

## The return of the Furies

Long ago, in the time of myths, the Furies were three ugly sisters, with hair, arms and waists entwined with poisonous serpents. They represent the ancient and primitive rules, demand vengeance or vendetta instead of justice, and alike to mafia, they protect the family and fertility. Aeschylus in *The Eumenides*, the third tragedy of *The Oresteia*, narrates the transformation of the Furies, sometimes also referred to as “infernal goddesses”, into Eumenides or the “gracious ones”. With the means of rhetoric and narratives, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus*, wrote as a contribution to the Athenian democracy and performed during the fifth century BC, includes a variation of the tragedy of Orestes to represent through this myth the transformation of the Athenian Areopagus, a council made of the old aristocracy, in a democracy, which permitted the birth of a modern and rational civil culture (Dreyfus and Kelly, 2011; Bonet, forthcoming).

Let us remember that in *The Eumenides*, the Furies are harassing Orestes because he killed his mother, Clytemnestra. Orestes with his act is taking revenge of the death of his father, Agamemnon, whose death was planned by Clytemnestra while he was away at the War of Troy. Clytemnestra connived Aegisthus to kill Agamemnon, in revenge for the sacrifice of their daughter, Iphigenia. Orestes, before killing her mother, reflected if the act of killing her was a matter of justice or vengeance. He finally thought that killing Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus, was an act of justice. Clytemnestra before she died called the Furies who enforce reprisal for Orestes act of matricide. Tormented by the Furies relentless chasing, Orestes went to Athens to seek Athena’s aid and acquittal. The acquittal first irritates the Furies that thought that this decision was against tradition and the rules they were fiercely protecting. This tension between the primitive and the modern civil world was wisely solved by Athena who inquired the Furies to accept their transformation into Eumenides or benevolent goddesses and also to honor Peitho, goddess of persuasion and seduction. The Furies acceptance made them to be part of the Olympus. This myth expresses brilliantly the importance of rhetoric in transforming the old, visceral and primitive regime into a new regime governed by reason and a democratic system.

Bearing in mind the recent political, social and economic context, we might confirm the return of the Furies, with their twisted hair of fine serpents. This regressive situation pushes this editorial to denounce, not only the critical moment that we, as a society, are living but also the rhetorical change we are experiencing due to the introduction of social media as the main tool to communicate complex ideas and built our ethos. This editorial is a call to recover the rhetoric of arguments, the dignity of the speaker and the respect for the audience, and finally, as in Aeschylus, to defend narratives that are willing construct a civic and better society. Our concern is to preserve and improve the cultural and civil values of our society regarding human rights, dignity, equality, respect, solidarity, compassion and empathy. These values have been promoted by rhetoric and can be only recovered by reintroducing the classic values of rhetoric, which were commented by Aristotle in his books *On Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics*.

This new political and social situation and its relation with rhetoric has been foreseen by some researchers and some of the papers presented in the 6th Conference on Rhetoric and Narratives in Management Research, held on March 2016 at ESADE Business School in Barcelona, Spain, include this view. Consequently, this special issue, on the rhetoric and narratives in management research, has, as usual, selected some articles relying on the research of the theory and uses of rhetoric and narratives in management but also it



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includes some articles that point at the regression of political and social discourse. It is our will to include this subject in the next Conference that will be celebrated from March 26 to 28, 2018 at ESADE Business School.

In the previous editions of this special issue, we have strongly advocated for the importance of the inclusion, use and command of rhetoric and narratives in the practice and nature of management. It does not matter if you are running a country, a company or your own destiny what it is already a fact is that the use of rhetoric and narratives is extremely resourceful to undertake this noble human activity and it is very advantageous to broaden your horizon.

Besides that in the past decades the political, social, economic and technological changes are introducing new elements on the understanding and use of rhetoric and narratives that require and gather our attention. In this sense the paper titled “Rhetorical construction of political leadership in social media” by Falkman and Madestam reflects on the phenomenon of the construction of political ethos through social media. Previously, politicians and managers depend on traditional media to build their ethos but now this is under our own control. Social media seems strongly helpful to build your personality, make it grow in a daily basis and share it with anyone. Here our concern is how this fast and slogan-based type of rhetoric and narrative could affect our democracies and our moral formation. Since it is not obvious that medicines sold at a very cheap price are appropriate remedies for such a difficult endeavor we are facing.

The following related paper titled “Everyday narratives: CEO rhetoric on Twitter” by Grafström and Falkman exposes the impact of social media tools in the context of a company. Likewise the previous article, this one reinforces the idea that social media strengthens the personal image building, it is multimodal, it is made by ourselves, and it is eavesdropped by the general public. Using social media is a must for CEOs, even the network they can access to appears to be easily saturated. However, through Twitter, CEOs publish marketing content of their companies, meetings that they attend and personal stories about their character and opinions.

These articles remind us that the uses, importance and expectations of rhetoric and narratives in the digital era are being transformed and make us wonder what are the new attributes given to these classical activities grounded on ethics and thought to govern.

The last edition of *JOCM* special issue included an article about cultural narratives taken from TV serials but that include rhetorical situations related to management. The present edition includes an article titled “Rhetoric, narrative and management. Learning from *Mad Men*” that explores a modern example of pop culture, the TV serial *Mad Men*, and its connection with persuasive rhetoric and management using the conceptual frameworks of Kenneth Burke and Richard Lanham. The authors Rutten and Soetaert quote Biesecker and Lucaites’ (2009) article:

Homo rhetoricus has origins in the Sophist of Athenian antiquity, and one might find its contemporary manifestation today in the advertising executive or political campaign manager.

Very often, *JOCM* special issue strengthens the important role of rhetoric and narrative in organizational change. The article titled “The road not taken: the narratives of action and organizational changes” by Solouki shows how the assortment and interaction of different narratives, their interpretations and meanings in a process of organizational change, influence people’s actions for a given purpose and goal. Using Alfred Schutz’s theory of human intentional action, the article connects the planning and execution of human actions to the construction of a narrative.

Another subject that has been increasingly included in the special issue is related to family business narrative and organizational spaces narrative. The paper titled “Building family business identity through transgenerational narratives” by Parada and

Dawson explores how narratives contribute to the understanding of not only of the values' transmission, succession processes and relations in family business but also is a required tool for building the identity of the corporation. The paper titled "Narrating organizational spaces" by Ropo and Hoykinpuro cares about the implication of the implicit narratives in organizational spaces. The authors suggest that managers should take notice of spaces as narratives.

Finally, the paper titled "Exclusion and inclusion in the Danish Military: a historical analysis of the construction and consequences of a gendered organizational narrative" by Muhr and Sløk-Andersen shows the power of a historically reproduced narrative that penetrates our cognitive framework and becomes the dominant voice in public arena, is difficult to change even evidence shows how wrong the argumentation can be.

This special issue should close with a special mention to Professor Slawek Magala and Professor Barbara Czarniawska recently retired. They both have contributed and made possible the high level reached in all the editions of the Conference on Rhetoric and Narratives in Management Research. They are also renowned academics in the field of narratives in management for their vast and important contributions. In the Sessions of Homage Professor Magala, introduced by Professor Juup Essers, presented his research on subject of "Narratives in intercultural studies and management". In the sessions of Homage Professor Czarniawska, introduced by Professor Deirdre McCloskey, presented her research on the subject of "Alicia Gimenez Bartlett, A Radical Feminist in Police Work: The Adventures of Petra Delicado".

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### References

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 Dreyfus, H. and Kelly, S.D. (2011), *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age*, Free Press, New York, NY.

### Further reading

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 Kennedy, G.A. (1991), *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse by Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.