

# Contents

*Preface* ix

*Acknowledgments* xvii

ONE Conversation and Its Discontents 1

TWO Ancient Conversation: From the Book of Job  
to Plato's *Symposium* 29

THREE Three Factors Affecting Conversation:  
Religion, Commerce, Women 53

FOUR The Age of Conversation:  
Eighteenth-Century Britain 79

FIVE Samuel Johnson: A Conversational Triumph; Lady  
Mary Wortley Montagu: Conversation Lost 119

SIX	Conversation in Decline: From Raillery to Reverie	150
SEVEN	Conversation in America: From Benjamin Franklin to Dale Carnegie	194
EIGHT	Modern Enemies of Conversation: From Countercultural Theorists to “White Negroes”	242
NINE	The Ways We Don’t Converse Now	264
TEN	The End of Conversation?	291
	<i>Bibliographical Essay</i>	315
	<i>Index</i>	329