
In *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric 1380–1620*, Peter Mack expertly describes the fortunes of Renaissance rhetoric within its academic and textual settings. Rhetoric in the Renaissance was a school subject, mostly covered in the grammar schools, with secondary importance in the universities, and thousands of rhetorical textbooks from the period survive as testimony to its ascendancy within the liberal arts curriculum. With a dizzying command of technical detail, Mack has delved into this large and complex textual record and emerged with a synthesis that will be required reading for students of the subject.

Beginning with a description of the most significant ancient treatises on rhetoric, followed by a chapter on the contributions of key fifteenth-century Italians (and one notable Cretan, George of Trebizond), Mack proceeds to a series of four chapters focused on teachers whose textbooks had an extraordinary impact on the theory and teaching of rhetoric in the sixteenth century: Rudolph Agricola, Erasmus, Melanchthon, and Ramus. The chapter on Melanchthon, the “dominant figure” of the years 1519–45 (p. 104), is filled out with sections on his chief students and followers. The chapter on Ramus (and his associate Omer Talon) gives a useful overview of the controversy and key combatants surrounding his polarizing reforms. With helpful tables outlining the contents of their principle writings on rhetoric, Mack charts their innovative and (again in the case of Ramus) agonistic adaptations of the classical program. The first half of the book is therefore devoted to the big players in the book market for Renaissance rhetoric – those whose work best adapted the classical program to the educational needs and occasions of the humanist school.

Indeed, for much of the period that Mack describes, Renaissance rhetoric was a symbiosis of two types of books on rhetoric: classical (Ciceronian) treatises and humanist manuals. For most of the sixteenth century, there is a strong correlation between the numbers of editions of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (still generally attributed to Cicero in the period) and the most popular humanist treatises (pp. 30–2). Mack explains the apparent symbiosis by noting the frequent use of humanist treatises as a preliminary study, a prologue to the study of a full-length classical treatise. But after decades of steady demand, humanist manuals and classical treatises alike suffer steep declines in production after the 1560s. The cause of the sudden decline is not clear, though Mack offers a number of suggestions: the rising fortunes of Talon’s rhetoric, which was not coupled to full-length treatises; new syntheses of classical and humanist rhetoric, such as found in the popular *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (1562) of the Jesuit educator Cyprian Soarez; the scholastic revival of the late-sixteenth century; or even the efficiency of the second-hand book market to meet continuing demand for humanist and classical rhetorics.
Renaissance rhetoric was equally tied up with the fortunes of the liberal arts, especially logic or dialectic. It is one of the virtues of *HRR 1380–1620* that it provides through the main part of the narrative a parallel account of the fortunes of both humanist rhetoric and dialectic. Melanchthon described his textbooks on rhetoric and dialectic as companion pieces, and even Ramus, who notoriously drew a sharp distinction between dialectic and rhetoric, distributing four of the five classical offices of rhetoric between them, insisted on the necessity and complementarity of both (pp. 142–5). Both rhetoric and dialectic were combined in a very influential method of critical reading, one of the uses of Renaissance rhetoric to which Mack is especially attentive.

The parallel fortunes of rhetoric and dialectic in northern Europe that Mack tells in the first half of the book are complemented, in the second half, by a chapter on the fortunes of rhetoric in southern Europe in the sixteenth-century (chapter 8), and chapters on the contemporary fortunes of specialized rhetorical treatises: manuals of tropes and figures (chapter 10), letter-writing manuals (chapter 11), preaching manuals and legal dialectics (chapter 12), and vernacular rhetorics (chapter 13). In these last four chapters, the narrative dimension of the first part of the book together gives way to a something more like a dictionary of authors and works. Most readers will probably find these chapters useful as works of reference, and the book is conveniently formatted and indexed for just such a use.

Throughout the book, Mack builds on the bibliographic labors of Lawrence Green and James J. Murphy, whose second edition of the *Renaissance Rhetoric Short Title Catalogue* appeared in 2006 and transformed possibilities for scholars in the field. *HRR 1380–1620* will serve for many as a vital companion to *RRSTC*. It interprets the findings of that bibliography in a meaningful way, and also provides biographical sketches for dozens of authors, and a description of the contents of more than a hundred works. Part history, part biographical and bibliographic register, it makes the long tail of Renaissance rhetoric a little shorter. It is no small contribution of *HRR 1380–1620* to have stricken many names from a list of neglected Renaissance authors once estimated at one thousand, and now known to be more than 1,717, but perhaps the book’s greatest contribution to the field is to have supplied categories and terms for scholars who wish to venture further into the tradition represented in *RRSTC*. In fact, Mack illustrates the utility of his terms and categories in chapter 9, “New Syntheses 1600–1620,” which makes repeated and illuminating reference to the figures discussed in the first half of the book.

*HRR 1380–1620* is therefore a timely work, a state-of-the-discipline book that summarizes the findings of many long-term projects, some of them still in progress, and points to several topics in need of further research. It challenges historians to imagine Renaissance rhetoric as a dynamic, evolving, and contested site of education, from the efforts to retrieve a comprehensive classical program, through various modifications of that program, to its ulti-
mate surpassing by the same forces of Renaissance humanism that renewed its cultural lease in the Western world.

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As a result of the critique from grammarians and philosophers of the previous centuries, eighteenth century rhetoric can be said to undergo metamorphoses in several ways. Inspired by a new philosophical awareness of man’s thought and language combined with an interest in conversational communication, works on style and taste came to the fore in all European countries. This volume presents important eighteenth century rhetorical works and their contexts in France, Germany, and Sweden.

Two chapters deal with rhetoric’s status in France. Marc André Bernier from Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières follows the changes through *inventio*: “Metamorphoses of the *inventio* in Eighteenth-Century France from Bernard Lamy to Jean-Francois Marmontel” (pp. 25–43). Here we find *inventio* combined with creativity in Marmontel’s poetics. This gives way to a cosmological *inventio* integrating nature, history, and words in an untraditionally way stressing the infinite possibilities.

In “Renouveau de la rhétorique et critique des théories classiques du langage” (pp. 45–69) Gabrielle Radica from Université de Picardie-Jules Verne in Amiens uses Étienne Bonnot de Condillac and Jean-Jacques Rousseau as examples. With illustrative citations from these two authors she presents the epistemological context for her conclusion: Condillac and Rousseau gave new life to the passions, their language and effect based on “fondements anthropologiques” (p. 64) – not a result of rhetoric as *ars*, but rather of a natural practice. One gets the impression that these passions, at least in a Condillac’s pedagogical context, should always be polite. Regarding the beauty of style, he recommends two properties: “la netteté et le caractère” (p. 53).

Anna Cullhed from Uppsala University studies *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Wissenschaften* by Johann Joachim Eschenburg. Through the changes in the respective editions she follows the evolvement of bellettrist rhetoric from the end of the eighteenth into the beginning of the nineteenth century (pp. 71–107). Eschenburg is a well-chosen demonstration of the growing tension between rhetoric and poetics. Interestingly enough, he is acquainted with the Scottish rhetoricians Campbell, Lord Kames and Blair (p. 94).