

Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik, Bd. 3 (Eup-Hör), hrsg.v. Gert Ueding (et al.),
Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1996, cols. 1610.
Reviewed by Josef Schmidt, McGill University.

The review of this volume more than 10 years after its publication is due to a “senior moment” of this reviewer who tries to make a virtue out of necessity of this situation: to point out how, in retrospect, more recent volumes of this undertaking have demonstrated steady improvements and more relaxed flexibility.

Three specific features of this 3rd volume make this very clear. The index of authors does not yet indicate the location of the individual contributors. Many substantial articles do not contain the customary translations of the titles of the entries (e.g. *Gebrauchsliteratur* = commercial or utility-related text genres); and some mini-entries like *Fangfrage/Fangschluß* (*catch/trick question*), comprising not even a full column, read like after-thoughts included out of a sense of encyclopedic comprehensiveness.

There is a strong bias towards rhetorical issues related to a German cultural context as in such entries as *Rhetorik des Feminismus* or *Gebrauchsliteratur*. Since German is a strongly gender-specific language, the entry on feminist rhetoric reports on the critical analysis of ‘German as a man’s language’ in recent times. This refers to concepts (fatherland, but mother tongue!) and attempts to acquire linguistic equality by modern usage of pronouns (of the s/he kind) or gender-inclusive nouns (*StudentInnen* = female and male students). *Gebrauchsliteratur* includes an extensive discussion on how the traditional genres in modernity underwent basic changes with the emergence of new genres that were, to a considerable extent, a function of the modern media. This change covers a broad spectrum from journalistic forms right to the *littérature engagee*; again, particularly in the German literary context, only after WW II was there a clear break away from the conventional distinctions of what constituted high literature (*Dichtung*). In this connection, the entry on *Geflügelte Worte* (*winged words, sayings*) notes with a certain nostalgia that the culture of using such literary references is steadily vanishing since a conventional literary canon is more and more a thing of the past.

There are many more smaller articles in this 3rd volume than in its successors. These vignettes, hardly ever more than half a dozen columns long, provide gems of cultural history that go far beyond a narrow rhetorical perspective. They make browsing through the tome an unmitigated pleasure. There are amusing articles on more esoteric topics like arch-magician Umberto Eco’s short treatise on secret languages (*Geheimsprache*) with a historical survey of the intricacies of “transposition” versus “substitution” in the encoding process. *Ghostwriter* provides a concise picture of the modern speech writer’s not always honorable ancestry, among them the 19th century French nègre, ‘a literary factory worker’ employed by literary titans like A. Dumas in their literary enterprise! *Groteske* (*grotesque*) is an ambitious concise analysis of the Renaissance concept that is described as the forerunner of such modern movements as Surrealism, Expressionism and Dadaism extending the purely textual basis of rhetoric. If there is a small reservation to be made, it is the fact that under this category of short entries there are some that would have been worthy of a more comprehensive treatment, e.g. *Gleichnis* (*parable, simile*).