
Heinrich Plett has long been one of the most prolific German rhetoric scholars. Most of us excel in one or two areas, but he has contributed valuable work in four different fields: historical and theoretical studies of rhetoric, editing new essay collections, and analytical bibliography. He first came to general attention with a substantial monograph (based on his 1969 Bonn doctoral dissertation), *Rhetorik der Affekte. Englische Wirkungsaesthetik im Zeitalter der Renaissance* (Tübingen, 1975). This extremely thorough survey of the importance given to moving the feelings in English Renaissance rhetoric, an understudied topic at that time, remains worth reading and might have become truly influential had it appeared in English. Professor Plett had already published a student text, *Einführung in die rhetorische Textanalyse* (Hamburg, 1971), which moved from rhetorical criticism into general linguistics, a move which he consolidated in *Textwissenschaft und Textanalyse. Semiotik, Linguistik, Rhetorik* (Heidelberg, 1975), subsequently translated into Rumanian (1983). Plett’s latest work on rhetorical theory is *Systematische Rhetorik: Konzept und Analysen* (Munich, 2000), which attempts a systematization of rhetorical figures using modern linguistic terminology.

In 1977 Plett produced the first of several volumes collecting essays by himself and other scholars, *Rhetorik. Kritische Positionen zum Stand der Forschung* (Munich). In consecutive years he published complementary volumes deriving from conferences held at the Zentrum für Rhetorik- und Renaissance-Studien that he had founded at the University of Essen, each containing 18 essays in German, French, and English: *Renaissance-Rhetorik. Renaissance Rhetoric* (Berlin, New York, 1993; see my review in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 49 [1996]: 438-40), and *Renaissance-Poetik. Renaissance poetics* (Berlin, 1994). Another conference he organized produced a volume called *Die Aktualität der Rhetorik* (Munich, 1996). Having been so active in providing a forum for other scholars’ work, it was only fitting that his colleagues repaid his good deeds with one of the best Rhetoric Festschriften of recent years, *Rhetorica Movet: studies in historical and modern rhetoric in honor of Heinrich F. Plett*, ed. P. L. Oesterreicher and T. O. Sloane (Leiden, 1999).

Heinrich Plett’s work has always been marked by a wide reading and the diligent use of primary and secondary sources, an important compo...

Professor Plett describes the volume under review, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture*, as “the result of more than thirty years’ work on Renaissance rhetoric” (p. vii). It is systematically organized (the chapters are labelled “A-F”), beginning with an overview of the “Scope and Genres of Renaissance Rhetoric” (pp. 11-84). Then comes the longest chapter, “*Poetica Rhetorica. Rhetorical Poetics in the Renaissance*” (pp. 85-294), divided into the five stages of composition (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, actio*). The survey widens to take in rhetoric’s relationship with the visual arts and with music, in a chapter awkwardly titled “Intermedial Rhetoric” (pp. 295-412). Chapter D, “*Poeta Orator: Shakespeare as Orator Poet*” (pp. 413-498) consists of five parts, four of which the author has translated from essays published in German between 1981 and 1995. Chapter E, “Iconography of Rhetoric and Eloquence” (pp. 499-552), is profusely illustrated (the volume as a whole contains 94 plates), and is followed by two detailed indices, of names and subjects. The volume is handsomely designed and printed, with a commendably high degree of accuracy.

Although the over-all structure is clear, there is an unfortunate degree of overlapping between sections, and the same quotations reappear several times over, often with the identical footnotes. This may not bother readers who consult just one section, but for those who read the whole the repetitions can become irritating. The extensive quotations from primary texts are a valuable feature of this book, but readers will need to know “the tongues,” since there is a bewildering inconsistency in providing English translations. This might seem a trivial point, but some of the untranslated neo-Latin and early modern French excerpts are not easy. A thorough copy-editing, a basic process in English and American university press publications, would have vastly improved the presentation of these wide-ranging discussions. Although Professor Plett’s English is usually excellent, there are patches of German *termini technici* which translate unconvincingly: “culturology” (p. 1); “ideologeme” (p. 78); “tropicity” (p. 99); “pragmatography” (p. 277); “intermedial references” (p. 325); “symmediality” (p. 349); “poetologists” (p. 362); “phono-stylistics” (p. 411); and one particularly opaque sequence: “Paradigmatic intertextuality on the other hand describes the substitution of sign configurations of different mediality” (p. 142). There are a few passages of awkward English: “This work that is written in brilliant macaronic style” (p. 34); “the actional sign” (p. 259); “rhetorical figuring” (p. 389); “Tense Metaphors as Instruments of Dramatization” (p. 489).

The outstanding feature of this book is its range of reference, surveying virtually all manifestations of rhetoric across Western Europe over a period
of three centuries. Close analysis is not Plett’s forte, indeed in discussing Shakespeare’s use of rhetoric he barely scratches the surface. But few scholars can match his breadth of enquiry. Perhaps the book is wrongly titled, covering “Rhetorical Culture in the Renaissance” rather than the impact of rhetoric on “Renaissance Culture” as a whole (a project which would need a team of authors). But it generously opens up the author’s knowledge for others to use. It lacks a separate bibliography, but more than a thousand footnotes refer to many times that number of books and essays. As a worker in the same vineyard (if on a smaller section), I salute some excellent documentation, such as a concise bibliography of the *ars memoria* (p. 202), followed by useful illustrations reproduced from mnemotechnical books, or valuable bibliographies of secondary literature on Pygmalion (p. 309), visual poems (p. 350), and Orpheus (p. 397).

By the same token there are occasional *lacunae*, even in Professor Plett’s knowledge. I list a few in the sequence in which they occur, as my small contribution to the common pursuit and exchange of knowledge.


P. 68: Plett fails to see the irony in Pico della Mirandola’s apparent attack on rhetoric, having relied on Wayne A. Reinhorn’s *The Emperor of Men’s Minds* (1993), one of the most unsympathetic books on rhetoric ever written, and not a reliable guide on this issue.

P. 20: a better edition and German translation of Melanchthon has been provided by Volkhard Wels, *Elementa rhetoricae. Grundbegriffe der Rhetorik* (Berlin, 2001), while Sachiko Kusukawa has produced an excellent translation of Melanchthon’s *Orations on Philosophy and Education* (Cambridge, 1999), including his “Praise of Eloquence” (1523).


P. 101: can one speak of “the feudal society in the Renaissance”? P. 104: the translation of the Greek term *pathê* as *perturbationes* is not a novelty in the Renaissance, but goes back to Cicero’s *Disputationes Tusculanae* (3.4.7-9).

P. 155: it seems rather uninformed to cite a book on the status of lyric poetry in antiquity dating from 1936, while (p. 157) L. L. Schücking (1908) is hardly an authority any more.

P. 183: Plett cites Luc Deitz’s outstanding edition of J. C. Scaliger’s 1560 *Poetices libri septem* (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt, 1994ff.; 5 vols. so far), but his remark, two pages later, on Scaliger’s puzzling “disunity” and use of “different definitions” shows that he does not know Deitz’s brilliant study of Scaliger’s sources (in the journal *Studi umanistici Piceni*, 14 [1994]: 91-101, and in his edition, II. 25-59). Deitz showed that the glaring inconsistencies within Scaliger’s treatment of the rhetorical figures and tropes were caused by his having transcribed two little-known early treatises in different parts of this *Poetices*, either not noticing their incongruity or not bothering to synthesize them. In Book 3 Scaliger lumped together tropes and figures of thought, drawing on the *Liber de figuris sententiarum et elocutionis* of the third-century CE rhetorician Aquila Romanus, while in Book 4 he copied out the *Peri schêmatôn* of the second-century CE sophist Alexander Numenios, both from recently published Aldine editions (1519, 1508). Scaliger’s use of Latin terminology for the first treatment, and Greek for the second, partially disguises the fact that “the same figure listed in the *Poeteces* can appear both as a trope when it has Aquila as its source and as a figure of speech when it is derived from Alexander Rhetor.” An attentive editor, such as Deitz, can illuminate the hidden corners of a text.

P. 189: Plett’s account of Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie* (1579) lists a study of its Greek sources published in 1916, but fails to note – if I may be allowed to say so – the demonstration in Brian Vickers (ed.), *English Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 190-296, that he borrowed silently but heavily from Johannes Susenbrotus, *Epitome Troporum ac Schematum* (Zürich, 1541).


P. 283: Perhaps the strangest bibliographical omission is of the magnificent *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen, 1982ff.; 7 volumes so far), ed. Gert Ueding. Its studied avoidance can hardly be accidental.


P. 437: Henry Peacham’s illustration of a play scene, involving personages in Roman costume does not refer to Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, but probably to the lost play, *Titus and Vespasian*. 
Those are a few additions to the documentation of Renaissance rhetoric, in the spirit of the open-minded exchange of knowledge which has distinguished all of Professor Plett’s work. This is not his best book, but it is one which every serious rhetoric library should have, and one from which few readers will fail to profit.

Brian Vickers


This is a reissue in paperback, with a new Preface, of a book originally published by Cornell University Press in 1995. Readers who missed it the first time around have another opportunity to consider an interesting and well-reasoned argument that has significant implications for the history of 19th century British and American rhetoric.

Robertson is concerned with political rhetoric, which he further restricts to campaign discourse, largely as reported in newspapers. This is a narrow, reductionist view of the subject that may limit the generalizability of his findings, but it does not damage his argument on its own terms. He examines how political culture evolved in Britain and the United States during the 19th century (between 1790 and 1900). The overall answer is that the audience for politics widened and political discourse became more vernacular. It shifted from a laudatory discourse deferring to men of distinguished character, to a hortatory discourse seeking support for specific policies. It appealed less to an elite audience and more to a popular audience. These changes effectively dissolved the boundary between deliberative and epideictic.

Having identified this important change, Robertson seeks to account for it. He finds a significant relationship between newspaper coverage and political practice. Specifically, the evolution of printing technology and the institution of advertising made it possible to sell low-cost newspapers to a large audience. This capacity, in turn, influenced trends in newspaper content. And an emerging understanding of what would satisfy a mass audience affected the practice of politicians. Their talk became focused more on policy and less on character, more on demands for specific outcomes and less on deference to men of exceptional judgment. It became more tense, more intense, more partisan, and more competitive. In 1790 the 18th century norms of genteel discourse were still dominant; by 1900 the basis of 20th century politics had been established.

Interestingly, however, this change came later in Britain than in the United States. There was a gradual shift in what the term “the people” was understood to mean. Originally it referred to the educated elite who were