Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America

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Contents

human nature experience

This is a work of history in fictional form—that is, in personal perspective, which is the only kind of history that exists.

Joyce Carol Oates, *Them*

The truth is, I have never written a story in my life that didn't have a very firm foundation in actual human experience—somebody else's experience quite often, but an experience that became my own by hearing the story, by witnessing the thing, by hearing just a word perhaps.

Katherine Ann Porter

It is like what we imagine knowledge to be:
dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free,
drawn from the cold hard mouth
of the world, derived from the rocky breast
forever, flowing and drawn, and since
our knowledge is historical, flowing, and flown.

Elizabeth Bishop, *"At the Fishhouses"*

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Introduction: A Profile of Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric

The purpose of this commentary is to define the characteristics of the nineteenth-century rhetorical tradition in North America and to argue that the nineteenth century was the last era during which the discipline of rhetoric exerted an acknowledged authority over the philosophical investigation of discourse and formal instruction in oral and written communication. The term *discipline* refers here to the historic role of rhetoric as a branch of liberal philosophy and education self-consciously concerned with discourse and the arts of expression. This history will focus on the theoretical and pedagogical priorities that the nineteenth-century discipline promoted, exploring how rhetoricians in this period defined their own enterprise. What philosophical assumptions were considered authoritative by rhetorical theorists in this period? How did these assumptions influence definitions of rhetorical principles and rules for practice? What rhetorical arts were defined as significant? What civic and cultural function was assigned to rhetorical education? These questions presuppose that an understanding of the nineteenth-century tradition depends on an investigation of the discipline's particular theoretical and cultural contexts. This methodological stance is predisposed by a larger assumption regarding the history of rhetoric: to understand the historic function of rhetorical traditions as

generic, cultural phenomena, we must concede the intrinsically adaptive dynamics of rhetorical theory and practice and the tendency of rhetorical pedagogy to model dominant philosophical and social values.

The most conspicuous characteristic in the history of rhetoric has been its responsiveness to the ever-changing nature of certain intellectual and cultural imperatives: (1) governing epistemological assumptions regarding the relationships between thought, language, and communication; (2) dominant philosophical views of human nature and the nature of affective response to discourse; (3) conventional and institutional perceptions of appropriate modes of formal communication; and (4) the perceived role of the study and practice of rhetoric in the maintenance of social and political order.[1] The disposition of theory, the evolution of rhetorical genres, and the function of rhetoric in the promotion of standards of literacy in any period in history are influenced directly by the shifting substance of these imperatives. Such factors have shaped what rhetoric has been deemed the art *of*. For example, Plato insists in the *Phaedrus* that the "function of speech is to influence souls" and that a "man who is going to be a speaker must know how many types of souls there are" (63). Underlying Plato's definition of the aim of rhetoric is the ethical bias that the arts should facilitate humankind's struggle to overcome the passions through reason and thus gain access to the knowledge of the Ideal. Plato's definition of rhetoric's edifying function also relies on the notion that eternal truth is knowable only through the processes of higher rationality.[2] By contrast, Aristotle stresses the truth-value of consensus over the authority of "immutable" truths; consequently, the *Rhetoric* assigns a more strategic function to rhetoric, viewing it as an agency by which practical wisdom or *doxa* is related to decision making concerning the good or health of the state.[3]

A more contemporary illustration of how ethical, epistemological, and ontological developments influence rhetorical theory can be observed in George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776). Campbell claims that the ends of speaking are reducible to four; "every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (10). Campbell's definition of rhetoric

was influenced by those views that had preoccupied eighteenth-century philosophy and liberal thought. As students of eighteenth-century rhetoric are quite aware, Campbell's concept of the human mind as comprising discrete faculties of the will, the imagination, the understanding, and the passions is attributable to the epistemological speculations of popular eighteenth-century philosophers such as David Hume and Thomas Reid, who pursued the assumptions of the Baconian-Lockian perspective that language links empirical knowledge with the mental faculties.[4]

These examples do not exhaust the philosophical issues that influenced classical theory and subsequent traditions; however, they do point to the overt influence that changing philosophical imperatives have had on theories of rhetoric and definitions of its scope and aim. Just as rhetorical theory has been affected by shifting philosophical views, so too has rhetorical practice been affected by social changes that have encouraged the development of new genres of rhetoric and/or transformations within the canonical guidelines. Pragmatic theories of rhetoric have tended to retain the classical system of treating rules for practice in terms of analyses of the divisions and canons of rhetoric; however, the theoretical substance of these rhetorical elements has been in a constant state of transformation. Shifting social and political conditions have promoted the development of "new" modes of formal communication and have supported alterations in the theoretical base of canonical precepts. Features of medieval and eighteenth-century rhetoric illustrate the effects of such forces on pragmatic rhetoric. The attention of medieval rhetoric to *ars dictaminis*, *ars praedicandi*, and *ars poetica* reflects a diversification of practice prompted by at least two contextual factors: the discourse activities encouraged and instigated by church bureaucracies and the cultures that supported them and the diversifying requirements of rapidly expanding political and economic states.[5] Similarly, contextual circumstances compelled the expansion of the rhetorical divisions in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. One of the major ambitions of the New Rhetoric was to provide a theoretical and pragmatic account of the type of rhetoric suited to scientific and philosophical communication. Both Campbell and Richard Whately (*Ele-*

ments of Rhetoric, 1828) treated the rhetorical process of conviction (the rhetoric of information) as a major constituent of theory and identified various forms of expository prose as distinct rhetorical categories. The development of the divisions of rhetoric beyond the traditional genres of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic in this period as well as others is attributable to cultural and social changes that exerted demands on the discipline of rhetoric to articulate new guidelines for proliferating rhetorical discourses.

The evolution of the rhetorical canons of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery reflects a similar process of responsive transformation. As changing philosophical attitudes have shifted, reorganized, and reshaped conventional standards about what modes of discourse are most effective and relevant, so too have these same dynamics influenced how the canons have been revised and reassessed. Even a brief recapitulation of the fortunes of style illustrates that canons have been transformed in response to changes in the dominant philosophical climate and shifts in attitudes toward rhetorical decorum. Nearly synonymous with *de copia* in Renaissance rhetoric, style underwent a radical redefinition at the hands of eighteenth-century rhetoricians and grammarians, who were strongly influenced by the powerful post-Renaissance linguistic ideals of perspicuity and brevity as well as the popular rationalist assumption that the "plain style" mirrored the processes of higher intellection. [6] Another dramatic transformation of a canonical element is exemplified by the eighteenth-century expansion in the English tradition of delivery into a rhetorical art in and of itself. This expansion, the result of work by theorists such as Thomas Sheridan (*Lectures on Elocution and the English Language,* 1759) and John Walker (*The Melody of Speaking,* 1787), would not have evolved in this fashion had seventeenth-century developments in epistemological philosophy and aesthetics not forged theoretical links between the workings of the sensory and mental faculties and the agencies of the the voice and the body.[7]

To assume that what rhetoric is perceived to be in any given age depends on the organic interplay between the disposition of the discipline

and the intellectual climate and social complexity of the times is to propose that there has always been a discipline of rhetoric, but that it has never been exactly the same one.[8] From a historical point of view, the formal discipline of rhetoric has represented itself consistently as that enterprise which governs the theory and study of formal discourse; however, what various societies in various eras have perceived that enterprise to embody has changed continually. To investigate the configuration of any particular rhetorical tradition necessarily obliges us first to recognize that throughout the history of rhetoric, rhetorical theory and pedagogy have displayed a dynamic tendency toward responsive transformation. An account of the nature of the nineteenth-century rhetorical tradition implies an investigation of the philosophical assumptions, theoretical models, and cultural mandates that shaped nineteenth-century theory and practice.

Many commentators on the history of rhetoric have observed that "we have yet no reliable history or bibliography of the dissemination of rhetoric texts in this period" or an "authoritative history" of developments in rhetoric during the nineteenth century (Vickers 22; Connors, Ede, and Lunsford 2). It is true that existing scholarship has not produced an overview of nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and practice; rather, research has focused on discrete elements of theory or on the status of individual arts. However, valuable information regarding the theoretical foundations and favored practices of the nineteenth-century discipline can be gleaned from this body of research, information that points toward significant generalizations. Research on nineteenth-century rhetoric has come in two waves of interest and from two distinctly different scholarly quarters. The first wave, beginning as early as 1930 and peaking in the 1950s, was initiated by scholars working in the discipline of speech communication; the second, more recent wave of attention has been prompted by a renewal of interest in rhetoric in the last decade among teachers and rhetoricians working in departments of English. Despite differences in focus, coverage, and evaluations offered by these two movements, these investigations have

provided a number of complementary insights into nineteenth-century theory and practice.

Appearing in the pages of *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and *Speech Monographs*, in early collections of historical scholarship on the American tradition, and in numerous doctoral dissertations written between 1935 and 1955, the earliest investigations of nineteenth-century American rhetoric provided the first accounts of its theoretical and pedagogical nature. The most conclusive of these pioneering efforts were Warren Guthrie's analysis of eighteenth-century English theoretical influences on the early nineteenth-century academy and the rise of the first indigenous American rhetorics ("The Development of Rhetorical Theory in America, 1635–1850") and several notable articles in *History of Speech Education in America: Background Studies*, edited by Karl R. Wallace. These investigations provided overviews of the development of elocution, oratory, and debate and general descriptions of academic courses offered between 1800 and the turn of the century.[9]

Showing a tendency to view the nineteenth-century tradition in terms of the fortunes of the oral arts, speech communication histories have largely been devoted to tracing theoretical influences and pedagogical trends in the relationship between classical rhetoric and the development of speech education. Typical subjects of early scholarship include the influence of "classical doctrines" and canons in nineteenth-century theory, homiletics, and oratorical practice; the popularity of campus exercises and extracurricular activities featuring declamation, original speeches, and debate; and the stylistic and argumentative techniques of emerging modes of public speaking. More recent work in this vein has explored the nature of Victorian and nineteenth-century American understandings of Ciceronian rhetoric, changing views of the inventional obligations of the platform speaker from 1800 to the late 1880s, and the influence of liberal philosophy on the academic tradition.[10]

This initial scholarship suggested that the nineteenth-century American tradition was slow to free itself from the powerful influence of the eighteenth-century British tradition; however, it began to show theoretical

and pedagogical creativity at midcentury. This creativity developed in response to the needs of a democratic society and the aims of an increasingly pragmatic system of education.

> Up to this point [1850] we have seen that American rhetoric was strongly under the control of English doctrine and works. . . . Now American rhetoric is prepared to come of age, for three American works of originality appear within a decade. W. G. T Shedd's commentary on and translation of Francis Theremin's *Eloquence a Virtue*, Henry N. Day's rhetorical writings, and M. B. Hope's *Princeton Textbook on Rhetoric* chart a vigorous course toward an ever more practical philosophy of persuasion. Differing in many respects, the works unite in asserting the functional significance of rhetoric. (Guthrie 16: 107)

In addition to providing this outline of influence and development, Guthrie and others established an important generalization regarding the status of the nineteenth-century rhetorical arts: the majority of early chronicles affirm Guthrie's initial observation that the theory and practice of elocution enjoyed massive popularity throughout the nineteenth century, while the exclusive attention to oratory of the eighteenth-century college curriculum gave way to equal attention to composition and the "critical and belles-lettristic phase of rhetorical training" in the early decades of the nineteenth century (Guthrie15: 67). Although early scholars recognized the expanding curricular concerns of nineteenth-century rhetoric, an expansion that ensured the status of oratory and belles lettres as the most favored arts, they argued that the study of oratory underwent a rebirth in the late nineteenth century through the popularity of forensic debate and the development of speech communication as a discrete academic specialization. In one of the earliest surveys of speech education in American colleges, Hochmuth and Murphy define significant features of "the main line of development of rhetorical training" in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in terms of the prominent position of oratory, widespread instruction in elocution, the rising popularity of forensics courses, and a general

"enthusiasm for debate" (169). The general attitude toward nineteenth-century rhetoric that emerges in this initial body of documentation is one of admiration for the successful development of an indigenous American tradition and for the durable popularity of various oral arts.

Authored primarily by a group of English studies scholars intent on asserting the relevance of rhetorical theory to composing theory, the second wave of scholarship has focused on the historical relationship between nineteenth-century rhetoric and the evolution of rhetorics of composition. Although the most ambitious investigation of this connection has been provided by James A. Berlin in *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* (1984), numerous articles in recent issues of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly, College English,* and *College Composition and Communication,* and in collections such as *The Rhetorical Tradition and Modern Writing* (Murphy, 1982) and *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse* (Connors Ede, and Lunsford, 1984) have evaluated a wide range of previously unexamined topics bearing on the evolution of rhetorics of composition: theories of invention in nineteenth-century rhetoric texts; the influence of nineteenth-century notions of style and grammar on standards for composition; the development of the genres of written discourse; and the influence of nineteenth-century rhetoricians on twentieth-century pedagogical traditions in composition theory.

This more recent body of scholarship reiterates rather than expands earlier conclusions regarding the influence of eighteenth-century rhetorics and tends, like early histories of nineteenth-century rhetoric, toward a "specialization" focus in its nearly exclusive attention to the history of the art of composition. However, scholarship of the last decade significantly extends previous accounts by drawing attention to the powerful theoretical and curricular status of rhetorics of composition in the nineteenth-century academy and by identifying and analyzing the treatises of those rhetoricians who shaped academic instruction in composition in the little examined period after 1850 (Scotsman Alexander Bain and widely read American rhetoricians A. S. Hill, John Franklin Genung, and Barrett Wendell). Berlin offers the most extensive analysis of nineteenth-century composing theory

to date in his exploration of the influence of "classical," "psychological-epistemological," and "romantic" theories of rhetoric on nineteenth-century instruction in composition (*Writing Instruction*).

In addition to establishing additional documentation of major theoretical influences and practices, what is distinctive about recent scholarship on nineteenth-century rhetoric is its overall assessment of this era as that period most responsible for the theoretical impoverishment of the rhetoric of composition and the academic marginalization of rhetoric studies in modern English studies.

> The period 1850–1900 in American certainly cannot be called one of the great eras of rhetoric, even though there was a brief flash of more vital activity in the closing years of the century. The subject was too heavily academic during most of this period to allow it much vigor. In no part of rhetorical doctrine can this be seen so clearly as in the matter of audience awareness—that is, the recognition of rhetoric as the art of communication.[11] (Kitzhaber 223–24)

The extensive influence in the nineteenth-century of belletristic rhetorics modeled on Hugh Blair's popular eighteenth-century treatise *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* has been identified by Kitzhaber and a host of composition studies scholars as a negative theoretical and curricular force that accelerated the erosion of rhetoric's historic function in society and in the academy, a process completed by the early twentieth century. Research of the last decade has characterized nineteenth-century rhetoric as a "fragmented" discipline that lost the stability of a traditional classical system as a consequence of the domination of belletristic views that encouraged superficial pedagogical aspirations for rhetoric.[12]

Frequently citing classical rhetoric as the most comprehensive view of the discipline ever devised, negative assessments of nineteenth-century rhetoric have relied on explicit or implicit contrasts between elements of classical and nineteenth-century rhetoric to assert the now nearly universal criticism that the classical tradition was further fragmented and corrupted

during this period. While such claims are provocative, they must be assessed with caution if the circumstances of nineteenth-century rhetoric are to be understood. Pejorative critiques of the nineteenth-century tradition draw their force from the assumption that rhetorical traditions that deviate from classical philosophies of rhetoric (Aristotelian or Ciceronian) are unstable or inherently compromised.[13] This classicist stance in nineteenth-century scholarship follows a noticeable tendency in historiography within rhetoric studies: the adoption of the stance that the "classical tradition" represents the original, most comprehensive, and only "true" configuration of rhetorical theory and praxis and that subsequent traditions should be measured against the features of this superordinate tradition.

The classicist stance has predisposed various characterizations of the state of rhetoric in earlier periods, including the view of the Middle Ages as a period of theoretical dispersal; the general regard for the Renaissance as a period of "recovery" for classical rhetoric; and the popular view of the eighteenth century as a period when the integrity of the classical system was corrupted within the English tradition by the rising popularity of belletristic poetics and "scientific" philosophies of rhetoric. The problematic consequence of adopting such a stance in accounts of the nineteenth-century tradition, or any other tradition for that matter, is that such a posture focuses attention on a fixed notion of what rhetoric ought to be rather than on what an individual tradition actually entails. Comparing the theoretical priorities and pedagogical practices of subsequent traditions to a classical model obscures the fact that every discipline of rhetoric is the creature of historical circumstances.[14]

Modern scholarship displays yet another partisan tendency in methodology that runs contrary to the ambition to examine the characteristic elements of the nineteenth-century tradition—a specialization or praxis bias. Although the "specialization" focus of early and recent scholarship in many instances is simply a consequence of the selective interests of the distinct scholarly venues in which rhetoric is presently studied, significant numbers of nineteenth-century commentaries present evaluative accounts of the fortunes of individual rhetorical arts. These accounts foster the

impression that the disciplinary range of nineteenth-century rhetoric can be or should be identified with one art. The bulk of scholarship on nineteenth-century composition instruction associates one of the pedagogical commitments of rhetoric in this period with the scope of the entire discipline in a synecdochic construct.[15] A praxis bias can be identified in a host of early investigations that define the nineteenth-century tradition strictly in terms of the status of argumentation, public address, or the study of oratory. The praxis bias is so pervasive in historical scholarship on nineteenth-century rhetoric that it could easily be assumed that to trace the history of oratory or composition and to account for the history of the discipline are one and the same gesture. Not restricted to nineteenth-century scholarship, the praxis bias can be identified in a number of ways in which the narrative of the rhetorical tradition has been told. For example, Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric* is discussed mainly as a work that recovers the classical canons and reinscribes public speaking as a major division of rhetoric; however, Wilson's frequent references to the invention and style of prose make it clear that he regards the canons as applicable to both oratory and prose composition. Consider as well the pejorative notice (or neglect) of the arts of elocution and criticism in accounts of the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century traditions despite their prestige during those periods.

Like the classicist stance that indicts rather than explores the unique theoretical, philosophical, and cultural influences on various postclassical traditions, the praxis bias does not account for the degree to which rhetorical practice evolves in response to changing needs of societies and cultures, accommodating not only an ever-changing theoretical disposition but also an ever-rearranging coalition of "traditional" and innovative arts. The assumptions explicitly or implicitly posed by classicist and praxis-oriented scholarship have perpetuated an approach to the study of nineteenth-century rhetoric that focuses evaluatively or selectively on certain features of the tradition. A commentary that seeks to profile nineteenth-century rhetoric against the backdrop of its indigenous circumstances must resist the assumptions of such partisan critiques in favor of an analytical reading of nineteenth-century scholarship as a body of work from which general conclu-

sions regarding the nature and function of rhetorical theory can be elicited, conclusions that clarify how the nineteenth-century tradition responded to the intellectual and social will of its age. When existing scholarship is reviewed from this perspective, significant presumptions regarding the character of nineteenth-century theory, the range of the nineteenth-century rhetorical arts, and the cultural function of rhetorical education can be derived.

Nineteenth-century rhetoric has been described consistently as a composite: "early nineteenth-century American school rhetoric [was] an amalgam of classical and eighteenth-century discourse theory" (Crowley, "Evolution" 146). Both initial and recent research into the theoretical foundations of nineteenth-century rhetoric points to three overt influences: "firm classical foundations," belletristic interests in "criticism and literary taste," and epistemological approaches to rhetoric as a "science" closely related to the study of the "mental faculties." All existing evidence indicates that nineteenth-century theory depended on a combination of the same classical, epistemological, and belletristic assumptions that marked the theoretical foundations of the New Rhetoric. Although various scholars have described this characteristic "amalgam" as "confusing," such evaluations do not mitigate against the working assumption that nineteenth-century theory was synthetic. This synthetic character can be traced to the durable influence of eighteenth-century models such as Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* as well as Richard Whately's early nineteenth-century work, *Elements of Rhetoric*. Nineteenth-century rhetoricians followed their immediate predecessors in combining classical treatments of the canons of invention, style, and arrangement with epistemological discussions of the laws of the mind and belletristic treatments of the principles of taste, style, and the literary genres.

One of the central ambitions of this commentary is to explore the premise that nineteenth-century theory was essentially synthetic, being derived from the integration of classical elements with eighteenth-century

bellestristic and epistemological approaches to theory and practice. The significant consequence of this synthesis is that the nineteenth-century tradition extended the theoretical and pedagogical claims of the New Rhetoric (chapters 1 and 2). Early nineteenth-century treatises such as Samuel Newman's *Practical System of Rhetoric* (1827) and Alexander Jamieson's *Grammar of Rhetoric and Polite Literature* (1844) imitated the organization of Campbell and Blair's treatises and incorporated the philosophical and pragmatic principles popularized by the New Rhetoric. Reiterating the classical elements incorporated in the theoretical and pedagogical substance of the New Rhetoric, nineteenth-century treatises outlined epistemological and critical standards for rhetorical principles and practices. This theoretical configuration was typical of nineteenth-century treatises in general—even those such as Henry N. Day's *Elements of the Art of Rhetoric* (1850) and A. S. Hill's *Principles of Rhetoric* (1878), which imitate the treatises of Campbell, Blair, and Whately less directly. By the 1880s, classical, belletristic, and epistemological precepts had become absorbed into an unprecedented theoretical hybrid. Texts such as John Franklin Genung's *Working Principles of Rhetoric* (1900) extended the influence of this theoretical synthesis into the early decades of the twentieth century.[16]

In addition to the repeated observation that nineteenth-century theory relies on a combination of classical, belletristic, and epistemological assumptions, scholars investigating the nineteenth century have pointed to a gradual but distinct shift from a dominant pedagogical interest in oratory early in the century toward a more inclusive pragmatic interest in public speaking, elocution, belles lettres, and composition by 1880. This diversity has been lamented by those who perceive it as problematic for the status of argumentation, oratory, and the study of classical principles. Nonetheless, even the most persistent critics of the "dispersed" state of nineteenth-century rhetoric practice conclude that nineteenth-century rhetoric extended traditional praxis beyond oratory and public speaking to include the arts of prose composition and critical analysis. This extended theory of practice will be explored in chapters 3 and 4, in which the claim will be made that the nineteenth-century discipline displayed far more allegiance to the

multifaceted eighteenth-century vision of rhetorical practice than it did to a classical tradition oriented solely to the study of public speaking. Nineteenth-century theorists defined an extensive, inclusive range for the rhetorical arts by conflating epistemological and aesthetic rationales for public speaking, the composition of written discourse, and critical analysis. As the century progressed, theoretical attention to a widening range of rhetorical arts moved the pedagogical interests of rhetorical education ever closer to the pedagogical ideal of the eighteenth-century belletristic tradition, an ideal that assigned equal importance to the arts of oratory, composition, and criticism.

A number of scholars have argued that the status of rhetoric in the academy declined in the nineteenth century; in fact, though, the pedagogical, philosophical, and theoretical interests of the discipline were supported vigorously by the liberal arts curriculum which consistently affirmed the cultural function of rhetorical education (see chapters 5 and 6). Rhetorical education played a crucial role in bolstering the idealism of nineteenth-century liberal education, an enterprise that was committed to the development of an intellectually progressive and culturally enlightened society. From the perspective of nineteenth-century educators in the United States and Canada, only an education in the rhetorical arts could foster those virtues that every intelligent and civilized individual must possess: "the cultivation of . . . taste . . . the exercise of the imagination . . . the development of . . . intellectual traits and feelings . . . and clearness and power of expression."[17]

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the nineteenth-century tradition was its unquestioned authority over institutional standards of literacy and the general public's notion of why the educated individual should learn to speak and write eloquently. Rhetoricians in the period perceived themselves as responsible for accounting for the nature of discourse, the techniques of rhetoric, and the development of the intellectual and moral virtues that enabled the speaker or writer to communicate in an effective and beneficent fashion. Extremely idealistic in their view of the consequences of rhetorical study, nineteenth-century rhetoricians promoted

the notion within the academy and in the public mind that the acquisition of rhetorical expertise is commensurate with the cultivation of a liberal mind and admirable, enlightening emotions. At no point during the century did prominent rhetoricians define the nature and aims of rhetoric in isolation of this ideological point of view. To observe the means by which the nineteenth-century tradition exerted this belief is to become better acquainted with the significant cultural role that rhetoric played in this era and to recognize the success with which the discipline promoted a theoretical and pedagogical program uniquely suited to its historical circumstances.