

Ambient Rhetoric

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in ambient rhetoric thomas rickert seeks to dissolve the boundaries of the rhetorical tradition and its basic dichotomy of subject and object with the advent of new technologies new media and the dispersion of human agency through external information sources rhetoric can no longer remain tied to the autonomy of human will and cognition as the sole determinants in the discursive act rickert develops the concept of ambience in order to engage all of the elements that comprise the ecologies in which we exist culling from martin heidegger s hermeneutical phenomenology in being and time rickert finds the basis for ambience in heidegger s assertion that humans do not exist in a vacuum there is a constant and fluid relation to the material informational and emotional spaces in which they dwell hence humans are not the exclusive actors in the rhetorical equation agency can be found in innumerable things objects and spaces as rickert asserts it is only after we become attuned to these influences that rhetoric can make a first step toward sufficiency rickert also recalls the foundational greek philosophical concepts of kairos time chora space place and periechon surroundings and cites their repurposing by modern and postmodern thinkers as informational scaffolding for how we reason feel and act he discusses contemporary theory in cognitive science rhetoric and object oriented philosophy to expand his argument for the essentiality of ambience to the field of rhetoric rickert then examines works of ambient music that incorporate natural and artificial sound spaces and technologies finding them to be exemplary of a more fully resonant and experiential media in his preface rickert compares ambience to the fermenting of wine how its distinctive flavor can be traced to innumerable factors including sun soil water region and grape variety the environment and company with whom it s consumed further enhance the taste experience and so it should be with rhetoric to be considered among all of its influences as rickert demonstrates the larger world that we inhabit

and that inhabits us must be fully embraced if we are to advance as beings and rhetors within it

this volume brings together three areas of scholarship and practice rhetoric material life and ecology the chapters build a multi layered understanding of material life by gathering scholars from varied theoretical and critical traditions around the common theme of ecology emphasizing relationality connectedness and context the ecological orientation we build informs both rhetorical theory and environmentalist interventions contributors offer practical theoretical inquiries into several areas rhetoric s cosmologies the trophe bioregional rhetoric s nuclear colonialism and more collectively forging new avenues of communication among scholars in environmental communication communication studies and rhetoric and composition this book aims at inspiring and advancing ecological thinking demonstrating its value for rhetoric and communication as well as for environmental thought and action

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