

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book aims to increase readers' resources for interpretation of their reading. It sets out a series of questions, derived from the teachings of rhetorical theory, which provide ways of thinking about texts, utterances, and the situations in which language is used. The point of this book is to show what might happen if we treat the doctrines of rhetoric as questions or categories which we might apply to our reading, rather than as instructions about how to write. In order to set out the implications of this idea, and in order to recommend it to a wider circle of readers, I have included in this essay many doctrines with which students of rhetoric will be very familiar. I hope those readers will pardon me for this and will understand the possible advantages of writing the book in this way.

Chapter 1 is devoted to presenting the questions, organised into seven sections. Chapters 2–7 discuss the implications of each of the questions in turn, bringing out more of the implications of (and possible answers to) the questions by summarising doctrines of classical and renaissance rhetorical theorists related to the questions. Reflecting more on the implications of the questions and knowing more about the way in which the rhetorical theorists thought about these doctrines will help the reader of this book get to know the categories better, pose the questions in a more thorough and thoughtful way, and make the questions more productive in thinking about texts. In each of the chapters I list all the questions from that section at the outset before discussing each in turn. I hope that a reader thinking about one of the questions could read that section independently, but there are connections between the questions

grouped in each section. Chapter 8 describes some ways of gathering material and writing about the texts one is reading. The conclusion considers the wider implications of taking a rhetorical approach to reading and understanding how language works. Interleaved within the chapters exploring the implications of the questions I provide sample readings of five literary texts using the questions raised: Chaucer's comments on his audience in *Troilus and Criseyde* (end of Chap. 2); structure, argument, and tone in a sonnet by Sidney (end of Chap. 3); narrative, argument, and questions in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (end of Chap. 5); teaching, pleasing, and the uses of persuasion in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (end of Chap. 6), and style and ecphrasis in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (end of Chap. 7).

In the further discussions of the questions in Chaps. 2–7 I refer mainly to works by six influential authors in the rhetorical tradition. Other writers referred to, such as Bakhtin, Booth, Melanchthon, and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, will be described in the chapter in which they appear. Aristotle (384–322 BC) was one of the most important Greek philosophers. He taught rhetoric alongside philosophy in his school in Athens. His *Rhetoric* is the earliest comprehensive Greek textbook on rhetoric which has come down to us and provides our earliest source on many of the central doctrines of rhetoric, particularly in relation to persuasion and the arousal of emotions.¹ Cicero (106–43 BC) was a prominent Roman orator and politician. His speeches are considered as the most significant models of Roman oratory. He wrote his most perceptive treatises on rhetoric, including *De oratore*, in his retirement from politics from 55 BC onwards.² For the Middle Ages, and even after the recovery of more original works, the most influential classical textbook of rhetoric was *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a handbook written by an unknown author around 84 BC. It provided concise accounts of almost all the principal doctrines and was especially influential for its account of the figures of style and the tropes.³ Quintilian (c.30–c.100) was a professor of rhetoric in Rome. His *Institutio oratoria* was the most comprehensive ancient account of rhetorical theory, which discusses the opinions of previous authors and provides examples of the doctrines in practice, most often from Cicero's orations. His book was too long to be used for teaching purposes but it remained a source of reference in the renaissance and beyond.⁴ Rudolph Agricola (1443–1485) was a Frisian humanist who studied in Italy for ten years. His *De inventione dialectica* (1479) provides an original synthesis of doctrines from logic and

rhetoric. He rethought issues in rhetorical theory on the basis of general principles and of analysis of classical texts, especially Cicero and Virgil.⁵ The Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466/1469–1536) exercised immense influence on sixteenth-century classical and Biblical scholarship, theology, and education. He wrote influential textbooks on different aspects of rhetoric, including *De conscribendis epistolis* (1522) on letter writing, *De copia* (1512) on rewriting texts so as to amplify their content and style, *Ciceronianus* (1528) on imitation, and *Adagia* (1508, frequently expanded and revised until 1535) on the interpretation and use of thousands of proverbs.⁶

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Coventry, UK

Peter Mack

NOTES

1. Aristotle, *The Complete Works*, ed. J. Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton, 1984); *On Rhetoric*, trans G. A. Kennedy, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2006); G. A. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, 1963); C. Shields ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle* (Oxford, 2012); C. Natali, *Aristotle: His Life and School* (Princeton, 2013).
2. Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, trans J. May and J. Wisse (Oxford, 2001); Elaine Fantham, *The Roman World of Cicero's De oratore* (Oxford, 2004); E. Rawson, *Cicero: A Portrait* (Bristol, 1983).
3. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed and trans H. Kaplan, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA, 1954); G. A. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton, 1972).
4. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, ed and trans D. A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library, 5 vols (Cambridge MA, 2001); M. van der Poel and J. Murphy eds, *Oxford Handbook to Quintilian* (forthcoming).
5. R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (Cologne, 1539, repr. Nieuwkoop, 1967). An English translation by Marc van der Poel is in preparation. P. Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden, 1993), *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric 1380–1620* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 56–75.
6. Latin editions of the works are published by Brill in Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, vols I–2, I–6, II–1–9. English translations in the *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto), vols 24–26, 30–36. C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works and Influence* (Toronto, 1991), Mack, *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric*, pp. 31, 76–103.

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Mack, P.

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