

Editor's Foreword

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Rhetor's seventh volume is faithful to the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric's tradition. It gives an apt picture, not only of the breadth of its investigations, but also of the varied approaches its members take to rhetorical studies. It comprises reflections first presented in the context of the society's recent conferences as well as articles submitted by scholars from all over the world. The high number of contributions in French shows that CSSR/SCÉR is now well established as a bilingual (English-French) society, clearly situated within Canada's scholarly community. Yet, contributions come from Europe as well as America or Africa. Such diversity is also a sign of the vitality of rhetoric studies in general, and of the journal and the society's inscription within the international scholarly community. On a broader scale, it begs the question of *rhetoric's empire* (to parody the title of Chaim Perelman): how far does rhetoric's domain of application extend? What are the relationships between philosophy and literature, on the one hand, and rhetoric, on the other?

In 2016, the special session of the society's annual conference was devoted to "Teaching Rhetoric across Time and Space". The presentations and discussions brought to the fore the importance of *progymnasmata*, the ancient preparatory exercises, not only in the history of rhetoric, but also as an essential element in thinking about rhetoric today. The International Society for the History of Rhetoric regularly schedules several panels on the topic at its biennial congresses. The first section of *Rhetor 7* precisely records and develops the paradoxical modernity of those rhetorical exercises. In "Les progymnasmata aujourd'hui" [Progymnasmata Today], his keynote address at the 2016 conference, Pierre Chiron not only brings the reader up on the rich developments which are currently taking pace in the philological study of progymnasmata – such as the unexpected trajectory of Aelius Theon's manual, reconstituted from an Armenian translation, a reconstitution which completely renewed the understanding of this author—but also paradoxically upends the value judgment on those apparently retrograde practices, by using cognitive science to show the benefit students today might draw from exposure to them in secondary education. Julie Dainville's article, "L'Éloge paradoxal à l'école: bilan et perspectives d'une expérience pédagogique," gives, precisely, an account of the kind of teaching experiment Chiron advocates. In the context of a series of teaching sessions aiming to render students in a Belgian high-school more familiar with rhetoric as a technique (both theoretical and practical) for the production of discourse, the instructor (Dainville herself) gave students the assignment to produce a sample of paradoxical praise, as a way to assess (1) the efficacy of the rhetorical procedures they had studied (in other words, from *their* point of view) and, (2) from *her* perspective, their ability to put into practice the tools she had made available to

them. Class discussions included the very choice of topics for praise (with a few problematic topics, like Hitler, leading to embarrassment and self-censorship), as well as the technical tools and devices put to use with varied degrees of success. Section I thus gives to rhetoric's current relevance very concrete and stimulating significance.

It is difficult to view teaching as completely divorced from any social implication and if, in Althusserian terms, the school system is part of the Ideological State Apparatus, most school institutions ostensibly assert a kind of political neutrality, or at least officially reject any direct political engagement—though institutions may assert values that imply clear political positionings. Still, rhetoric is by definition connected to the life of society. Section II of the present issue of *Rhetor* is dedicated to that fundamental aspect. In “Characteristic Strategies of an Environmentalist”, Jim Gough explores modes of arguing and positions, even the complete reversal of values which characterize those who place the environment at the top or their priorities, a choice which calls into question the *common ground* from which stem the prejudices of the ambient conversation and the set of more or less conscious metaphors at the heart of social positionings. The article illuminates not only the contrasting *ethè* of those fighting for the environment and their adversaries, but their ways of addressing their respective audiences and the topics they favour as well. Lyuba Encheva, in “The Grammar and Rhetoric of Gamification”, returns to the reflections that earned her the student award at the 2016 CSSR conference. Using Kenneth Burke's *dramatistic pentad* in particular,¹ she brings to the foreground the political and social implications of the discourses of those who promote the framing of corporate and industrial life as a game, a process allowing for a reinforced productivity on the employees' part and a closer adherence to their companies' goals, while ostensibly lightening their tasks, presented as parts in the game, albeit a serious game. Section II shows how important rhetorical analysis is for the understanding of ideology and political and social life: not only is it put into practice in social discourse, but it also provides tools to explicate the strategies and stakes of those discourses.

Section III comprises readings of literary and philosophical texts. These articles show the degree to which the discipline has reclaimed its fecundity as an analytical tool, since rhetorical studies came to life again as a scholarly focus in the 1970s. In this section questions of distinctions between disciplines appear most crucial. Aristotle, for instance, made a clear distinction between *mimesis* and rhetorical persuasion. Periodically, however, rhetorical aims and tools invade the field of poetics (for instance in the conception the *Grands Rhétoriciens* of the late 15th- and early 16th-centuries had of poetry, or even in Boileau's 1674 *Art poétique*). One can also think of Locke's dismissal of rhetoric in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.² Descartes had already shown strong hostility toward rhetoric. But

¹ See Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives*.

² “[L]anguage is often abused by figurative speech. Since wit and fancy find easier entertainment in the world than dry truth and real knowledge, figurative speeches and allusion in language will hardly be admitted as an imperfection or abuse of it. I confess, in discourses where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them can scarce pass for faults. But yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath

the renewal of the 1970s showed rhetoric's fecundity as an analytical instrument (witness, to quote only one example, Kibedi Varga's 1970 *Rhétorique et Littérature*). And of course, that fecundity was not fortuitous, but stemmed in effect from the suppression of the extent to which discursive practices both literary *and* philosophical were indebted to the main principles and foundation of rhetoric. But, beyond rhetorical criticism proper, rhetoric takes on its full significance as an epistemological component of more or less closely related practices and theories. Baboucar Diouf offers a semiotic and problematological reading of Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi, le livre des ossements*, a text that chronicles the genocide in Rwanda. Beyond the various discursive strategies the text develops, the analysis brings to the fore the importance of such rhetorical concepts as *ethos* and *pathos* in the very development of problematology. Africa is again the context for Patricia Ofilé's reflection, "Paradox of Barbarism and Fear in J.-M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*". Clearly situated within a postcolonial framework, this article illuminates the various techniques for othering those who are to be debased, abused, and eventually excluded. It analyzes racism as a rhetorical construct, a form of linguistic racialization, which brings to mind Homi Bhabha's analyses in *The Location of Culture* and *Nation and Narration*. Paradoxically, Ofilé shows, the attempt to subvert the colonial discourse runs the risk of being implicated in the very essentialism it calls into question.

The volume ends with two articles that emphasize more directly philosophical or metaphysical aspects, even when the author does not wear the cap of the philosopher. In "La Rhétorique à rebours de Pascal Quignard", Irène Kristeva traces in Quignard's *Petits traités* the development of a project of "speculative rhetoric", which aims to "please, seduce, bring to one's knees". The notion of subversion recurs here, since Quignard's project is presented as opposing three traditional discourses dominant in western culture (philosophy, decorative eloquence, and theology) and as based, for its writing, on the entanglement of images (as the condition for the production of *écriture sidérante*, a way of writing able to stun), and, at the emotional level, on *tædium vitæ*.

Far from opposing rhetoric and philosophy, Thomas Franck reclaims, in his essay, "Rhétoriques de Merleau-Ponty", the philosophical dimension of rhetoric. Starting from a text included in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Signes*, a work marked by the French existentialist philosopher's inquiries on language late in life, the article illuminates the extent to which contemporary developments in the fields of discourse analysis and rhetoric are influenced, not so much directly and explicitly by Merleau-Ponty's individual works, but more broadly by his contribution to the intellectual conversation of the 1960s and 70s. The concepts that make up existentialist philosophy (for instance that of *situation*), *a priori* invite such a rhetorical enquiry into Merleau-Ponty's writings. However, one must also take into consideration the topological networks he elaborates, in particular the *fabric [tissu]* metaphor, and a

invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats: and therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them." (Book III, ch. 10, "Of the abuse of words")

dialectic between *parole parlée* and *parole parlante* (which Lester Embree, in his *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* loosely equates to Jakobson's binary *code/message*, see Embree 108). This focus, as well as an insistence on emotion, allows Franck to emphasize the genealogical connection between contemporary theories of the social uses of language—whether they hail from discourse analysis or rhetoric—to the author of *Signes*.

In the end, then, the volume reinforces the impression that emerged from the opening articles: the ever-resurgent actuality of rhetoric is made up of history, genealogy, and innovation. Several decades ago, against Gérard Genette, chronicling in "La Rhétorique restreinte" the gradual restriction of rhetoric, Brian Vickers advocated, rather, the idea that the history of rhetoric is made up of a constant to-and-fro between restriction and expansion. It appears rhetorical studies today are a testimony to the vitality of the discipline, whose modernity does not preclude a strong anchoring in ancient rhetoric, a phrase which brings to mind the title of Roland Barthes' essay in *Communications* 16, a volume which stood as an indication of the obstinate endurance and resurgence of rhetoric.³

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