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Women (London, Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1891) gives a common-sense liberal reaction toward women's rights. Other helpful books upon women's activities include L. P. Brockett, *Woman's Work in the Civil War* (Philadelphia, Zeigler, McCurdy and Co., 1867); Carrie C. Catt and Nettie R. Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926); Paulina W. Davis, comp., *A History of the National Woman's Rights Movement* (New York, Journeyman Printers' Co-operative Association, 1871); Lydia H. Farmer, *What America Owes to Women*, (New York, Charles Wells Moulton, 1893); Phebe A. Hanaford, *Daughters of America* (Augusta, Me., True and Co., 1883); and May W. Sewall, ed., *The World's Congress of Representative Women* (Chicago, Rand McNally & Company, 1894).

The Teaching of Rhetoric in the United States during the Classical Period of Education

by OTA THOMAS

General Overview

Education, it has often been contended, reflects the temper of the age in which it exists. Certainly this seems true of the development of the teaching of speech in America. The New World, founded partly because of religious dissension in the old, felt that one of the immediate needs was for spiritual leaders. Accordingly, schools were established to train ministers of the gospel, and the curriculums of those schools followed the principles currently accepted for theological training. The classical languages, logic, and rhetoric constituted part of that preparation. At the outset, college students were required to speak in Latin, not only in their formal speech appearances but in their conversation as well.¹ Scholastic debates were couched in the Roman tongue and carried on in the stilted manner of formal logic. But Colonial Americans faced a hard life, with little time for such luxuries as conversational command of an outmoded language. Before long the vernacular triumphed as the method of informal communication in the college. Subsequently, as governmental and political institutions developed and it became apparent that leaders were needed for affairs other than the saving of men's souls, the colleges turned their attention more directly to the training of lawyers, doctors, and teachers. From the beginning, it must be remembered, colleges were functioning as professional schools no less than as liberalizing institutions. Before the opening of the nineteenth century, courses in surveying, navigation, anatomy, and geography were recognized and accepted in the New England colleges. For

¹ The first laws of Harvard as set forth by President Dunster in *New England's First Fruits*, in 1642, demanded that "the Scholars shall never use their Mother tongue except that in publick Exercises of oratory or such like, they bee called to make them in English." The Yale laws of 1726 contained a similar provision.

men with secular interests, speech training based only on the Latin of Cicero and the syllogisms of Aristotle served little practical need. Thus, on demand of student and layman alike, the study of English grammar, literature, and speech was introduced into the higher institutions.

During the Revolution, the British occupied many college towns. William and Mary, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, Pennsylvania, and King's colleges were among those to feel the impact of invasion. In the midst of death, destruction, and hunger, students turned from abstractions to the immediate problems at hand. Ready and forceful discussion of contemporary issues demanded a free, flexible form of argument delivered in the vernacular. The difficulty of expression in the Latin language and the rigidity of the syllogistic forms were inhibiting to thought. Thus the trend toward anglicizing and informalizing speech training in the colleges was hastened by the political turmoil of the eighteenth century. The demand was for the solution of legal and governmental problems, and in adjusting its techniques to this demand speech training seemed to justify itself.

The greatest practical changes in speech education during the first two centuries of American collegiate history were, then, the transfer from the Latin to the English medium of communication and the inauguration of training in forensic debate during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

With the changes in the practical aspects of speech training came changes in the theories that governed the practices. When debate was confined to formal logic and speech performances were delivered in the classical languages, the preeminent rhetorical concepts posed for student mastery dealt primarily with stylistic perfection. Disputations were the legitimate offspring of logic, and proficiency in defending a conviction in these student arguments was relatively little related to mastery of rhetorical principles. In other oral exercises collegiate speakers strove for elegance of language. Then, as the training modified its goal and concerned itself with the development of effective speakers, using the vernacular, the theoretical precepts in turn were modified to conform to the necessity for persuasion in lay speaking. As college students attempted to perfect the art of convincing others, the four divisions of rhetoric as conceived by Aristotle once more gained ascendancy. The tool of this broader rhetoric was oratory; its primary medium of communication was speech.

With the increasing demand for effectual lay speaking, writers for the first time devoted whole books to discussions of delivery—an aspect of rhetoric that Aristotle, Cicero, and their followers had largely ignored. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the enthusiasm for working principles of oral presentation flourished both in England and America. The writers on elocution refined and detailed their treatments

With the growing emphasis placed on delivery, rhetoric became more and more associated with the written word, and spoken language became considered chiefly a matter of elocution. During the nineteenth century, speech training was largely conceived as learning and practicing mechanical rules for oral communication.

By the middle of the nineteenth century student speech performances were conducted mainly in the English language. The classical rhetorical principles expounded in the American colleges found practical application in frequent disputes, as well as in the older, accepted types of collegiate speaking exercises. Furthermore, specialized and intensive training in elocution supplemented the persuasive techniques acquired in the rhetoric classes.

Speech in the Curriculums

From the time the first classes met on the Harvard campus, training in the theory and practice of speechmaking held an acknowledged place in higher education. The early laws of William and Mary did not specify any definite courses in rhetoric, yet the statutes of 1792 provided that candidates for the bachelor's degree must "be well acquainted with Logic, Belles Letters [*sic*], Rhetoric," as well as other prescribed subject fields.¹ According to the Harvard laws of 1643 and 1655 and those of Yale in 1726, the study of rhetoric was required of all students throughout their undergraduate preparation. Later statutes² of these colleges demanded only one year's classwork in that branch of learning—that year to be completed before reaching junior standing.

Following the curtailment of time devoted to rhetoric, certain other important curricular adjustments relating to speech education occurred. The first of these changes was the introduction of the study of English grammar, composition, and literature into the curriculums. Yale first hesitantly granted classroom recognition to English speech and language on October 26, 1776, when the Corporation, at the request of the seniors, voted that Timothy Dwight be allowed "to instruct them in rhetoric, history, and the belles lettres, provided it may be done with the approbation

¹ Auguston Davis, "Statutes of the University of William and Mary, Richmond," reprinted in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 25 (1792): 58.

² The Laws of Harvard College, 1767, MS in Harvard Archives; *Laws of Harvard College*, (Boston, Samuel Hall, 1798); *Laws of Yale College-Made and Established by the President and Tutors*, 1745, MS in Yale Library; *Laws of Yale-College in New Haven, in Connecticut, Enacted by the President and Fellows* (New Haven, Thomas and Samuel Green, 1774); *Laws of Yale-College in New Haven, in Connecticut, Enacted by the President and Fellows, the Sixth Day of October, A.D. 1795* (New Haven, Thomas and Samuel Green). When the official curriculum was first formally set forth at Dartmouth in 1796 rhetoric was required only during the freshman year.

of the parents or guardians of said class."¹ Harvard had legislated regarding the teaching of English in 1766, when the tutorial plan of the college was changed from a class to a subject-matter basis. The ruling provided that all students report to their tutors on Saturday morning to be instructed in "Theology, Elocution, Composition in English, Rhetoric, and other Belles Lettres, according to the direction of the Corporation from time to time."² Seemingly, English had been taught in the Grammar School at William and Mary since its founding, and specific reference is found in 1772 to "a course of lectures on . . . poetry, including the general principles of composition."³

The introduction of such courses was important. The English language had been accepted as a recognized medium for speech performances. Naturally, facility in handling the mother tongue was imperative to students in oral performances, particularly because most of these exercises were written in full and read aloud.

The second important development was the inauguration in the early 1800's of courses devoted to the delivery of speeches. E. D. North, who wrote his book in 1846 outlining the procedure by which elocution was taught at Yale, had been instructing in that subject for more than a quarter of a century at New Haven, and plainly he considered the course as a complement to the study of rhetoric.⁴

Another compensation attending the reduced emphasis on rhetoric in the curriculum was the increased opportunity for actual student participation in speaking exercises, particularly in declamations. In the last half of the eighteenth century authorities at both Yale and Harvard encouraged more students to declaim each week.⁵

Still another significant development in the teaching of speech was its recognition as a separate and distinct subject field, organized in course form. In 1806 John Quincy Adams was appointed to the Boylston Chair of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard. It was the first such appointment in the United States. Previously the subject had been taught by some tutor

¹ Yale Corporation Records, cited in Wm. L. Kingsley, *Yale College*, (New York, Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1879), I, 99.

² Harvard College Records, II, 271.

³ *The Virginia Gazette*, Jan. 2, 1772.

⁴ E. D. North, *Practical Speaking as Taught at Yale* (New Haven, F. H. Pease, 1846). For a full treatment of the diversification of courses in speech after 1835, see the study by Thomas E. Coulton noted in the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

⁵ The Yale laws of 1745 required six students to declaim each week; by 1755 twelve declamations were demanded weekly. Harvard provided in its early laws for such weekly performances also, but did not specify a definite number of participants. On Nov. 10, 1766, additional speaking opportunities were provided by a vote of the Corporation asserting that "Sophomores and Freshmen shall on Fryday mornings thro' ye year declaim in the chamber of their Tutors respectively."

who also instructed in numerous other fields and was frequently not specifically prepared for teaching speech. But after Adams began his duties, other colleges established similar professorships. From this meager beginning have sprung the speech departments of the present day.

Speech Practices in the Colleges

In addition to the classes devoted to the acquisition of theory, students were required to demonstrate the practical application of rhetorical concepts in frequent speaking exercises. The 1727 statutes of William and Mary, which did not call for the study of rhetoric, required of all students both declamations and disputations. The declamation, which originally had meant a short composition in one of the ancient languages, written and delivered *memoriter*, had been one of the most popular of these weekly exercises. Not until 1751 do any indications appear that the English tongue was permissible. At that time Benjamin Franklin wrote to one of the Yale trustees: "I am glad you have introduced English declamation into your college. It will be of great service to the youth, especially if care be taken to form their pronunciation on the best models. . . . It is a matter that hath been too much neglected."¹ The legalizing of English for speech exercises was accompanied by the introduction of English grammar and composition into the curriculums, for the common medium of expression was increasingly regarded as worthy of study. The clamor for a "practical" education was already producing tangible results. After the lapse from Latin, the term *declamation* was enlarged to include the delivery of an excerpt from another author. Thus John Quincy Adams delivered at Cambridge in 1786 a cutting from *As You Like It* to fulfill his curricular declamation requirement;² members of the Harvard Speaking Club recited bits of composition from such varied sources as English histories, Demosthenes' orations, all types of poetry, and contemporary sermons. Students were probably encouraged in this activity by the elocutionists, who included in their books practice selections for the mastery of specific dicta.

In the earliest days of the colleges, *commonplacing*, or the delivery of original sermons, had been required, as well as the repeating of the context of sermons attended. As the institutions became more secular and the purpose of education became broader than that of preparing ministers, this requirement was abandoned.

Another type of oral activity, destined for enormous popularity, was the disputation. Until the mid-point of the eighteenth century the disputes,

¹ *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (Albert Henry Smyth, ed., New York, The Macmillan Company, 1907), III, 61.

² John Quincy Adams, college diary, cited in Henry Adams, "Old Cambridge and New," *North American Review*, 114 (1872): 132.

though presented orally, had been exercises in formal logic, conducted by means of syllogisms in the Latin tongue. After 1750 the more utilitarian forensic debate was gradually substituted as a classroom procedure; by 1800 it had superseded the traditional form of argument.¹ Not only was this exercise demanded of the juniors and seniors in their course of study but the students began to debate extracurricularly.² In fact, it is in its extracurricular use that we find the first distinction made between a forensic and an extemporaneous dispute.³ The students, of their own volition, attempted to free themselves from their manuscripts.

But perhaps the most significant adaptation of the forensic dispute was found in the law school of the College of William and Mary, where the students conducted regular legislative exercises. Jefferson wrote to James Madison on July 26, 1780 regarding this activity: "Wythe's school is numerous, they hold weekly Courts & Assemblies in the Capitol. The Professors join in it, and the young men dispute with elegance, method & learning. This single school by throwing from time to time new hands well principled, & well informed, into the legislature will be of infinite value."

In addition to speech performances that were demanded as a part of the weekly recitation routine, the more excellent students were allowed to appear at commencement and at special class-day exhibitions held three or four times throughout the year. One of the most popular entertainments on such occasions was the English dialogue.⁴ The terminology

¹ On July 21, 1789, President Stiles, of Yale, recorded in his diary: "The seniors have had but one syllogistic disputation this year, and perhaps half a dozen last year. There was one only last Commencement—none this. Thus farewell syllogistic disputation in Yale College much to my mortification."—*The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* (Franklin B. Dexter, ed., New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), III, 360. The commencement programs at both Dartmouth and Harvard show that the Latin disputes disappeared at those colleges, also, before 1800.

² See the section in this chapter on Literary Societies.

³ On Nov. 26, 1776, the Linonia Society at Yale voted to introduce extemporaneous disputes into their meetings. The constitutions of the chapters of Phi Beta Kappa distinguished between "opposite composition" and extemporaneous disputation. The constitution of the United Fraternity at Dartmouth provided at each meeting "one written and two extemporaneous disputes" should be given. The Code of Laws of the Brothers in Unity at New Haven, in 1783, contained the provision that on the third gathering of the month "one-half of the disputants shall perform in writing; the other extempore." John Quincy Adams, in 1786, recounted that in the classroom forensic dispute the arguments were written out and totaled two or three pages in length. *Writings of John Quincy Adams* (W. C. Ford, ed., New York, The Macmillan Company, 1913), I, 21.

⁴ *Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (P. L. Ford, ed., New York, G. P. Putnam's, 1894), II, 322.
⁵ Like the declamation and disputation, the dialogue was originally confined to the classical languages, though it had never been received enthusiastically by the students. Always the parts assigned to be delivered in the mother tongue had been those most coveted by the contending scholars.

was so indefinite, however, as to extend over a number of meanings. At times it designated a conversational technique after the Socratic method. The interrogations might be so directed as to secure information, or the purpose of the inquisitor might be to wring such concessions and admissions from his speaking colleagues that the latter would be forced into an indefensible position. Or it might be a discussion written and prearranged by two or more persons. As applied to this latter activity, *dialogue* was freely interchangeable with the *colloquy* or *conference*. Occasionally, students memorized and delivered an excerpt from some classical model, such as Erasmus' *Colloquies* or Cicero's *De oratore*. This exercise, too, was known simply as a dialogue. And a fourth usage for the word was its application to plays written and produced by the students.¹

Two other activities presented on special occasions were so closely related to the original declamation that their respective boundaries can hardly be disentangled. These were the oration and the dissertation. Apparently the term *dissertation* referred to a rather lengthy persuasive speech. Orations, on the other hand, although primarily persuasive, might include inspirational and eulogistic performances. The eliosophic, valedictory, salutatory, and funeral orations, for example, were all concerned less with producing action than with the inculcation of an attitude or an appreciation.

The Literary Societies

After 1750 one of the most important forces promoting better speech in the college emanated not from the faculty and governing bodies but from the students themselves. This force was the literary society, which assumed, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, a distinguished and powerful place in educational institutions. Kingsley, the Yale historian, says that the New Haven Linonia Society was one "which for more than a hundred years was to exert a marked influence on the institution; and which, in the opinion of some of the most distinguished of the living alumni, has been scarcely second in its advantages to the regular instruction of the officers of the college."²

¹ The term *dialogue* was deliberately used by the Linonia Society at Yale to camouflage the production of plays. On Dec. 21, 1782, the secretary recorded that since the college authorities had forbidden the enacting of plays at the society's anniversary, each of the four classes should present a dialogue for the event. The account of the celebration that took place on Apr. 8, 1783, states that they performed a humorous dialogue, the characters of which were "Esquire Grimsey, an avaricious miser who has two sons educated; Johnny Grimsey, the eldest son, a profligate rake who was married to Susy Princost; Solomon Grimsey, the youngest son, a sober-minded studious youth, unmarried," etc.

² Kingsley, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

At Yale, where these groups first appeared in a significant role, two of the societies, the Linonia and the Brothers in Unity, were of primary importance. At Harvard, the Hasty Pudding and the Speaking Clubs, at Dartmouth, the United Fraternity and the Social Friends, at William and Mary the F.H.C. Society, and at Princeton the American Whig Society were the representative organizations.

The Linonia, organized in 1753, was the oldest of all such fraternities, and its program was in essence the outline followed by later groups including the Phi Beta Kappa chapters in their early years. These organizations served three important purposes. (1) They provided an opportunity for students to participate frequently in speech activities. (2) They encouraged a systematic attempt to criticize the performances constructively. (3) Each of the societies established and maintained a library for the use of its members.¹

An indication of the abundant opportunities for student performance is provided by the records of the Linonia Society. On November 9, 1781, the program of the meeting consisted of five compositions, eleven speeches, and several dialogues, with two or three members speaking in each. The next week eight speeches and two dialogues were given. The constitution of 1785 specifically enjoined that each "member shall at every meeting have an opportunity of offering whatever exercises he pleases, which if approved by the Society, shall be exhibited at the next meeting." Written compositions were examined by a committee of student critics, any member violating proper grammatical usage during the meeting to be corrected by his conferees.

By 1800 the literary societies had assumed such importance on the Yale campus that students entering college were automatically allocated by the authorities to one of the two major organizations. For thirty years this practice was continued.

As the nineteenth century progressed, records show that the literary societies became less dominant and that members became increasingly uninterested and irresponsible. But it should be remembered that during the period in which colleges had provided little other opportunity for studying the English language and speech, these groups had done vital and dynamic work to promote the improvement of speechmaking.

Rhetorical Theory

A. AS REVEALED BY STUDENT READING

The Ramean Rhetoric. Until approximately 1720 the Ramean concept of rhetoric occupied a lofty position in the Harvard curriculum. Ramus

¹ By 1869 the combined libraries of the Linonia and Brothers in Unity Societies at Yale numbered 30,000 volumes. Edward B. Coe, "The Literary Societies," in Kingsley, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

believed that *inventio* and *dispositio*, as processes of the mind, belonged to the field of logic, whereas rhetoric proper was concerned chiefly with the ornamentation of ideas. To him rhetoric had two parts—expression and action. Expression included the study of tropes and figures; action dealt with voice and gesture.¹ Evidence indicates that the classical rhetoricians were largely ignored while the abbreviated rhetorics of Talaeus and Dugard, disciples of Ramus, were widely known and venerated.² Both these authors considered *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio* in general, but their chief emphasis was upon elegancies of style, especially the use of tropes and figures.

In addition to Dugard, Harvard freshmen in 1726 studied the grammar-school text of Thomas Farnaby. Farnaby, a student of the seventeenth century English rhetorician Vossius, naturally reflected in his *Index rhetoricus et oratorius cum formulis oratoris et indice poetico* the classical view of his teacher. Dull, abbreviated, and yet crowded with information, the work fell far short of providing a self-explanatory, interesting text. It did, however, contain adequate discourses on all four divisions of the classical rhetorical doctrine during an era in which two of those divisions were woefully neglected.

Outside the Ramean tradition, the *Formulae oratoriae* of John Clarke was also read in the New England colleges. In treatment less complete than Farnaby's text, it contained more detailed helps and illustrations for composition of specific types.

After 1720 the *Port Royal Art of Speaking* attracted considerable interest in America. Though this book is by no means a restatement of classical doctrines, nevertheless the fivefold division of rhetoric is proposed and discussed in the second section, The Art of Persuasion. The treatment of delivery is slighted, the discussion of memory is negligible, and matters of style, particularly the use of trope and other figures, are grossly emphasized. But invention and arrangement, long neglected in popular colleges texts, are given full recognition as parts of the art of persuasion.

The Rhetoric of Oratory. With the *Port Royal Art of Speaking* serving as a transition from the abbreviated to the classical concept of rhetoric in collegiate circles, the mid-eighteenth century marked a turning point in the history of speech education. Parallel with the change from Latin to English speechmaking, with the shift from syllogistic to forensic debate, and with the increasing student enthusiasm for improved speech, came a general familiarity of students with the classical rhetorical doctrines. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, although Quintilian and Aristotle still remained comparative strangers, Cicero's *De oratore* obtained wide

¹ Frank Pierrepont Graves, *Peter Ramus and the Educational Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1912), p. 138.

² The investigations of Warren Guthrie and P. G. Perrin confirm this conclusion. For full treatment concerning the early curriculums, see these studies.

circulation. Until the publication of Blair in 1783, the most influential contemporary reformulation of the classicist viewpoint was Ward's *System of Oratory*. This text, a massive synthesis of the Greek and Roman rhetorical concepts, considered oratory as the medium of the art and its aim as the influencing of the minds of men. Despite its tedious length, the students liked it and read it of their own volition. In 1767 a member of a student-organized group for the promotion of oratory at Yale tells us that we "purchased Ward's System of Oratory for our director." After the speeches given at each meeting, the same student continues, "We read a lecture in Ward, and, as we go on, are careful to digest and incorporate it."¹

This awakened interest in Aristotelian principles of speaking does not mean, however, that the abbreviated rhetoric with its concentration on tropes and other figures had been discarded. Holmes' *Art of Rhetoric Made Easy* and the section on rhetoric in R. Dodsley's *The Preceptor*² were devoted largely to style. Both were read, and Holmes was particularly popular. Library records, available at Dartmouth during the period from 1774 to 1777, show that the *Art of Rhetoric Made Easy* was the only text in rhetoric among the books most frequently withdrawn,³ and before the adoption of Blair's *Lectures*, Holmes had been one of the texts in use at Yale.⁴ Though Holmes did not confine his treatment to *elocutio*, the sections devoted to other aspects of rhetoric were superficial and perfunctory.

In addition to these rhetorical concepts, students were exposed to still a third point of view. The late eighteenth century saw the origin and amplification of a new theory of rhetoric—in the elocutionary school. Arising out of the oft-repeated criticisms of the standard of English oratory, the proponents of this new movement argued for the improvement in speech through better delivery. As to how this effective communication should be achieved they differed, and accordingly ranged themselves into two opposing camps.

The first of these groups was the naturalistic school. It posed the tenet that the most effective delivery was that which followed the natural, conversational method. Its most famous exponent was the English author

¹ Letter of David Avery, cited in E. H. Gillette, "Yale College One Hundred Years Ago," *Hours at Home*, 10 (February, 1870): 334-335.

² The rhetorical section in this book was not of Dodsley's own composition but was abstracted from the Reverend Anthony Blackwall's *Introduction to the Classics*, published in 1750.—R. Dodsley, *The Preceptor* (London, R. Dodsley, 1754), I, 405.

³ Herbert D. Foster, Webster and Choate in College, *Collected Papers* (privately printed, 1929), p. 236.

⁴ J. C. Schwab, "Partial List of the Text-books Used in Yale College in the Eighteenth Century," broadside in Yale Library. Simeon Baldwin had an abstract of this book in his *Commonplace Book or System of Learning*, compiled during his sophomore year at New Haven, in Yale Library.

Thomas Sheridan, whose works were widely known in the American colleges.¹ William Enfield's *The Speaker*, which followed the same tradition, was circulated less extensively. In the nineteenth century the naturalistic school, widely known in the eighteenth century, was almost entirely ignored.

The second, or mechanistic, concept of elocution, destined to receive overwhelming popularity in the 1800's, had not been greatly emphasized in the Colonial educational institutions in the previous century. Adherents of this school held that the way to achieve an effective, and eventually natural, delivery was to classify didactically the various elements of oral communication and to seek proficiency in their use by means of mechanical practice. Thus, with varying emphasis, each of the authors set forth specific instructions concerning the use of pitch, intensity, rate, and quality of the voice, as well as movements of hands, head, eyes, and other parts of the body. John Walker, the English writer, penned a series of books after 1781 and was the first thoroughgoing "mechanist" to become really famous, though his influence had no important effect upon the American schools until the last years of the century. The most widely known mechanistic protagonist in the colonies was James Burgh, in his *Art of Speaking*. First published in 1761, it was in the Harvard library by 1767 and a few years later was purchased by student literary societies at both Yale and Harvard. Burgh's doctrines were not so mechanical as those which were to follow, yet even before the dawn of the nineteenth century the rhetorical *theses* bear testimony to the fact that American collegians were learning specific injunctions relative to the manipulation of voice and body in speaking.²

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, it is apparent that the classical rhetorical concepts which the students read were supplemented by acquaintance with the stylistic and elocutionary rhetorics. In addition to the works already cited, Rollin's *Belles Lettres*, Priestley's *On Oratory*, Blair's *Lectures*, Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Mason's *Essay on Elocution*, Lawson's *Lectures Concerning Oratory*, and the several compositions of both Walker and Sheridan were readily available for student use. Throughout this period oral communication was the medium through which the art of rhetoric found its expression. Rhetoric and oratory were consistently coupled both in the curriculums and in the thinking of the period.

¹ Sheridan's *Lectures on Elocution* appeared in the Harvard Library catalogue of 1765 and according to the library charging record was withdrawn more frequently in 1767 than any other rhetorical text—three times! Members of the United Fraternity at Dartmouth purchased a copy for their use, and in his diary, a Hanover collegian, Ephraim Smedley, recorded for posterity his diligent reading of the *Lectures*.

² See below, pp. 208-209.

Ascendancy of the Elocutionary School. In the late years of the eighteenth century certain influences converging gradually wrought a change that was to culminate in the nineteenth century with the virtual isolation of *pronuntiatio* as a part of rhetoric. Probably one of these potent influences was the publication in 1783 of Hugh Blair's immediately popular *Lectures on Rhetoric and the Belles Lettres*. Yale adopted the book as a text in 1788; Harvard chose it three years later. The library of William and Mary today contains a copy of this book that bears the signature of John Gilchrist, who was a student there in 1791; so at that time it was at least known at that institution if not actually used, and before 1817 it had been adopted as a textbook. Until the middle of the nineteenth century it was one of the most widely used textbooks of rhetoric. The only authors who rivaled Blair were Campbell and Whately.

Blair's work in the transition of rhetorical thought had a double significance. First, it associated rhetoric with belles-lettres; furthermore like the volumes of Aristotle and Cicero, it largely ignored the matter of delivery. This text, it must be remembered, was achieving signal successes in America at a time when the democratic spirit was high and the country was in the midst of the tremendous ordeal of formulating and maintaining a stable government. The demand was for effective speakers who could gain the confidence and could sway the beliefs of voters. When, concurrent with this demand, the popular school rhetoric ignored *pronuntiatio* and the writers of the elocutionary school became more prolific and precise, the stage was set for the coupling of rhetoric with composition and written communication and for the establishment of elocution as a distinct discipline. The college at Hanover, for example, furnishes a pertinent illustration. The Dartmouth curriculum in 1822¹ required a course in English during the sophomore year and specified the text for that subject as Blair's *Lectures*.

Nor did the rise to popularity of Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* greatly alter the scene. Both these men made contributions to the art of persuasion that have been frequently and amply reviewed in later criticisms; their contributions, however, did not include treatments of *pronuntiatio* significant enough to retard the distinctly growing discipline of elocution. Campbell, like Blair, held to the natural mode of delivery but placed little emphasis upon oral presentation as such. Whately was more definitive, assigning oral presentation to a position of greater importance, but his work did not appear until 1828.

¹ Dartmouth College Catalogue of 1822, cited in Leon Burr Richardson, *History of Dartmouth College* (Hanover N. H., Dartmouth College Publications, 1932), pp. 376-377.

² Campbell's treatise was published in 1776 but did not achieve a circulation comparable to Blair's until after 1830.

by which time the mechanistic elocutionary school had consolidated its prestige. Furthermore, the catalogues of Colby, Middlebury, South Carolina, and Yale colleges specified that Whately was studied "except Part IV"—the section dealing with *pronuntiatio*, which argued for the naturalistic concept.

Before analysis of the amazing growth of the elocutionary movement, it should be noted that American college professors were publishing rhetorics of their own. None of these editions, it is true, was widely circulated, but as documents they are important because most of them are compilations of lectures; they indicate what was taught to groups of American college students in the period between the Revolutionary and Civil wars. Seemingly, the first major New World contribution was that of President Witherspoon at Princeton,¹ whose lectures on rhetoric, delivered at the New Jersey college from 1758 to 1794, were posthumously collected and printed. He maintained that the orator was made, not born, and that the best method of training was wise study coupled with intimate knowledge of great models. His discussion of rhetoric was in the classical tradition.² From 1819 to 1851 Edward Channing delivered the prescribed Boylston lectures. They were published in 1856, but, though they too conformed to the letter of the classical doctrine, they emphasized the development of literary taste and the perfection of style. Channing was interested more in the literary than in the oratorical aspects of the subject.³

Two other early nineteenth century American professors were responsible for rhetorical publications of more limited scope. Samuel P. Newman, instructor at Bowdoin from 1822 to 1839, is the only one of the whole group of American authors whose work⁴ was originally intended as a text; soon after publication it was adopted by several American colleges. Newman stressed primarily matters of style, virtually ignoring both oral communication and the persuasive goal of rhetoric. The second document is the little known rhetoric of Ebenezer Porter, *Lectures on Eloquence and Style*. It is not surprising that Porter, holder of the Bartlett Professorship of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover Academy from 1813 to 1831, famous for his

¹ The Reverend High Jones, of William and Mary, had as early as 1724 published his *Accidence to the English Tongue*. While the book was not a comprehensive rhetoric text, Dean Grace Warren Landrum hails the work as "the first grammar in English hitherto discovered to have been written in His Majesty's colonies."—*William and Mary Quarterly*, 19: 272.

² John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (2 vols., Cambridge, Hilliard and Metcalfe, 1810) "His *Lectures* though confused in some matters of detail, were an admirably organized summary of classical rhetoric—probably the best such summary ever made by an American."—Horace Rahskopf, John Quincy Adams' *Theory and Practice of Public Speaking* (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1935), p. 40.

³ Edward Channing, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Boston, 1856).

⁴ Samuel P. Newman, *A Practical System of Rhetoric* (Portland, Me., 1827).

treatises on elocution, should indicate in these lectures that he considered delivery one of the most important aspects of rhetoric and that he cherished style.¹

As rhetoric became allied with written composition, training in speech per se was by no means neglected, but the details of the instruction were dramatically modified. Following the publication of his *Elements of Elocution* in 1781, John Walker produced a series of books that set and amplified the pattern for the new and prospering mechanical elocution: detailed analyses of all the movements of head, hand, arm, and body; minute descriptions of shades of facial expression; intricate calculations of the uses of the human voice; and all these embroiled and beset with innumerable rules allegedly derived from nature.

Following in his wake came a host of elocutionary writers, American as well as English.² The influence of the new tradition felt in the colleges in the late 1700's was reflected in the rhetorical *theses* posed for commencement exercises. But it was not until the nineteenth century that strenuous training in vocal and physical communication became an end in itself. So great was the fervor for specific instructions in speaking that the more vague and philosophical naturalistic teachings were largely forgotten or despised.

The development of the elocutionary theory can be traced in general contour by a few keystone treatises. After Walker had definitely set the pattern, Gilbert Austin published in 1806 his *Chironomia*.³ The book is significant because it carried to quintessential refinement the mechanistic treatment of gesture and bodily action. In addition to the inclusion of more than a hundred plates to illustrate the gestures, a system was charted for marking and designating movements, in much the fashion of Steele, who in his *Prosodia rationalis*,⁴ had earlier worked out such techniques for the voice. For several decades Austin was to be considered the source book on physical action in speaking. Author after author patterned his content from the plan so amply provided.

¹ Lamberton, in his study of homiletics before 1860, concludes that the advances made in the theory of preaching centered around delivery. He maintains that Porter, together with Russell, Rawson, Taylor, Meade, "and a few others in the final period present the first well-rounded discussion of sermon delivery."—F. W. Lamberton, *A Survey and Analysis of American Homiletics Prior to 1860* (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1930), p. 266.

² All the important and many of the less important elocutionary treatises are reviewed in the works of Robb, Guthrie, and Blanks.

³ Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia; or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery: Comprehending Many Precepts, Both Ancient and Modern, for the Proper Regulation of the Voice, the Countenance, and Gesture* (London, T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1806).

⁴ Sir Joshua Steele, *Prosodia Rationalis: An Essay Towards Establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech to be Expressed and Perpetuated by Peculiar Symbols* (London, J. Almon, 1775).

Although William Russell, in 1823,¹ and Ebenezer Porter, in 1827,² and in the years following, had produced texts on elocution, their contributions were significant mainly as representing the theories of important American teachers whose influence was felt on more than one campus. Essentially they were both Walker adherents who merely reiterated, with minor variations, the standard mechanistic philosophy.

In 1827 appeared the American document destined to be a unique contribution. Probably the *Philosophy of the Human Voice*, by Dr. James Rush, of Philadelphia, was the greatest single influence upon the development of elocution in America. Dr. Rush divided the treatment of voice into sections on quality, force, time, abruptness, and pitch.³ He further analyzed each of these attributes and made suggestions for their specific application in the reading of sentences and phrases of various kinds. In other words, he attempted to reduce the use of voice to a definitely describable pattern in much the fashion used by Austin in treating bodily action. The book was immediately popular, and, despite attacks by various adverse critics, it remained the supreme authority on voice through most of the nineteenth century.

With the publication of Rush's volume, the essentials in the story of elocutionary theory were completed. Walker had built the framework for the system; Austin had reduced bodily action to a formula; and Rush had made voice usage an exact science. Henceforth students were to be taught specific, hard-and-fast dictums for the oral presentation of material. The mechanical school flourished and grew despite the occasional protests of those who objected to its supposed artificiality. The movement gathered such swift momentum that it reached the period of the Civil War without having its supremacy seriously threatened.

B. AS REVEALED BY THE THESES

The rhetorical tenets published yearly at commencement time tell generally the same story. Until 1720 almost all the propositions considered as defensible dealt with matters of style. Tropes, metaphors, synonyms, epithets, hyperboles, and other figures frequently constituted the subject matter of the assertions to be maintained by graduating students.

¹ William Russell, *The American Elocutionist* (Boston, Jenks and Palmer, 1840).

² Ebenezer Porter, *Analysis of the Principles of Rhetorical Delivery as Applied in Reading and Speaking* (New York, Leavitt, 1827). This was Porter's most popular and important work. It was one of the most widely used college elocutionary texts before 1850.

³ James Rush, *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* (4th ed., Philadelphia, Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1855), p. 49.

After 1720 a gradual change in the *theses* of the New England Colleges indicated the return of *dispositio* and *inventio* to the realm of rhetoric. This return to the long-neglected phases of rhetoric was probably due in some part to the increasing disrespect toward logic. Cotton Mather, as early as 1726, had advised students of theology not to spend too much time on logic, contending that its processes ended merely in confirmation of the obvious. The Boston minister argued, "The most valuable thing in Logic, and the very Termination of it, is the Doctrine of Syllogisms. And yet it is notorious, that . . . all Syllogizing is only to confirm you in a Truth which you are already the owner of. . . ." ¹ Seventy years later, another Boston clergyman, John Clarke, wrote: "Logic, I am sorry to observe, has with many persons, a doubtful reputation. The time was when it triumphed over other arts; and the time has come, when the usurpation is too much resented. . . . Syllogisms seem now to be passing into oblivion." ²

Concomitant with the broadening vista of rhetoric came a modification in the tenets affecting *elocutio*. From 1720 to the end of the century a constantly recurring warning appears against sheer copiousness and ornateness as a standard for style. "Tropes, unless for expressing ideas more aptly, ought not to be used more than common words." ³ "Tropes and figures, although influential and persuasive when correctly used, nevertheless make the oration obscure and become tedious to the listeners when piled up with affectation." ⁴ "A profusion and redundancy of metaphors tend to debase language and speech." ⁵

Figures and tropes were still sought, but the *theses* reflected the growing turn toward moderation in the use of such rhetorical devices. Brevity and simplicity were beginning to be heralded as attractive qualities.

A third change in rhetorical discipline reflected in the *theses* occurred during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Propositions dealing directly with the delivery of speeches increased rapidly. This was, of course, a direct effect of the new English elocutionary school, the importance of which, even before 1800, had been felt so vividly as to presage its nineteenth century popularity.

Pronuntiatio tenets set forth were frequently specific injunctions relative to the use of voice and body. "The head should always be inclined towards the moving hand except in renouncing." ⁶ "Wrath is detected by a

¹ Cotton Mather, *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (Boston, Thomas Hancock, 1726), pp. 35 and 36.

² John Clarke, *Letters to a Student in the University of Cambridge, Massachusetts* (Boston, Samuel Hall, 1796), pp. 80 and 84.

³ Harvard *Theses*, 1770.

⁴ Harvard *Theses*, 1758.

⁵ Yale *Theses*, 1790.

⁶ Yale *Theses*, 1751.

harsh, violent and broken voice." ¹ Others were more general and philosophical. "The facial expression is more powerful in expressing the emotions of the mind than is the whole body." ² "Polished delivery demands movements of the body, control of voice and language, and a facial expression appropriate to one's speech." ³

A fourth development revealed by the same source testified to the growing association of rhetoric with written communication. Criticisms of *belles-lettres* are occasionally included as defensible propositions, and after 1781 the definition of rhetoric at Yale is consistently set forth as the teaching of "finer literature and the art of speaking."

Publication of *theses* ended in the early years of the nineteenth century, but until that time, these exercises corroborated the story of the texts—the early ascendancy of the Ramean rhetoric of style, the transition to the classical doctrines, the growing importance of delivery, and the linking of rhetoric with *belles-lettres*.

Conclusion

Speech education was from the beginning a recognized part of collegiate training in America, though the details of that education were altered by the demands of the contemporary civilization. During most of the Colonial period college graduates were almost exclusively members of the clergy, whose speaking was confined to a limited subject field with a limited purpose. While this condition obtained, students' attention was directed toward the beauty and "elegancy" of language in oral performance. The language utilized was one of the classical tongues. With the conflicts and problems of the middle eighteenth century came a democratizing of society, evident in education as well as in other aspects of living. Its implication for speech was that leaders must learn to talk to all types of people in a manner that would achieve tangible results. Rhetorical theory expounded was once again concerned with practical persuasion. The English language was seen to be the medium through which this persuasion could be accomplished. As the desire for effective speaking increased, more and more energy was centered on an aspect of rhetoric hitherto relatively neglected—*pronuntiatio*. Excellent content was futile if one could not present it tellingly. The objective, scientific attitude was growing, in speech delivery as elsewhere. The result was the mechanical, elocutionary school, which flourished and in the nineteenth century produced a distinct speech discipline.

¹ Harvard *Theses*, 1783.

² Yale *Theses*, 1769.

³ Harvard *Theses*, 1776.

Leaders in American Public Address

Sources consulted in the preparation of this material included official documents of the colleges: the list of *Theses* and *Quaestiones* published each commencement at Yale and Harvard; the Harvard commencement programs printed after 1794; the statutes and laws governing Yale, Harvard, William and Mary, and Dartmouth; the Corporation, Faculty, and Overseer's records at Harvard College; the catalogue of books in the Yale library in 1755 and 1799; and in the Harvard Library in 1790.

Many accounts of contemporaries furnished valuable information. By far the most important of these was *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*. John Quincy Adams's *Writings* and student diary, the manuscript diary of Ephraim Smedley, Samuel Swift's *Reminiscences of College Life*, and Jonathan Trumbull's *Memoirs* were also useful. Manuscript commonplace notebooks of material abstracted during college attendance by Simeon Baldwin, Perez Fobes, Joseph Goffe, Benjamin Wadsworth, Nathan Fiske, and others, gave further insight into college reading and texts.

The files of the written performances delivered at Dartmouth commencements, the 110 student manuscripts of Joseph Goffe, the Baldwin manuscripts, Nathali Daggett's book of student forensic speeches, Daniel Haskel's composition book, and the Orations and Dissertations of the Linonia Society in the Yale Library, together with miscellaneous speeches in the college archives, provided extensive samples of the speaking performances in New England colleges.

Invaluable information concerning extracurricular speaking activities was revealed in the manuscript records of the Phi Beta Kappa societies, of the Linonia and Brothers in Unity societies at Yale, of the Speaking and Hasty Pudding clubs at Harvard, of the Social Friends and United Fraternity at Dartmouth. In addition, short records were available of minor students groups at Yale and Harvard.

Graduate research in fields related to American speech education has been of indispensable assistance. The following studies were consulted: Anthony F. Blanks, *An Introductory Study in the Teaching of Public Speaking in the United States*; Thomas E. Coulton, *Trends in Speech Education in American Colleges, 1835 to 1935*; Charles A. Fritz, *The Content of the Teaching of Speech in the American College before 1850; with Special Reference to Its Influence on Current Theories*; W. A. Guthrie, *The Development of Rhetorical Theory in America, 1635 to 1850*; F. W. Lambertson, *A Survey and Analysis of American Homiletics Prior to 1860*; Alice Moe, *The Changing Aspects of Speech Education in the United States from 1636 to 1936*; P. G. Perrin, *The Teaching of Rhetoric in the American Colleges before 1750*; Mary Margaret Robb, *Oral Interpretation of Literature in American Colleges and Universities*; W. P. Sandford, *English Theories of Public Address, 1530-1828*; and Ota Thomas, *The Theory and Practice of Disputation at Yale, Harvard, and Dartmouth from 1750 to 1800*.