

# Rhetoric's Earthly Realm: Heidegger, Sophistry, and the Gorgian Kairos (Lauer Series in Rhetoric and Composition)

Bernard Miller

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Plato privileges the realm of absolute reality and truth above and beyond the world of language, discourse, and rhetoric. For Plato, earth harbors the façade of mere appearances and the evils of the bewitching powers of language. In RHETORIC'S EARTHLY REALM: HEIDEGGER, SOPHISTRY, AND THE GORGIAN KAIROS, Bernard Alan Miller counters this intellectual legacy with an innovative and thoroughly conceived theory of rhetoric, one concerned with "earth" in its Heideggerian aspect, complex and multifaceted, at the root of a phenomenology placing the focus on earth as the power of Being itself, whereby it is manifest purely as language. Here, earth means "native soil," a place of the "rootedness" of a people, where the forces of nature and culture are joined in language to constitute a community. In Miller's view, language is not only an ontological process comprising the very dynamic of our being but, more critical to RHETORIC'S EARTHLY REALM, it is a power whose rhetorical dimensions are most clearly apparent in the phenomenon of kairos. The concept of kairos-as espoused by the Sophist Gorgias-has an enigmatic dimension, being an instance of the "pre-Socratic mystery" and therefore bearing a much more mystical imprint than otherwise sanctioned in theories of rhetoric. It designates a "spontaneity" in the generation of language that, from the Platonic perspective, has discomforting similarities to processes of psychic intervention and poetic frenzy. Given the perspective of an "earthly realm," Miller attempts to retrieve a kairos true to the spirit of Gorgias, one where the pre-Socratic world view remains intact, allowing a more congenial ambiance for reimagining and appreciating Sophistic rhetoric. In RHETORIC'S EARTHLY REALM, the essential ingredients of Sophistic rhetoric are reconfigured or rendered anew, including concepts like doxa, apate, and techne. BERNARD ALAN MILLER teaches courses in writing, American Indian literature, and freshman composition at Eastern Michigan University. His research and publications have dealt primarily with rhetorical theory, with an emphasis on cross-cultural studies and the various connections between pre-Platonic and postmodern thought. He earned his PhD in 1987 from Purdue University.



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