal punto di vista linguistico due corpora precedentemente collezionati riguardanti, nel dettaglio, due controversie sorte all'interno di questo ampio movimento. In particolare, un primo corpus è composto da commenti riguardanti J. K. Rowling, l'autrice di Harry Potter, e le sue posizioni contrarie alla comunità transessuale, e un secondo corpus di commenti riguardante la controversa rilevanza storica dell'esploratore Cristoforo Colombo. Lo scopo è quello di osservare come le persone che hanno preso parte a questo movimento sui social networks abbiano utilizzato come forma di persuasione l'appello alle emozioni, quindi il ricorso al linguaggio emotivo e l'appello all'intelligenza emotiva degli utenti

La tesi si compone di tre capitoli: il primo capitolo è dedicato all'excursus storico del concetto di retorica e delle relative teorie formatesi nel corso del tempo. La prima nozione affrontata è proprio quella di retorica e delle difficoltà incontrate nel corso dei secoli nel delimitare con precisione i confini semantici di questo concetto. Questo ha infatti assunto significati e sfumature diverse a seconda del periodo storico nel quale lo si considera e ciò è dovuto alla prossimità semantica che si trasforma a volte in totale identità dei concetti di retorica, intesa come persuasione, e di manipolazione. Ed è proprio questa vicinanza a suscitare contemporaneamente curiosità e scetticismo nei confronti di questo concetto. La definizione a mio avviso più adeguata del concetto di retorica è quella fornita da McKeon, che la descrive come un'arte architettonica universale, dove la parola

universale si riferisce al fatto che la retorica sia ovunque e ogni persona ne faccia uso, mentre il termine architettonica indica il fatto che essa è lo studio di come gli esseri umani organizzano e usano la lingua in maniera efficace e, di conseguenza, rappresenta lo studio di come l'essere umano organizza e imposta il suo modo di pensare circa un'ampia gamma di argomenti. Questa definizione suggerisce l'idea che, essendo la retorica applicata da tutti e in qualsiasi momento, la singola persona possa essere sia oggetto che soggetto della persuasione stessa e, in aggiunta, l'essere umano può essere oggetto di una propria persuasione interna che è quella sulla quale, secondo Chamorro-Premuzic, si fondano le decisioni della vita. Quindi, questa vicinanza e a volte sovrapposizione dei concetti di retorica e manipolazione che ha fatto sì che la retorica non godesse di buona fama in alcuni periodi storici, è ora oltrepassata, e ne è testimone la presenza di numerosi corsi sulla retorica, i moltissimi libri pubblicati e la consapevolezza che questa sia fondamentale in moltissime discipline della vita sociale come, per esempio, per l'economia, i cui dibattiti, come ci ricorda McCloskey, sono in buona parte basati sulla persuasione e come, più in generale, la maggior parte delle conversazioni quotidiane siano conversazioni persuasive.

In particolare, le origini della retorica si collocano attorno al 465 a.C. a Siracusa quando Corace e Tisia, dopo la caduta del tiranno, condussero la città verso la democrazia facendo in modo che ai contadini venissero restituite le terre precedentemente espropriate, gesta che li hanno resi celebri come i padri di questa disciplina. Il loro successo fu tale che la retorica si diffuse rapidamente in tutta la Magna Grecia e, in particolare, giunse ad Atene dove ebbe una grande fortuna legata al fatto che penetrò nella penisola greca in un periodo di svolta dal punto di vista storico, ossia il passaggio dall'aristocrazia alla democrazia che ammetteva sempre più persone nell'arena politica e nella quale il successo personale non si fondava più sulla classe politica ma sulla capacità di pronunciare discorsi persuasivi. Quindi la retorica in questo periodo svolge un ruolo cruciale nel dar forma ai principi democratici. Un altro cambiamento fondamentale realizzatosi nell'ambito dell'educazione è rappresentato dall'arrivo dei sofisti, maestri che insegnavano l'arte della retorica dietro compenso e secondo i quali il fine della retorica era la vittoria nei dibattiti. Uno dei più grandi critici dei sofisti e della loro concezione di retorica è Platone, il quale li condanna nel suo famoso dialogo Gorgia, in quanto la loro arte fuorvia il giudizio dei giudici nei tribunali piuttosto che tendere alla

verità e alla giustizia vera e propria che, come afferma nel Fedro, sono i fini ultimi della retorica. Un altro oratore che rappresenta un punto cardine per la storia della retorica è Aristotele, il quale scrive un libro dal titolo emblematico: la Retorica. Qui spiega che essa, più che essere l'arte della persuasione, ha come scopo quello di trovare i mezzi di persuasione e gli elementi persuasivi in ogni occasione. In particolar modo, Aristotele indica tre elementi che compongono l'arte della retorica, logos, pathos ed ethos, che si riferiscono rispettivamente alla logica di un discorso intesa come logica alla base delle decisioni quotidiane, alle emozioni umane concepite come motore di cambiamento del giudizio delle persone, e alla personalità, carattere e valori dell'oratore. La retorica greca ha esercitato la sua enorme influenza anche nei secoli a venire e prima fra tutte nella Roma antica, dove la maggior parte degli insegnanti di retorica erano greci e dove questa diviene centrale nel sistema dell'educazione. Il più grande esponente della retorica romana antica era Cicerone, il quale, nel suo capolavoro De Inventione, sottolinea l'importanza della combinazione della ragione e dell'eloquenza in quanto la ragione senza l'eloquenza è di poca utilità per gli stati mentre l'eloquenza senza la ragione non è mai vantaggiosa. Specificatamente, Cicerone sostiene che la retorica è ciò che ha reso la vita sociale umana possibile e che il linguaggio è di grande beneficio ma non deve mai essere separato dalla verità. Proprio eloquenza e saggezza sono le doti che un buon oratore deve possedere e, inoltre, deve essere in grado di carpire e capire le emozioni del pubblico siccome il pieno potere dell'oratoria si dispiega nella comprensione e nella gestione dei sentimenti di quest'ultimo. L'epoca immediatamente successiva è quella del Medioevo, caratterizzata dall'ascesa dell'istituzione ecclesiastica che ha come costante il rigetto e il disprezzo per il sapere degli antichi in quanto considerato sapere pagano. Questo non ha comportato tuttavia la scomparsa della retorica nel Medioevo ma, semplicemente un adattamento di quella antica perché divenisse funzionale agli scopi e al credo della Chiesa. L'autore di questo adattamento è sant'Agostino il quale, grazie alla sua opera di traduzione della retorica ciceroniana nel linguaggio della chiesa, ha fatto sì che le importanti opere del passato non cadessero nell'oblio. Il problema della retorica cristiana è racchiuso però in un paradosso: la retorica, che si avvale del linguaggio e quindi di elementi finiti, viene usata per descrivere Dio che, al contrario, è infinito, il che comporta che la retorica non possa descriverne in maniera esaustiva la grandezza. Tuttavia, al contempo, una retorica divina è necessaria. Quindi, la funzione che Sant'Agostino

attribuisce alla retorica è quella di pulire e svuotare la mente del cristiano per prepararla alla contemplazione di Dio. Inoltre, la retorica serve al credente anche per scoprire la verità divina e tramandare il sapere alla congregazione. La retorica cristiana di questo periodo dunque, espletava sostanzialmente la funzione di educare la popolazione credente che era per la maggior parte illetterata. La produzione di scritti retorici torna però in auge nell'epoca successiva nota come Rinascimento, tanto da renderla l'epoca storica più prolifica dal punto di vista retorico. Infatti, questo periodo, si caratterizza per un ritrovato interesse per il sapere antico e per una necessità di conservazione dello stesso. Più specificatamente, la retorica in questo periodo è strumento per la ricerca di un nuovo metodo di studio e di approccio al sapere antico. Il ruolo fondamentale della retorica viene mantenuto nelle varie epoche, durante tutto l'Illuminismo, periodo caratterizzato dalla prevalenza della ragione, fino ad arrivare all'Ottocento. In particolare, questo è il secolo del progresso tecnologico e scientifico che ha impattato enormemente sulla vita sociale delle persone e sui loro meccanismi di aggregazione. Infatti, è a cavallo tra Ottocento e Novecento che vengono fatte invenzioni importanti come il telegrafo, il telefono, la radio e la televisione, invenzioni queste, che hanno portato al ridimensionamento del concetto di spazio, legato alla scoperta di nuove terre, e di tempo, nell'aumento di velocità di trasmissione e circolazione delle informazioni. Ma questi nuovi mezzi, chiamati mezzi di comunicazione di massa, hanno avuto un impatto enorme anche sul linguaggio e, di conseguenza, sulla retorica. Un esempio emblematico è la trasmissione radiofonica di Orson Welles che, nel 1938, leggendo un adattamento del libro La guerra dei mondi e simulando un notiziario speciale sullo sbarco dei marziani, ha scatenato una crisi di panico tra gli ascoltatori statunitensi. Queste nuove forme di comunicazione hanno dunque suscitato un grande interesse e sono state studiate teorizzate a lungo e. Per cui, per esempio, McLuhan parla di media caldi e media freddi dove i primi sono quelli che richiedono una partecipazione pressoché nulla da parte dell'interlocutore, mentre i secondi prevedono un'esperienza e un coinvolgimento multisensoriale. Un'altra teoria è quella dell'ago ipodermico secondo la quale i media rappresenterebbero una sorta di iniezione di idee e modelli di comportamento in un pubblico passivo e incapace di una rielaborazione critica. A questa teoria si oppone quella di Lazarsfeld, nota come la teoria degli effetti limitati, secondo la quale i media hanno degli effetti appunto limitati sul pubblico che, invece, è in grado di riflettere su quello di cui sta usufruendo, quindi

l'effetto del messaggio in questo caso è quello di rinforzare le attitudini e le opinioni preesistenti. Questa teoria è portata all'estremo da un'altra successiva che è nota come la spirale del silenzio, secondo la quale il potere persuasivo dei social media, e in particolare della televisione, è così forte da mettere in luce le opinioni e i sentimenti prevalenti nel pubblico silenziando le minoranze e le visioni dissidenti, basandosi in particolare sulla concezione che una persona singolarmente non sarebbe portata ad esprimere un'opinione nel caso in cui questa potesse essere percepita come contraria all'opinione maggioritaria per la paura dell'isolamento sociale, in quanto non isolare se stessi è molto più importante del proprio giudizio personale. Questi meccanismi e teorie si sono ulteriormente sviluppate e rafforzate, e risultano essere particolarmente appropriate per l'epoca successiva definita l'epoca dell'informazione o epoca digitale, iniziata con l'invenzione del computer e la successiva interconnessione dei singoli computer tra loro che ha preso il nome di web. L'utilità del web, inizialmente creato per scopi scientifici ossia per velocizzare e rendere più efficiente lo scambio di informazioni tra scienziati, si è rapidamente estesa ad altri ambiti e, come conseguenza di questa versatilità, il computer è entrato in brevissimo tempo nelle case della maggior parte delle persone fornendo loro in questo modo la possibilità di essere sempre connesse le une alle altre. Questo è reso possibile in particolar modo dai social networks che sono piattaforme online e, tra quelle oggi più diffuse, ci sono Facebook, Twitter e Instagram. Tutte queste piattaforme si avvalgono di un proprio linguaggio permettendo agli utenti di esprimersi in diversi modi, tramite l'utilizzo di testi, immagini, video e software. Tutto ciò ha dato origine alla nozione di retorica digitale che è oggi caratterizzata da un'alta interdisciplinarietà e questo campo è così ampio che Hass ha definito la retorica come la negoziazione digitale dell'informazione e dei suoi contesti storici, sociali, economici così come le influenze che riguardano il cambiamento. I social network offrono la possibilità di muoversi verso un modello di cultura che è sempre più partecipativo e nel quale le persone danno forma, condividono, ristrutturano e mescolano i contenuti mediatici in modi non concepibili all'interno dei formati della retorica tradizionale come, per esempio, la stampa. Di conseguenza, anche questo nuovo tipo di comunicazione, chiamata comunicazione mediata dal computer (CMC), ha suscitato molto interesse e ha portato alla produzione di numerose teorie come, per esempio, quella degli usi e delle gratificazioni che si concentra sul perché e sul come le persone usano i media, e in particolare sostiene che li

usino per diversi scopi: utilità interpersonale, passare il tempo, cercare informazioni, per convenienza o intrattenimento. Quindi la scelta della piattaforma dipende dallo scopo e dalle necessità. La teoria della presenza sociale sostiene invece che le persone usino le piattaforme digitali per soddisfare il piacere e la necessità di stare assieme ad altre persone, dove il termine presenza è da intendere in termini psicologici, quindi riferiti alla caratteristica dei social media di mimare il mondo fisico dando una sensazione di continuità, come se non lo si fosse mai abbandonato.

Lo scopo del secondo capitolo è invece quello di illustrare i principi dell'Appraisal Theory, teoria sviluppata da Martin e White nel 2005, che si colloca all'interno della linguistica sistemico funzionale. Questa teoria è stata scelta per analizzare i corpora per la sua completezza e chiarezza, nonché per la possibilità che offre di analizzare i risultati sia dal punto di vista qualitativo che quantitativo. Per capire meglio i fondamenti di questa teoria, il capitolo illustra i principi del più ampio sistema all'interno del quale questa si colloca, ossia the language of evaluation (il linguaggio della valutazione) che consiste nella manifestazione di una posizione o di un'opinione riguardante una persona, un'entità, altre questioni o situazioni e, inoltre, l'atto della valutazione è un atto soggettivo e deve essere necessariamente considerato all'interno di uno specifico sistema valoriale, fornito dalla società di riferimento, e deve considerare le relazioni sociali tipiche che hanno luogo all'interno di quella stessa società. Infatti, una delle funzioni principali di questa teoria è quella di cogliere l'opinione e il linguaggio positivo o negativo utilizzato dallo scrivente o dal parlante per giudicare in maniera più o meno esplicita il valore di una determinata cosa, dal momento che proprio nel giudizio della persona si riflette il sistema di valori della stessa e della sua comunità di appartenenza. Secondo la teoria di Martin e White la valutazione, o appraisal, si compone di tre elementi. Di queste tre componenti l'unica presa in considerazione e approfondita, perché funzionale allo scopo di questa tesi, è la prima, ossia la categoria dell'attitude che è dedicata specificatamente all'ambito delle emozioni. Questa è ulteriormente divisa in tre sotto domini: l'affect (affetto), che comprende le risorse linguistiche necessarie per creare una reazione emotiva ed è suddiviso a sua volta nelle categorie un/happiness (in/felicita), in/security (in/sicurezza) e dis/satisfaction (in/soddisfazione). Il secondo dominio è chiamato judgement (giudizio) e comprende tutte quelle risorse linguistiche necessarie per esprimere un giudizio o un parere circa l'allineamento o la compatibilità di un comportamento con l'assetto etico e

morale di riferimento, ed è ulteriormente suddiviso in due sottocategorie: la categoria chiamata social esteem (stima sociale), suddivisa in normality (normalità), capacity (capacità) e tenacity (tenacia), e la categoria chiamata social sanctions (sanzioni sociali) a sua volta suddivisa in veracity (veridicità) e propriety (proprietà). L'ultima categoria è quella definita appreciation (apprezzamento), che comprende gli strumenti linguistici per valutare la complessità di cose e situazioni. Una teoria così strutturata si spinge chiaramente al di là di una semplice costruzione linguistica delle emozioni ma, piuttosto, considera il modo in cui la categoria dell'attitude è utilizzata per influenzare, e quindi persuadere, i comportamenti e le opinioni altrui. La teoria dell'appraisal di Martin e White è stata applicata in questa tesi tramite l'uso di un software, AntConc: un toolkit sviluppato da Laurence Anthony per l'analisi dei corpora. Nello specifico questo software è stato scelto per le numerose funzioni di cui dispone e per la possibilità che offre di condurre l'analisi in maniera esaustiva. In particolare, AntConc è stato utilizzato per condurre l'analisi quantitativa e il confronto dei due corpora, i quali sono composti da cinquecento commenti ciascuno, suddivisi in favorevoli e contrari. Il primo corpus, più nel dettaglio, riguarda J. K. Rowling e i commenti fatti ad un suo Tweet che è stato causa di grandi polemiche. Nel Tweet l'autrice scrive: ""people who menstruate" I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone helps me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?" ("persone con le menstruazioni" sono sicura che ci fosse una parola per quelle persone. Aiutatemi. Dunne? Dronne? Denne?). Con questa frase J. K. Rowling ha voluto commentare l'articolo di una rivista, incentrato sulla creazione di un mondo post Covid-19 più equo per le persone con le menstruazioni, sottolineato in tal modo come nella concezione dell'autrice le persone che hanno le menstruazioni siano solo donne, quindi di fatto escludendo tutte le donne transgender. Questo commento ha aperto un grande dibattito tra gli utenti dei social network, che si sono divisi tra coloro che appoggiano e condividono le posizioni di J. K. Rowling, e quelli che invece la accusano di transfobia. L'altro corpus riguarda invece Cristoforo Colombo e la sua legittimità come figura storica. Infatti, le proteste sorte a seguito dell'uccisione di George Floyd e che avevano come obbiettivo la cessazione della violenza della polizia contro la comunità afroamericana, si sono allargate fino a comprendere, e quindi mettere in discussione, figure del passato considerate controverse come, appunto, Cristoforo Colombo. Questo dibattito è in particolare incentrato sulla rimozione o meno delle statue presenti in vari

stati degli USA raffiguranti Colombo e che per alcuni sarebbero motivo di offesa e una mancanza di rispetto nei confronti delle popolazioni indigene che, con lo sbarco dell'esploratore sulle coste di quella che sarebbe diventata l'America, sono state decimate da malattie e dalle violenze esercitate dagli esploratori stessi. Di tutt'altro parere sono invece le persone che sostengono e riconoscono l'operato e l'importanza storica di Cristoforo Colombo, come colui che ha portato il progresso e dato inizio alla globalizzazione. Questi processi di damnatio memoriae hanno avuto luogo sul web, e in particolare su Facebook e Twitter, e si sono quindi realizzati tramite il linguaggio caratteristico di queste piattaforme, linguaggio fatto di emoji, ossia rappresentazioni dei sentimenti che forniscono tutti gli elementi non verbali dei quali di solito si avvale la conversazione faccia a faccia, gli hashtags (o in italiano il cancelletto) che sono utilizzati per identificare una parola chiave o un argomento di interesse o tendenza per facilitarne l'individuazione, o ancora le abbreviazioni, lo slang e i neologismi che sono largamente utilizzati come retaggio di quando su Twitter la lunghezza massima dei messaggi era di 140 caratteri che, data la brevità, costringeva gli utenti a ricorrere alle abbreviazioni; o ancora i meme, definiti come elementi culturali che si propagano per imitazione da un individuo all'altro, costituiti da messaggi brevi contenuti in un'immagine e compresi da molte persone.

Il terzo capitolo è incentrato sull'analisi quantitativa e qualitativa dei corpora ed è finalizzato al rilevamento degli espedienti retorici che facciano appello alle emozioni impiegati dagli utenti per persuadere. Nello specifico, le analisi di entrambi i corpora hanno restituito dei risultati molto cospicui e interessanti sia per quanto riguarda J. K. Rowling, sia per quanto riguarda Cristoforo Colombo. In entrambi i corpora gli utenti si sono avvalsi di termini esplicitamente emotivi come, per esempio, il manifestare sentimenti di amore, odio, ammirazione, disprezzo, supporto o cancellazione nei confronti di J. K. Rowling e di Colombo. Altre volte il riferimento emotivo è più celato, come dimostrano gli innumerevoli epiteti utilizzati sia per la Rowling (transfobica, TERF, ignorante, sessista, chiusa di mente o arretrata) che per Colombo (Hitler, assassino, oppressore, violentatore, colonizzatore o schiavista), ma anche nei confronti della comunità transessuale (malati, pazzi, problematici e deumanizzati) e degli indigeni (immigrati, criminali, arretrati, retrogradi o inferiori). In entrambi i corpora inoltre, gli utenti fanno largo uso del linguaggio emotivo nella categoria dell'in/sicurezza perché

mentre da un lato i sostenitori della Rowling gridano alla censura e alla privazione della libertà di espressione e parola, i suoi detrattori fanno leva sullo stato di fragilità ed insicurezza in cui vivono costantemente le persone transgender. D'altro canto, i sostenitori di Colombo fanno notare come tutto il progresso della società attuale sia dovuto a lui, e come queste discussioni rischino di cancellare la storia o anche solo di riscriverla, mentre i suoi detrattori si rifanno al senso di pietà del lettore nei confronti delle popolazioni indigene, sostenendo un'idea di inclusività. In entrambi i corpora si utilizzano due parole ricorrenti nel movimento della Cancel Culture: la parola cancellazione (e tutti gli altri termini ad essa collegati come censura o libertà di parola ed espressione) riferita al risultato al quale le discussioni che si collocano all'interno di questo movimento potrebbero portare, e la parola woke (e il sostantivo wokeism traducibile con la locuzione consapevole delle ingiustizie sociali) che assume in questi contesti un significato negativo perché utilizzato come dispregiativo per indicare quasi la petulanza, l'eccesso e l'assurdità delle richieste della Cancel Culture. In particolare, è utilizzato dagli esponenti più conservatori per denigrare il politicamente corretto e, in generale, le convinzioni della sinistra (questo movimento è spesso associato al credo della sinistra). Un'ultima caratteristica è l'appello alle fallacie come l'argumentum ad misericordiam che fa leva sul senso di pietà dell'interlocutore verso una determinata persona o situazione, o ancora l'argumentum ad metum che fa invece appello alla paura dell'interlocutore. Una fallacia simile è chiamata la parata degli orrori che consiste nel battersi contro una qualche azione o cosa elencando una serie di conseguenze negative a cui questa potrebbe portare, oppure l'argumentum ad hominem che è una tecnica quasi abusata nei corpora e consiste nel criticare non quello che una persona ha detto o fatto ma piuttosto la persona stessa. Una tecnica usata dai detrattori di Colombo è la reductio ad Hitlerum che, come suggerisce il nome stesso, consiste nel paragonare l'interlocutore a Hitler o al mondo nazista per squalificarlo.

Dunque, il risultato di questa indagine ha mostrato come le persone facciano, più o meno consapevolmente, leva sui sentimenti per convincere i loro lettori della correttezza o verità delle loro posizioni, inducendoli quindi a riformulare la loro opinione. E le tecniche e il linguaggio emotivo utilizzato sono svariate: da parole esplicitamente ricomprese nell'ambito delle emozioni, all'uso di costrutti che fanno appello al senso di in/sicurezza delle persone o che mirano a minare le loro certezze, all'uso di epiteti

chiaramente riconducibili a persone o fatti oggi non ben visti dalla società o ancora l'appello alle fallacie. In conclusione, posso affermare che, considerata la pervasività, il potere, l'imprescindibilità e il dominio della retorica nella quotidianità dell'uomo, nonché il suo potere e fascino quando questa incontra, descrive e da forma al travolgente e indomabile reame delle emozioni, l'essere umano, che è colui che tiene le redini di entrambi questi mondi, è, prima di tutto, un essere retorico.

## References

- Abbott, D. P. (1974). Marxist influences on the rhetorical theory of Kenneth Burke. *Philosophy and Rhetoric, 4*, pp. 217-233.
- Anderson, J. A. (1996). *Communication theory: epistemological foundations*. New York: Guilford.
- Aristotle. (1954). Rhetoric. (W. R. Roberts, Trans.) New York: Modern Library.
- Asmelash, L. (2020, June 11). Statues of Christopher Columbus are being dismounted across the country. *CNN*.
- Baker, M. C. (2015). *Case: its principles and parameters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barnes, J. (1995). *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beard, M. (2021, September 28). We argue over statues, yet history shows they're really all about power. *The Guardian*.
- Board, E. (2022, March 18). America Has a Free Speech Problem. The New York Times.
- Bois, J. W. (2007). *The Stance Triangle*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Buteau, E. (2020, December 9). Philanthropy and Racial Equity in 2020: Moving the Needle? *Cep.org*.
- Campbell, G. (1776). *The philosophy of rhetoric* (1963 ed.). Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press.
- Cascone, S. (2018, January 12). NYC Decides Not to Tear Down Controversial Monuments—But Will Add Historical Markers Instead. *News Art Net*.
- Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2015, June 02). Persuasion Depends Mostly on the Audience. *Harvard business Review*.
- Cicero. (1976). *De Inventione*. (H. M. Hubbell, Trans.) Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library.
- Cicero. (1976). *De oratore*. (H. R. E. W. Sutton, Trans.) Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library.
- Clark, M. L. (1953). Rhetoric at Rome. New York: Barnes and Noble.

- Couldry, n. (2012). *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice.*Wiley & Sons.
- Crisell, A. (1986). *Understanding Radio*. Routledge.
- D. Croteau, W. H. (1997). *Media/society: industries, images, and audiences*. Pine Forge Press.
- D. M Boyd, N. B. (2007, May 6). Social network sites: definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), pp. 73-122.
- David W. Johnson, R. T. (2009, June 1). An Educational Psychology Success Story: Social Interdependence Theory and Cooperative Learning. *Educational Researcher*, pp. 112-163.
- Douglas Biber, S. C. (2004). *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Doung, I. (2017, August 16). Why do memes matter? A look at the good, the dank, and the viral. Retrieved from scmp.com: https://www.scmp.com/yp/discover/lifestyle/features/article/3065773/why-domemes-matter-look-good-dank-and-viral
- Eggins, S. (2004). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.
- Ehrens, T. (2019, April ). *Whatls.com*. Retrieved from techtarhet.com: https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/Texting-Twitter-chat-and-IM-abbreviations-and-acronyms
- Englebretson, R. (2007). *Stancetaking in Discourse*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Enos, R. L. (1993). Greek rhetoric before Aristotle. Waveland: Prospect Heights.
- Evans, V. (2017, August 12). Emojis actually make out language better. New York Post.
- Eyeman, D. (2015). *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice*. Michigan: University of MIchigan Press.
- Fahie, J. J. (1884). *A history of electric telegraphy, to the year 1837*. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, LCC.
- Farrell, T. (2018). Social Knowledge II. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 64, pp. 323-334.
- Faulhaber, C. (1978). "The Origins of Humanism" Medieval Eloquence: studies in the theory and practice of medieval rhetoric. Berkley: University of California Press.

- Fortenbaugh, W. W. (1975). Aristotle on Emotion. New York: Barnes and Nobel.
- Frank Biocca, C. H. (2003, October). Towards A More Robust Theory and Measure of Social Presence: Review and Suggested Criteria. *presence teleoperators vurtual environments*, 12(5), pp. 456-480.
- Friedersdorf, C. (2022, March 23). The Threat to Free Speech, Beyond 'Cancel Culture'. *The Atlantic*.
- Gambino, R. (2000). *Vendetta: the true story of the largest lynching in U.S. history.*Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Garofolo, F. (2020/2021). La voce e l'oratoria come mezzi di comunicazione essenziali ed efficaci in diversi contesti politici e sociali. Milano: LUISS.
- Geoffrey Leech, M. H. (2012). *Change in Contemporary English: A Grammatical Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Granieri, G. (2006). La società digitale. Laterza.
- Grube, G. M. (1965). *The Greek and Roman Critics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Habicht, C. (1990). Cicero the Politician . Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Hodder Education Publishers.
- Hare, R. M. (1982). Plato. Oxford: Oxford University press.
- Herrick, J. (2008). The history and theory od rhetoric. Routledge.
- Heyer, P. (2003). America under Attack I: a reassessment of Orson Welles' 1938 war of the worlds broadcast". *Canadian journal of Communication*, 28(2), pp. 1-13. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2003v28n2a1356.
- Howell, W. S. (1971). *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Humphreys, A. (2016). *Social media: enduring principles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hunston, S. (2010). Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- J. K. Burgoon, D. B. (1994). Interpersonal deception: III. Effects of deceit on perceived communication and nonverbal behavior dynamics. *Journal of Noverbal Behavior*, 18(2), pp. 155-184. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02170076

- J. Miller, M. P. (1974). *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*. Bloomingston: Indiana University Press.
- J. R. Martin, P. R. (2005). The Language of Evaluation. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jenkins, H. (2009). Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Jennifer Guthrie, A. K. (2013). Tell Me Sweet (And Not-So-Sweet) Little Lies: Deception in Romantic Relationships. *Communication Studies*, 141-157.
- John R. Carlson, R. W. (1999, April). Channel Expansion Theory and the Experiential Nature of Media Richness Perceptions. *The Academy of Management Journal*, pp. 153-170.
- Johnson, W. R. (1976). Isocrates flowering: The Rhetoric of Augustine. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 9(4), pp. 217-231.
- Judah, S. (2015, October 12). How Christopher Columbus became a hate figure for many online. *BBC*.
- Justin Hodgson, S. B. (2016, November 22). Introduction: What is Rhetorical about Digital Rhetoric? Perspectives and Definitions of Digital Rhetoric. *Enculturation*, pp. 64-70.
- K. Hyland, P. T. (2004). Metadiscourse in Academic Writing: A Reappraisal. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 156-177.
- Katz, E. (2009). Mass Communications Research and the Study of Popular Culture: An Editorial Note on a Possible Future for This Journal. *Studies in Public Communication*, pp. 1-6.
- Kennedy, G. (1980). *Classical rhetoric and its secular and christian tradition*. Chapel Ill: University of North Carolina press.
- Kitto, H. D. (1968). The Greeks . Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Knipfer, E. (2014, February 28). Language as a Reflection of Society. *Introspection*, 3. Retrieved from http://www.reallycoolblog.com/introspection-30-language-as-a-reflection-of-society/
- Landucci, I. (2020). *The language of Evaluation in Editorials: The Trump case* . Modena: Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia .
- Lowery, S. (1995). *Milestones in Mass Communication research: media effects*. Longman Publishers.

- Lyon, D. (2006, November 4). From "post-industrialism" to "information society": a new social transformation? *Sociology*, 20 (4), pp. 577-588.
- Maples, C. J. (2008). Giving voice: the use of interactive theatre as professional development in higher education to reduce alienation of marginalized groups.

  Missouri: University of Missouri.
- Martin, W. J. (1995). The Global Information Society. Routledge.
- Matthews, A. (2020, October 9). Why Columbus Day Courts Controversy. *History.com*.
- Maynard, D. (2014, May). Who cares about Sarcastic Tweets? Investigating the Impact of Sarcasm on Sentiment Analysis. *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'14)*, 4238-4243.
- McCloskey, D. N. (1994, January 10). The neglected Economics of talk. *Planning for higher education*, 22, p. 17.
- McKeon, R. (1942, January). Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. Speculum, p. 19.
- McLuhan, M. (1964). Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. McGraw-Hill.
- McPherson, S. S. (2009). *Tim Berners-Lee: inventor of the World Wide Web.* Twenty-Fisrt Century Book.
- McQuail, D. (2005). Mass Communication Theory 5th Edition. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- McQuail, D. (2010). Mass Communication Theory. SAGE.
- Mirhady, W. W. (1994). *Peripatetic Rhetoric after Aristotle*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Mooney, M. (1979). Renaissance Thought and Its Sources. New York: Columbia UNiversity Press.
- Mooney, M. (1985). *Vico in the tradition of rhetoric*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Murphy, J. J. (1971). *Three Medieval rhetorical Arts*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter, K. S. (2020). *Interpersonal Communication: A Mindful Approach to Relationships*. Open SUNY.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The spiral of silence: a theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), pp. 43-51.

- Nordquist, R. (2019, July 3). *Definition and Examples of Corpus Linguistics*. Retrieved from ThoughtCo.: https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-corpus-linguistics-1689936
- Norton, R. W. (1978). Foundation of a Communicator Style Construct. *Human Communication Research*, 4, pp. 99-112. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1978.tb00600.x
- Ntahonsigaye, M. K. (2008). Fake News Hysteria: how an analysis of Orson Welles' War of the Worlds broacast can inform the issue of "fake news". Ontario: University of Windsor. Retrieved from University of Windsor.
- Partington, J. W. (2006). *The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills*. Pleasant Hill.
- Paul Baker, T. M. (2015). Corpora and Discourse Studies: Integrating Discourse and Corpora. Springer.
- Plato. (1952). Gorgias. (W. C. Helmbold, Trans.) Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Plato. (1956). Phaedrus. (W. C. Rabinowitz, Trans.) Indianapolis: Liberal Art Press.
- Poulakos, J. (1995). *Sophistical rhetoric in classical Greece*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Pretelli, M. (2020, November 06). CRISTOFORO COLOMBO E LE "GUERRE CULTURALI" NEGLI STATI UNITI. *il Mulino*.
- R. Iedema, S. F. (1994, March 15). Evaluative semantics and ideological positioning in journalistic discourse. *Mediating Ideology in Text and Image: Ten critical studies*.
- Roberts, M. (2020, June 9). J.K. Rowling's transphobia shows it's time to put down the pen. *The Washington Post*.
- Romilly, J. d. (1992). The great Sophists in Periclean Athens. Oxford: Claredon Press.
- S. Conrad, D. B. (1999). Adverbial Marking of Stance in Speech and Writing. Essex: Longman.
- Sandra Kübler, H. Z. (2015). *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistically Annotated Corpora*. Bloomsbury.
- Sayfullo Nurtaev, E. M. (2019, December 21). Neologisms in social networks. *Philology Matters*, p. 28.
- Schwartz, B. A. (2015). *Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's War of the Worlds and The Art of Fake News*. Hill and Wang.

- Segal, C. P. (1962). Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos. *Harvard studies in classical philology*, 66, pp. 99-155.
- Sirkka L. Jarvenpaa, D. E. (1998). Communication and Trust in Global Virtual Teams. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 73-121.
- Slyt, D. (2020, October 19). Cancel Culture: Do the negative impacts outweigh the positive? *Dakota Student*, pp. 50-62.
- Stephen W. Littlejohn, K. A. (2008, February 23). Theories of human communication. *Wadsworth series in communication studies*, pp. 185-215.
- Stubbs, M. (1996). Text and Corpus Analysis: Computer-Assisted Studies of. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Szekely, P. (2020, June 11). New York's Cuomo defends Columbus statues for symbolism to Italian Americans. *Reuters*.
- Tony McEnery, A. W. (2001). *Corpus Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Tremlett, G. (2006, August 7). Lost document reveals Columbus as tyrant of the Caribbean . *The Guardian*.
- Tremlett, G. (n.d.). Lost document reveals Columbus as tyrant of the Caribbean.
- Troup, C. (1999). *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom: the rhetoric of Augustine's Confessions*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Tunzelmann, A. v. (2021). Fallen Idols: History is not erased when statues are pulled down. It is made. Headline.
- Vian Bakir, E. H. (2018, May 15). Organized persuasive communication: a new conceptual framework for research on public relations, propaganda and promotional culture. *Critical Sociology*, 3.
- Vickers, B. (1982). Rhetoric Revalued: Papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric. Binghamton: Center for Medieval and early Renaissance Studies.
- Vickers, B. (1988). *In defense of rhetoric*. Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Walther, J. B. (1992). Interpersonal Effects in Computer-Mediated Interaction: A Relational Perspective. *Communication Research*, 19-52.
- Warnick, B. (1993). *The sixth canon: Belletristic Rhetorical Theory and Its French Antecedents*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

- Winston, B. (1998). Media, Technology and Society. Routledge.
- Yakun Wei, M. W. (2015, June 4). An Analysis of Current Research on the Appraisal Theory. *Linguistic and Literature Studies*, 3(5), pp. 235-239.
- Younge, G. (2021, June 1). Why every single statue should come down: Statues of historical figures are lazy, ugly and distort history. From Cecil Rhodes to Rosa Parks, let's get rid of them all. *The Guardian*.
- Yunfeng, G. (2013, November). Book review: Anis S Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy. *Discourse & Society*, 26(6), pp. 833-835.