

# **CRRAR**

Centre for Research in Reasoning, Argumentation and Rhetoric

*presents*

## **A PERAMBULATORY SENSIBILITY**

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### **Abstract**

From Plato's description of temperance as "doing all things in an orderly and quiet fashion — for example, walking in the street" through Cicero's insistence that "in standing or walking, ... let us preserve what we have called 'propriety' (*decorum*)" to Michel de Certeau's "long poem of walking," Walter Benjamin's peripatetics, and contemporary tropes and figures of perambulation, walking has been a variegated, resonant analogy for rhetorical inquiry and performance. Yet in the histories of walking that have appeared in the last few years, no scholar has explored the rich associations of rhetorical hermeneutics with perambulation.

By exploring analogies between walking and rhetoric from antiquity to the present, I argue that both rhetoric and urban perambulation enjoin participants to embrace a 'responsive pragmatism,' a sensibility underwritten by prudence and sagacity, expressed in the broadest terms by decorum, and grounded on Aristotle's insistence that rhetoric is interventionist, ethical, that the "true and the approximately true are apprehended by the same faculty." This faculty, as Seneca recognises, and Plutarch misrepresents, is 'ambulatory,' one devoted to apprehending changing circumstances, and one that allows the walker or rhetor to remain 'self-consistent.' I finish with a consideration of a Latin phrase attributed to Augustine, *solvitur ambulando*, it is solved by walking, in order to suggest that rhetorical and aesthetic canons were actively translated into ethical criteria, and in no setting more urgently than in a city.

**Thursday, October 29th, 2009**

**4:00 p.m.**

**DILLON HALL, ROOM 263**

*All are welcome*