

Editor's Introduction

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In this, the second volume of *Rhetor: Journal of the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric*, we see once again the richly vibrant results of inviting submissions that address rhetorical studies from diverse perspectives on diverse subjects. Rather than attempting to predetermine precisely what counts as scholarly work in rhetoric, *Rhetor's* approach is to provide a forum for the voices of scholars with a range of research interests and from a variety of disciplines, yet who share a passion for “rhetoric”—in whatever terms that be defined. In these pages, then, you can expect to encounter multiple possibilities for what it means to engage in rhetorical studies. Such an approach suits the tradition of Canadian studies in the field, which has emerged largely despite the lack of explicit disciplinary frameworks in most universities to support rhetorical scholarship.¹ Necessarily, in the Canadian context, the conversation about rhetoric has been broad-ranging and interdisciplinary, with no clearly dominant approach established. This is a context that we hope to continue, through the contributions of both Canadian and international authors and readers.

The nine articles in this volume signal the range of possibilities that the journal welcomes: they include historical studies of rhetors and rhetoricians whose accomplishments deserve more recognition, analysis of the rhetorical-political functions of characters in a literary corpus, rhetorical criticism of contemporary political and cultural issues in three different

¹ This situation is, however, changing: in addition to the University of Waterloo and the University of British Columbia, which have had programs in rhetoric for many years, an increasing number of other universities also now possess undergraduate and graduate programming in rhetoric, usually under the auspices of English and French departments. One notable exception is the University of Winnipeg's recently established Department of Rhetoric, Writing, and Communications (formerly the Centre for Academic Writing).

nations, and a study of women's health-care rhetoric. Together, these articles also generate, explicitly and implicitly, critical insights for the development of rhetorical theory.

Both Elisabeth Zawisza's "Apprentissage de la rhétorique et de la citoyenneté: Les écrits de Marie-Madeleine Jodin" and Tania Smith's "Learning Conversational Rhetoric in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Hester Thrale Piozzi and Her Mentors Collier and Johnson" participate in the groundbreaking work of recuperating the rhetorical contributions of historical women: Zawisza brings to light the rhetorical significance of the writings of Marie-Madeleine Jodin, the eighteenth-century French author, actor, and student of Diderot, who strategically appropriated dominant modes of masculine argumentative discourse to make a passionately incisive case for the equality of *citoyennes* in the new French Republic; Smith likewise illuminates the rhetorical accomplishments of an eighteenth-century female writer, intellectual, and conversationalist: though excluded from formal education in the arts of rhetoric and from practicing in the traditional masculine domains of oratory, Hester Thrale Piozzi's informal mentoring by Arthur Collier and Samuel Johnson helped her to become a deeply admired practitioner and theorist of the socially valued art of conversation. Not only do Zawisza's and Smith's studies provide us with new understandings of these women's rhetorical lives; they also suggest the relevance of Jodin's early feminist and Piozzi's conversational rhetorics to the ongoing project of rethinking traditional rhetorical theories and practices.

Mirela Saim's article "A New Rhetoric for Modern Jewish Studies: Moses Gaster's Redefinition of Jewish Homiletic Concepts" also offers significant new research for an area of rhetorical history and theory little known within the mainstream discipline. Working from her expertise in Jewish studies, Saim focuses on the rhetorical theory of storytelling developed by the nineteenth-century scholar of Judaism, Moses Gaster. Gaster's work and ideas, she argues,

warrant integration into Western rhetorical traditions because they greatly enrich classical and medieval-Christian understandings of the *exemplum* as a mode of narrative persuasion.

Sylvain Rheault likewise invites us to turn our attention to the (not-so-distant) past, in his article “Les rôles des personnages féminins comme arguments contre l’usage de la force dans quelques récits de combat en France dans les années trente.” Adopting a rhetorical perspective on 1930s combat novels by the politically engaged French male authors Bernanos, Céline, Drieu la Rochelle, Giono, Giraudoux, Malraux, Romain, and Saint-Exupéry, Rheault explores the *pathos* function of the traditional “silent victim” female character within these authors’ arguments against the use of force in a context in which war appeared imminent. This study demonstrates the value of investigating literary texts as legitimate—indeed, important—voices in public debates about political issues: literature, like other rhetorical activities, both addresses and responds to the circumstances of its creation.

In “The Muslim Headscarf Controversy in French Schools: A Sign of Inclusion or of Exclusion?” Nancy Senior also investigates political debate in France, though her subject (whether or not Muslim headscarfs should be banned in French schools) is much more recent and her genre (newspaper articles) more obviously central to public discourse. Examining a wide selection of newspaper coverage on this issue, Senior demonstrates how—despite their opposing views on the subject—different sides in this debate build their arguments on a similar foundation: a “universal” appeal to the French national values of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. Her critique thus reveals how similar rhetorical strategies may be used for dissimilar purposes and demonstrates the role that shared values or assumptions play in providing the grounds of possibility for a debate.

From France, we turn to political discourse in the US. Through his rhetorical analysis of Barbara Lee's September 14, 2001, speech in the US House of Representatives, Grant Cos foregrounds the significance of this speech as an eloquent and courageous—if ultimately unpersuasive—dissenting view in the decision to grant President George W. Bush open-ended authority to engage in anti-terrorist warfare. Arguing that Lee's speech constitutes a “rhetoric of reflection,” Cos uses this critique to revitalize and refine classical theories of prudential rhetoric.

Studies of rhetoric in the Canadian context are not, of course, absent from this volume of *Rhetor*. Jennifer MacLennan, in her article “Signposts of Cultural Identity: George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* and Mel Hurtig's *The Vanishing Country*,” shows how these two texts—despite their notable dissimilarities—share rhetorical patterns of cultural resistance and ambivalence that indicate their participation in a distinctive tradition of Canadian identity rhetoric. A close analysis of Grant and Hurtig supports MacLennan's larger argument that the discourse of resistance in Canadian identity rhetoric has primarily an epideictic function. Jeanie Wills, for her part, explores the complex ideological operations of Canadian identity commonplaces in her study of political pamphlets distributed by Saskatchewan right-wing Independent MP Jim Pankiw (“‘Telling it like it is’: Jim Pankiw and Politics of Racism”). Without denying the distressingly racist nature of these pamphlets, Wills's probing critique reveals how—less evidently but therefore perhaps more persuasively—they invoke commonplace Canadian values in order, paradoxically, to undermine these values. Her study clearly signals how a reinvigorated rhetorical theory of commonplaces can help to elucidate the intricate relationships between language and ideology.

Lastly, Philippa Spoel also investigates a genre of Canadian rhetoric in her article “A Feminist Rhetorical Perspective on Informed Choice in Midwifery.” Drawing on feminist

rhetorical theory as well as feminist and cultural critiques of medico-scientific and consumerist discourses, Spoel explores the ideological and situational constraints that affect Ontario midwifery's negotiation of "informed choice" as an alternative, women-centred communication practice. This exploration contributes to research on health-care and women's rhetorics, and participates in the development of feminist rhetorical theory.

Whether you read all or a selection of the articles in this volume, we trust you will find within these (virtual) pages fresh perspectives and original research that stimulates your own thinking about rhetoric in multiple directions. We invite you to approach this collection, in true Canadian fashion, as a mosaic of views and topics on rhetoric: each article possesses its own distinctive shape and colour, but together they compose a dynamic pattern of possibilities for rhetorical studies.