

Preface

This volume is the third publication of the Canadian Society for the History of Rhetoric. It was impossible to publish all the papers given at the 1989 and 1990 conferences; however, the present volume offers a selection of the full range of studies of rhetoric since its present revival of interest.

As appropriate, Part One presents scholarly investigation of the nature and practices of rhetoric during its long history. Giuseppe Mazzara sets out the contentions about rhetoric in its earlier period, when sophists and anti-sophists attempted to determine the relation between logical truth and persuasive argumentation. Beth Bennett presents the influence of the sixth-century rhetorician Cassiodorus in transmitting Classical theory into the medieval era. Mirela Saim shows the strong presence of rhetoric in the art and thought of Dante expressed in *The Divine Comedy*. John Chamberlin studies McLuhan's theory of an emerging post-medieval literacy by examining the differences between monastic and scholastic learning in the fourteenth-century sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester. Grant Boswell sets forth how the Spaniard Juan Luis Vives in the sixteenth century transformed the theory of argumentation by noting the practical goals of discourse. Finally, John Stephen Martin shows how Marxist argumentation had its basis in a rhetorical "problematic" whose solution enabled phenomenal experience to validate ideological concepts.

Part Two deals with the changes within the critical theories underlying rhetoric today. In each of these three papers, it is clear that rhetoric is more than "correctness" or "style"; and that rhetoric has actually regained that cohesion with philosophical logic that it lost in the eighteenth century. David Goodwin notes how "stasis theory" is integral to the invention of logical argumentation. Douglas Brent presents important correlations between current critical theories of literature and the emerging analytic theories of rhetoric, implying thereby that rhetoric shares a common origin with cognitive psychology and esthetics yet to be determined. With a somewhat similar intent, Takis Poulakos examines the rhetorical character of all historical accounts of the rhetorical tradition, and makes comparisons between these accounts and the theories of historiography.

Part Three provides some examples of rhetorical analysis in contemporary informational discourse, suggesting how argumentation governs our perceptions of a communication. Maryse Souchart focuses on the factors of argumentation in news stories, and Robert Seiler offers an investigation of the form that an interview takes, suggesting how the sense of information is determined by the points of engagements between interviewer and interviewee.

In sum, these essays evidence the current revival of rhetorical studies in a wide spectrum. In this revival, rhetoric demonstrates its traditional role as the central factor of human thought, subsuming and controlling virtually all the arts and sciences which define human existence and values.