

Introduction: Editorial Vicissitudes and Rhetorical Rapprochement

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Before I present the content of Volume 3 of the journal, *Rhetor*, which, like the preceding volumes, provides a rich diversity of stimulating reflections, I would like to say a few words about the work of an editor. Since becoming a member of the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric (CSSR) in 1998, I have been an enthusiastic advocate of Internet resources. In 2004, I was delighted to be able to convert Volume 1 of *Rhetor* to an electronic format, followed by Volume 2 in 2007. This was not a difficult task but, for me, it was symbolic: I was participating in the CSSR's official entry into the new millennium. Now, in 2009, I have the great pleasure of both editing and converting Volume 3, which provides me with an ideal opportunity to share some thoughts on the role of the editor of an e-journal.

In 2003, when the first issue of the new *Rhetor* journal was about to be published, the General Meeting had to decide whether to do so in print or electronic format. The minutes of the meeting do not indicate any vigorous debate on the issue because the choice was clear: given the limited funding available to a small society like ours, it had become much more economical to publish on-line. The cost of a printed publication would have been higher and, as well, we would have had to choose a printer, arrange for a limited print-run of a few hundred copies, and organize distribution to libraries, etc. Also, with the growing number of monographs and scholarly journals in recent years, space on university library shelves is at a premium and, increasingly, journals end up in

the recycling bin because there is no room for them. For these reasons, the decision was made to publish in an electronic format, not because it was the way of the future, but because it was cheaper and less complicated. My original idealism was put to the test during the work of editing.

If I were to proclaim that the technological advances of the last twenty years have made it possible for ALL readers around the world to have access to the research of Canadian rhetoricians, those who use the Internet on a regular basis would react with a knowing smile. Any rhetorician who is an Internet user knows that *Rhetor* articles represent only miniscule particles in the huge sea of information available on-line. The only way for someone using the most popular search engines to find one of our articles is by chance, or by using very precise questions. In the context of such information overload, how can we ensure that people interested in rhetoric find our articles? Moreover, time is accelerated in cyberspace. When I was a university student in the eighties, an article published in the thirties in the journal, *18th Century Studies*, did not seem particularly outdated. Today, if something on a Web site was produced prior to 2000, it has a dated air about it. Does having an electronic format mean our articles will be relegated too quickly to cyberspace limbo? These are some of the questions to which I needed answers to guide my editorial decisions.

I will begin by discussing the issue of obsolescence. For academics like me, articles that appear in *Rhetor* represent the state of knowledge in the Canadian intellectual landscape at a given point in time. This is ample justification for their preservation for all

time, and it means that the editor's task is not limited to evaluating and compiling articles. Editing an e-journal also means ensuring that the articles entrusted to the journal are preserved for future generations. Fortunately, to do that, one can count on the enthusiastic co-operation of university libraries. In the case of *Rhetor*, the first three issues have been uploaded to the electronic archives of the University of Regina. As long as the library exists, our articles will be there. But, as a precaution, it would be good to have a number of mirror sites. All members of the Society are invited to participate in this effort, by contacting their library archivists. This will be a task for future editors of the journal. Further, while writing ideas down is an essential intellectual exercise in the development of scholars and academics, the article that results from this exercise is not complete until it is read. Editing also means ensuring that articles can be found by potential readers. Of course, university library archives are included in the indexes of the major search engines, but we must also see that our articles are listed in recognized bibliographies, such as MLA or JSTOR, because it is there that serious research begins. I have had *Rhetor* added to the catalogues of several bibliographical services, including EBSCO, but there remain many avenues to be explored. However, even if the perfect editor had performed his duties admirably by ensuring that our articles would be preserved forever and that they could be found with a single click of the mouse, that would not necessarily mean that our articles would be read. The work of editing has its limitations and it is now up to the members of the CSSR, who are teaching and doing research, to further that work. In research, electronic articles should be accorded the same importance as print articles. In teaching, we should ensure that our students learn how to find and to read articles on-line. All members of the CSSR must make the effort

to educate others, as a way of enhancing the reputation of electronic journals like *Rhetor* and affirming that they are serious publications.

The editor's lament will end here, as I move on to an overview of the content of this third issue of *Rhetor*. The articles assembled in this issue appear to have a common feature: "rapprochement". In *Rhétorique générale* (1970) the Groupe μ suggests that the figure of speech be viewed as a procedure applied to a raw material. Elision, then, becomes the elimination of a letter. In *Clé des procédés* (www.cafe.edu, 1998), Bernard Dupriez defines rapprochement as the process of taking two objects or concepts that are not compatible by nature and considering them together. This may help to differentiate the phenomena present and, at the same time, to identify their commonalities. By highlighting tensions, the practice of rapprochement also allows new perspectives to emerge, and this, in turn, allows us to better grasp the general problem.

Colin Snowsell, in *What's Hotter: Hell House or Global Warming? The Shifting of Rhetoric of the Evangelical Right*, establishes a rapprochement between two events: the 2001 screening of the documentary, *Hell House*, and the 2007 Leadership Summit. Conceived by evangelists, "Hell House" attempts to frighten the unconverted by showing them the possible consequences of their current sins. The Leadership Summit, also organized by evangelists, demonstrates concern for helping victims of AIDS and the starving people of Africa. There appears to be a fairly wide divergence in the rhetoric of the two phenomena, which also occur at different times. Snowsell explains that, fundamentally, evangelists support capitalism. That may seem paradoxical because

capitalism has negative effects, like poverty, which the evangelists suggest they will then work to reduce. Why not simply attack the source of the problem directly? It is because evangelists believe they must gain the support of political parties, which defend capitalist ideology. The use of fear makes way for social commitment, and while the rhetoric employed may have changed, the intentions and the methods of evangelists remain the same.

In her article, *Rhetorical Theory and the Institutionalization of Community Service Learning in Higher Education*, Tania Smith examines community service learning. This is a movement that seeks to bring together the community and universities. This rapprochement is part of an institutionalization process, and, therefore, of structuring, and Smith tries to identify the impact this has on rhetoricians. For example, to what degree can the university influence the community and, vice-versa, how far can the community go in imposing its objectives on the university? Rhetorical theory examines the use of language as a vector for structuring individuals and groups, that can help the community to develop critical thought and to improve its tools for change. Historians of rhetoric can also contribute to the issue by recalling civic debates of the past.

In *The Sparrow and the Shaking Tent: Containing the Convert in Two Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Ojibwe Conversion Narratives*, John Moffatt brings together two texts dealing with conversion, one written by Bede, in 731, and the other by Peter Jones, published in 1861. Despite the different contexts and eras, Moffatt demonstrates certain

common features. The conversions must take place through accommodation, incorporating pagan elements, if necessary. The supremacy of the Christian Logos is discovered through the use of pagan rites. There are also two target groups. The first is made up of contemporaries of the narrator, who have been brought up in the Christian religion. The second group is internal to the text. These are new converts to religious and intellectual ideas that they have not yet succeeded in embracing entirely because their pagan life is still too recent. Members of this group feel welcomed into the new religion, but marginalized, as well, because of the limited development of their faith.

The comedian Mary Walsh, best known for her role in *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, provides original perspectives on Canadian identity, as Jennifer MacLennan explains in *Life on the Rock: Island and Identity in Mary Walsh's "A Hymn to Canada"*. Mary Walsh was born in Newfoundland, an island that remained a British possession until it became a Canadian province in 1947. According to MacLennan, it is as an islander that Mary Walsh gives expression to the themes of survival and physical belonging. MacLennan develops the metaphor of the island as a way of finding a Canadian identity, in a country whose culture is marginalized by its American neighbour. Further, the technique of rhetorical enactment enables Walsh, through her personal anecdotes as a Newfoundlander, to use an original approach in examining Canadian identity, from the perspective of an outsider. Rapprochement with its insular character could help the Canadian nation define its own identity.

In *Bathos: Some Canadian Examples*, Shannon Purves-Smith notes that bathos commonly appears in Canadian humour. Bathos is the technique of moving quickly from the sublime to the banal or the ridiculous, for comic effect. Purves-Smith uses an 18th century treatise, entitled *Peri Bathous, or the Art of Sinking in Poetry*, written by the fictional author Scriblerus, as a tool to analyse poems written by the fictional authors Sarah Binks (by the real writer Paul Hiebert) and Edith Babb (by the writer Naomi Norquay). The work is the opposite of the treatise *Peri Hupsous (On the Sublime)*. The application of the various recommendations of *Peri Bathous* are identified in the body of work of each poet and explained in detail. Here again, the rapprochement of the texts allows us to discover new and exciting perspectives.

Based on a personal experience (his seven-year-old grandson choosing to buy a brand-name wallet that was more expensive than the no-name ones), Jim Gough, in *Communicating for Influence: Ethical Borders*, questions the ethics of branding practices. By considering such practices together with texts on independence and human rights, the author of this article deconstructs the new strategies used by brand-name companies, including product placement in movies. By doing so, the author explains how the choices available have been blurred. The article proposes the establishment of some ethical conditions, including support for moral independence, research on the strategies used by brand-names, public dialogue and the development of critical thinking in families to help children to make choices.

In *May Sinclair: Idealism-Feminism and the Suffragist Movement*, Jim Gough presents the argumentative duel between Sir Ahmroth Wright, defending radical anti-feminist positions, and May Sinclair, a feminist who should have been better studied deplors the author. In the manner of David confronting Goliath, May Sinclair endeavours to deconstruct, undermine and refute Sir Ahmroth Wright's arguments that show women's incapacity to vote. Among other things, May Sinclair strives to rationally demonstrate that her opponent's suppositions are not corroborated by any scientific evidences.

In the final article, *The Rhetorical Paradigm of Nietzsche's Aphorisms*, Joseph Schmidt, noting that Nietzsche is imitating the biblical style of Psalm 14 in his famous phrase "God is dead", suggests that we must take into consideration a much broader context than that contained within the aphorism itself. By examining other examples, Schmidt demonstrates that the single or double layers of parody in Nietzsche's concentrated expressions can only be identified by using intertextuality to its fullest extent. In other words, to reach a complete understanding of the philosopher's thought, there must be a rapprochement of the individual elements and the text as a whole.

I hope that there will be a rapprochement of reader and text as you reflect on the articles that follow.

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