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Autor: Eden, Kathy

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In this eloquent book, Kathy Eden challenges commonly accepted conceptions about the history of hermeneutics. Contending that the hermeneutical tradition is not a purely modern German specialty, she argues instead that the historical grounding of modern hermeneutics is in the ancient tradition of rhetoric. Eden demonstrates how the early rhetorical model of reading, called *interpretatio scripti* by Cicero and his followers, not only has informed a continuous tradition of interpretation from Republican Rome to Reformation Europe but also has forged such enduring hermeneutical principles as meaning, context, and literary economy. Focusing on the most widely read works of the foremost rhetorical theorists—including Cicero, Quintilian, Plutarch, Basil, Augustine, Erasmus, Melanchthon, and Flacius-Eden traces the evolution of interpretive principles that form a single coherent chain of hermeneutical tradition. She shows how the student in ancient times learned strategies for interpreting contentious passages in legal and other texts, strategies that enabled readers to find meaning both in Homer and in the Bible. To understand patristic and humanist hermeneutics, says Eden, we must recognize their roots in this deeply institutionalized method of reading. Yale Studies in Hermeneutics Series

Kathy Eden is professor of English and comparative literature and chair of Literature Humanities at Columbia University.