

*Part Five*

**NINETEENTH-CENTURY  
RHETORIC**

# Introduction

Before the end of the eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution had begun to transform work, living conditions, population patterns, and economic standards in many parts of Europe and the United States. During the eighteenth century, calls to bring science into the curriculum went largely unheeded, but with the reforms of the nineteenth century, science and technology came into their own. The German university system made scientific research its top priority. Mathematics and science became standard subjects in the *gymnasien* (or “gymnasium,” a secondary school that prepares students for the university), along with composition in German and the study of polite literature, including some works in Latin and Greek. Composition in the vernacular replaced Latin composition throughout the Continent, and Latin disappeared almost completely from the public primary schools. In England, the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, abetted by the Church, remained reactionary about education for the working classes for a long time, fearing that such education would lead to social unrest. But even in England, reading, writing, and arithmetic became standard instructional fare for the lower classes, along with lessons in religion, citizenship, and the pleasures of sobriety. Secondary education was, by and large, for the commercial classes, whose members required solid literacy skills and the ability to do complex calculations. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School, had to defend the study of the classics against attacks by those favoring a more utilitarian curriculum. “Polite” classical education continued, needless to say, in schools for the upper classes and in the traditional universities.

Given all these events, rhetoric in the nineteenth century clearly had to respond to the changing nature of public education as much as to the internal economies of the discipline and related intellectual movements.

## RICHARD WHATELY’S RHETORIC

The rhetorics of Sheridan, Blair, and Campbell were quite well suited to the curricular needs of most nineteenth-century schools in Europe and the United States, at least if they did not include many female or nonwhite students. From the modern

here we go w/  
the Germans

> [RSA  
Animate]

Strong  
connections to  
the industrial  
revolution

+ the same old  
debate again  
and again

point of view, all these rhetorics play down the classical tradition. They retain enough references to the heroes of the classical tradition and enough illustrations translated from great Greek and Latin works to provide an overview for scholars not versed in the originals; they present an outline of classical rhetoric while loudly rejecting the *topoi* and syllogism as unscientific; and they defend what remains with arguments from psychology. All three are proudly modern in their inclusion of recent writers. Scotland, Ireland, and the United States in particular received two benefits from elocution and belles lettres: the high culture of imperial England, plus the satisfaction of rejecting the classical curriculum associated with English aristocratic education. Finally, the eighteenth-century rhetorics were easily adapted to the literacy needs of mass education in a commercial-industrial society. Apparently no new theory was needed; certainly none was forthcoming. The works of Blair and Campbell were often used together as course texts, and most new textbooks simply rang changes on their ideas and materials.

oh, snap!

One significant new work was a rhetoric by Richard Whately (1787–1863), published in 1828. The full title is *Elements of Rhetoric, Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion, with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution* (p. 1003). As the subtitle suggests, Whately picks up the dominant trends of the day—Campbell's moral evidence, the epistemological focus on persuasion (as opposed to style), composition presumably written, and elocution clearly oral. But Whately's contribution to rhetorical theory comes from the particular uses to which he puts these elements. Whately was an Anglican clergyman. He was educated at Oxford and remained there until 1831, when he became archbishop of Dublin. He published a considerable number of works on church-related subjects, and the *Elements of Rhetoric* is at least partly conceived as a textbook for divinity students. In it, Whately discusses the oral reading of the church service (harking back to seventeenth-century complaints); he focuses on argument to provide a defense for religion against the skepticism fired by science and rationalism; he returns to classical invention as a way to generate arguments about revealed truth—absolute truth—and is not concerned with the contingent and merely probable truths of the empiricists; and he emphasizes the need to consider the audience, namely, the generally uneducated congregation.

another score for the empiricists

As scholar of rhetoric Douglas Ehninger points out in his introduction to *Elements of Rhetoric*, for these purposes Whately does not need belletrism, with its absorption in literary criticism and matters of taste and style. Instead, he begins with epistemological rhetoric, which leaves inquiry to science and looks chiefly at the psychology of audience response. Whately has no need of inquiry, either. He simply treats the revealed truth of religion as if it were analogous to the other kinds of knowledge that rhetoric deals with, knowledge discovered by the subject discipline of the discourse. Rhetoric must prove the truth thus discovered to people who have not themselves made the discovery. Truth does not convey itself, after all. Whately endorses Locke's position that language is conventional, linked neither to external objects nor even to clear notions of complex ideas. Thus, Whately concludes, rhetoric requires a theory of argument, a form of invention concerned not with discovery but with ways of convincing. For this form of invention, he turns to Aristotle and Campbell.

weak defense (?)

rhetoric  $\equiv$  conveyance

Campbell (also a clergyman, as noted earlier) defends testimony as a form of moral evidence. By testimony, Campbell means not only the assertions of witnesses in the courtroom, but any assertion about experience—the assertions, for example, that constitute an historical record. Christianity, too, is dependent upon the truthfulness of testimony about the life and teachings of Jesus. Whately, following Campbell, analyzes testimony in great detail, seeking criteria for its truthfulness and examining the effects of different types of testimony on audiences. He bases this analysis on Aristotle's discussion of signs as a form of evidence and sets out in Aristotelian fashion some fourteen circumstances that determine the truthfulness or acceptability of testimony. In similar detail, he outlines the doctrines of Presumption—that is, the conditions that give one side in a dispute the *prima facie* look of correctness—and Burden of Proof—that is, the liabilities faced by the challenger of an accepted notion. Refutation receives the same kind of careful and detailed treatment. Whately thus provides the kind of treatise on practical psychological rhetoric for which Campbell and other eighteenth-century epistemological rhetoricians (like Priestley and Kames) laid the theoretical groundwork. Whately retains Campbell's distinction between conviction and persuasion, assigning reason to conviction and emotional appeals to persuasion. He always maintains that the way reasoning works to produce conviction is not necessarily logical or consistent. Thus it ought to be no embarrassment to recognize the legitimacy of appeals to the feelings, especially in a cause about which one can have no doubts.

the persistence  
of this binary  
through to  
modernity

Some of Whately's arguments are strained, marked more by apologetics than analysis. And in the effort to provide a complete rhetoric, he often resorts to sketchy, derivative comments. This is the case, for example, throughout his chapter on style. But Whately is by no means purely parochial. His contribution to rhetoric is not limited to ecclesiastical uses, and his book exerted a wide influence well into the twentieth century.

Whately influenced, among others, his student John Henry Newman. At Whately's urging, Newman wrote a long essay on Cicero in which he emphasizes the philosophical underpinnings of Cicero's rhetoric. Newman's argument in *A Grammar of Assent* (1870) relies on Whately's contention that religious belief is in fact a kind of knowledge quite similar in status to history, for both are based on faith, testimony, and probabilistic argument. Newman takes up the question of how people give credence to any proposition that is not subject to demonstration. He concludes that we assent quite justifiably to a great variety of propositions on the strength of accumulated probabilities, propositions for which we cannot adduce irrefutable proof or a clear logical argument. Newman extends Whately's theory by explaining, in more general terms, why rhetorical argument works.

remained an  
important  
question  
(the pseudo  
reasoning of  
religion)

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S RHETORICS

Secondary and university education for women was still a rarity. In 1851, Harriet Taylor Mill, ardent feminist and wife of John Stuart Mill, complained that women's education remained a matter of "superficial information" even when it was about serious subjects. The problem, says Mill, lies in the continued career restrictions women face: "High mental powers in women will be but an exceptional accident,

economic logics

until every career is open to them and until they as well as men, are educated for themselves and for the world, not one sex for the other."<sup>1</sup> In advocating women's education in the early eighteenth century, however, Mary Astell had heralded a trend that was to gain momentum in the nineteenth century. After 1700, women's access to literacy and further education began to improve quickly. In seventeenth-century England, according to social historian David Cressy, only 20 percent of women were sufficiently literate to sign their names, even though the Renaissance had improved opportunities for their education (see the introduction to Part Three). But, as historian Harvey Graff has shown, by the end of the eighteenth century at least 50 percent of women in Europe and North America were literate. Until the end of the nineteenth century, women were still almost completely excluded from university education and were barred from the professions of law, religion, and political office for which university training in rhetoric prepared men. But the question of how women should be educated continued to be debated, gaining political import from movements toward more democratic forms of government in Europe and the new United States, with the concomitant need for a literate citizenry.

In the eighteenth century, most people, male and female, who acquired literacy did so at home or in village schools that offered both informal instruction and what we would now call day care. People learned to read the Bible, newspapers, broadsides, popular literature, and business documents; to sign their names on legal forms; and to write personal letters. Formal schooling at the elementary and secondary levels, for both boys and girls, increased throughout the period, but this education did not include classical learning, literacy in Greek and Latin, or formal training in rhetoric, except in a few elite schools for boys destined for the university. The exceptional women who sought university education before the end of the nineteenth century often faced serious obstacles even to acquiring adequate preparation for postsecondary work, as many of their autobiographical accounts testify.

One such nineteenth-century aspirant, Anna Julia Cooper, was allowed to enroll in a secondary school where male students prepared for college training for the ministry. A male teacher sympathetic to Cooper's ambitions invited her to join his class in Greek. Her thoughts upon "humbly" accepting this invitation eloquently underline the barriers faced by women seeking higher education:

A boy, however meager his equipment and shallow his pretensions, had only to declare a floating intention to study theology and he could get all the support, encouragement and stimulus he needed, be absolved from work and invested beforehand with all the dignity of his far away office. While a self-supporting girl had to struggle on by teaching in the summer and working after school hours to keep up with her board bills, and actually to fight her way against positive discouragements to the higher education; till one such girl one day flared out and told the principal "the only mission opening before a girl in his school was to marry one of those candidates." He said he didn't know but it was. And when at last that same girl announced her desire and intention to go to college it was received with about the same incredulity and dismay as if a brass button on one of those

<sup>1</sup>Harriet Taylor Mill, "Enfranchisement of Women," in *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill: Essays on Sex Equality* (1851; rpt., ed. A. S. Rossi, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 112-13.

candidate's coats had propounded a new method for squaring the circle or trisecting the arch.<sup>2</sup>

Anna Julia Cooper persevered. She earned a B.A. and an M.A. from Oberlin College and was one of the first African American women to earn a Ph.D. (from the Sorbonne, at the age of sixty-seven, in 1925).

By the end of the nineteenth century, American women did have some access to higher education, both in the few coeducational schools, such as Oberlin, Iowa, and Cornell, and in women's colleges such as Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Smith, and Wellesley. Women in these schools could study rhetoric devoted in the classical spirit to public address on issues of civic importance. Moreover, they could study with a growing number of gifted women teachers. For example, Gertrude Buck, who held a Ph.D. in English and taught at Vassar, published a textbook, *Argumentative Writing*, in 1899, in which she describes a course she offered with a professor of economics. The young women in the course researched and debated topics concerning "The Relation of the State to Monopolies," such as "The profits of the railroads are excessive" and "The public should own and control the telephone service." These would seem to be topics to engage future public leaders, not just those who hoped merely to marry the leaders.

Not surprisingly, as women's education improved, women increasingly began to speak in public and to reflect on their rhetorical practices. These practices were non-traditional by definition, since women were not supposed to speak in public. Hence, as speech communication scholar Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has suggested, women's rhetoric was based not on culturally dominant values and well-established occasions for oratory but on strategies "to subvert popular belief and to overcome unusually significant persuasive obstacles, such as prohibitions against speaking itself and stereotypes that reject [women] as credible or authoritative."<sup>3</sup>

The spread of Protestant Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries aided women's efforts to become better educated and to achieve public voices. First, Protestantism encouraged women to be literate so that they could read the Bible. In addition, several Protestant denominations were spread through the efforts of itinerant preachers who exhorted crowds extemporaneously, using deliberately colloquial, earthy, moving language, and a number of these preachers were women. Some Protestant sects also encouraged social action on behalf of the poor, prostitutes, slaves, and other abused groups. Given this social action agenda, preaching sometimes shaded over into political oratory. Women who addressed political issues, however, often retained a religious orientation and relied heavily on religious justifications for their right to speak. The social evils they attacked were, they claimed, so offensive to God that pious Christian women must speak out, even at risk of social censure. This stance was needed because, as historian Barbara Welter has shown, the era's prevailing gender ideology, which she calls the "Cult of True Womanhood,"

the rhetoric  
that emerged  
here would  
necessarily be  
distinct /  
departures

<sup>2</sup>Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892; rpt. intro. Mary Helen Washington, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 77–78.

<sup>3</sup>Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Sound of Women's Voices," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75 (1989): p. 212.

delimited “respectable” women to the domestic sphere, from which they were supposedly too pure, pious, and submissive to male authority to venture.<sup>4</sup> If they did so, their chastity was questionable—ever the traditional sanction against women who were perceived as crossing gender boundaries (see the introduction to Part Three).

Beginning with Margaret Fell in the late seventeenth century, Quaker women were among the first to speak in public on social issues, and the number of Quakers among women social-activist orators was, and is, high in proportion to the number of Quakers in the general population. The Quaker emphasis on each person’s right and duty to conduct his or her own life by an “inner light” of spirituality provides a philosophical as well as a theological justification for women’s rejection of social constraints in favor of social justice.

Methodism also produced many early women speakers. The sect spread by organizing its adherents into prayer groups that women might lead, offering prayers, guiding discussions of spiritual development, and even expounding God’s word. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, first permitted this participation by women on the grounds that it was not actually “preaching” because the audiences were small—he distinguished this activity from what Quaker women did. But soon larger crowds gathered to hear the most successful Methodist women leaders, and Wesley decided to encourage their public ministry. Important early leaders included Mary Bosanquet, who defended women’s preaching in a long letter to Wesley; Margaret Davidson; Sarah Crosby; and Ann Tripp. Although male leaders after Wesley found ways to restrict Methodist women’s public speaking, an activist tradition had already been established that would continue to bear fruit, especially in the United States, where woman preacher Phoebe Palmer (p. 1085) became one of the century’s most important Methodist theologians.

In nineteenth-century America, the tendency for Protestant women to speak out on public issues gave rise to a sustained political movement conducted by women, a movement that began in public social action against slavery and expanded into a campaign for a broad agenda of civil rights. One of the first women to speak from the public platform on such issues was African American Maria W. Stewart (p. 1031). Sustained by her religious faith to brave the censure heaped on a woman who addressed mixed audiences of women and men—a scandalous violation of women’s “proper” sphere—Stewart denounced white racism and exhorted African Americans to fight against slavery and for civil rights for free African Americans. She articulated a specific role for black women in the liberation of the race, including a place for them as public speakers, and thus paved the way for several generations of powerful African American women orators. People of color, previously largely excluded from a rhetorical tradition defined as white as well as male, would not simply imitate white rhetoric but would develop their own ways of using language for public action, as can be seen not only in the oratory of African American women, but also in the work of such noted African American male orators as Frederick Douglass (p. 1061) and others (discussed below).

<sup>4</sup>Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860,” in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976).

this is  
ironic  
given how  
we now  
view women  
and religion

Perhaps the first major American theorist on feminist issues, including women's rhetoric, was Quaker Sarah Grimké (p. 1045). She and her sister Angelina Grimké began to publicly denounce the evils of slavery that they had witnessed firsthand in their slave-owning family in South Carolina. But they found that, even among northern opponents of slavery, they were chastised for flouting the norms of "proper" women's behavior by addressing gender-mixed audiences for the abolition cause. Thus Sarah Grimké had to develop a feminist critique of the social and rhetorical limitations placed on women as a defense of her and her sister's abolitionist activism. She insisted on women's mental and moral equality to men, which placed on them the same responsibility to combat social evils, and she maintained that traditional strictures placed on women served male interests. Sarah and Angelina Grimké became role models for several generations of European American women activists.

*the argument  
and the ground  
on which that  
argument could  
be heard*

Debate over the role of women in the abolition movement tore it apart, but not before a broader movement was created, led by women, who denounced slavery as well as advocating for the rights of free African Americans and of Native Americans, for temperance, and for women's rights, including suffrage. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton began her activist career as an abolitionist. But after being denied a seat at an abolitionist convention because of her sex, she decided to organize action on behalf of women's rights. She and fellow abolitionist and feminist Lucretia Mott convened the first American meeting devoted to women's rights, at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Thus Stanton was launched on a public career that spanned the century. Before the Civil War, she combined abolition work with agitation for women's rights; after the war, she focused more on women's rights and, increasingly, on women's suffrage alone. She argued with lawyerly precision and dominated mixed audiences and the all-male audiences of state legislatures where she advocated legal redress for the inequalities visited on women.

Very different in style was Sojourner Truth, one of the best-known African American women orators of the nineteenth century. Born Isabella, a slave in upstate New York, she was freed in 1828 when slavery was abolished in the state and was self-supporting thereafter as a domestic servant. In 1843 she renamed herself Sojourner Truth and became an itinerant prophet who denounced slavery and the oppression of women. Truth never learned to read or write and never attempted to erase the broad dialect in which she spoke, which was influenced by her first language, Dutch. Her pithy sayings and platform aphorisms made a tremendous impact on the largely white audiences she addressed, and she did more perhaps than any other nineteenth-century speaker to convince white women, and even some white men, that rights for African American people of both sexes and rights for women of all races must be pursued simultaneously. As historian Nell Irvin Painter has shown, disentangling Truth as a "symbol" constructed by the white people who recorded her life (with highly variable accuracy) and Truth as she saw herself is a difficult task. Nevertheless, it is clear that Sojourner Truth brought African-inflected culture to the speaker's platform as never before in the United States, legitimating it through the widespread support she received.

*the act of  
renaming  
yourself*



In contrast, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper translated her African American heritage through the excellent education she received at the school of her uncle, William Watkins, a noted abolitionist. As her modern editor Frances Smith Foster points out, by the age of thirty Harper was already “the best known and best loved African American poet prior to Paul Laurence Dunbar.”<sup>5</sup> Her antislavery verse appeared regularly in abolitionist publications. She also wrote short stories—“The Two Offers” is perhaps the first short story published by an African American writer—and novels, the best known being *Iola Leroy*. She experimented with a range of African American speech styles for her characters, from the dialects of former slaves to the elevated language of well-educated professionals such as Iola and her friends. Harper was also perhaps the most prolific public speaker among African American women in the nineteenth century. She traveled throughout the United States, north and south, speaking against slavery and for women’s rights and African American rights, and she continued after the Civil War, speaking to both white and black audiences. Her public persona was refined and “literary” yet ardent on behalf of African American rights. Harper remained firmly rooted in the black community while also being unusually adept at building bridges with white activists, working with Stanton and others to promote women’s suffrage and holding long-term office in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, a largely white organization that was the most powerful women’s group of the postwar years.

Temperance, it must be understood, was a women’s issue in the nineteenth century. Alcohol constituted the “drug problem” of the age, and it was largely a male problem, from which women suffered because it contributed to the physical abuse of women and children, diverted family finances from needed supplies, and encouraged prostitution and other social ills. The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) gave women a means to combat alcohol, and the WCTU’s effectiveness increased greatly when Frances Willard (p. 1114) became its president in 1879. Willard, a well-educated European American woman and devout Methodist, was a tireless promoter of the organization, speaking at an average of one meeting per day during the first ten years of her presidency. She developed a particularly powerful feminine rhetorical persona, emphasizing women’s spirituality and devotion to home as the very traits that made their public participation necessary as an uplifting force. She broadened the WCTU’s agenda to include a wide range of social issues and restructured the organization to train many women to speak in public. Historian of rhetoric Carol Mattingly argues that under Willard’s guidance the WCTU became “the largest and most effective organization for teaching women rhetorical skills in the nineteenth century.”<sup>6</sup> By the time Willard died in 1898, women speaking in public no longer had to defend their right to appear on the platform—they were a widespread and widely accepted phenomenon. Willard, Stewart, Grimké, Stanton, Truth, and Harper, among others, established a range of public voices for women that is still being developed today.

<sup>5</sup>Frances Smith Foster, ed. *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), p. 58.

this is  
interesting

alcohol an  
history of  
history

ethos always  
as a  
compromise  
as a  
composition

## THE RHETORICS OF MEN OF COLOR

Although rhetoric in Europe was typically practiced in culturally homogeneous settings, from the early seventeenth century North America became a diverse culture, with incomers from Europe, Africa, and Asia mingling with the Native American populations. As the nation called the United States took form, the group holding political power was more homogeneous, tending to be middle- and upper-class white, Anglo-phone men. Thus in the United States public rhetoric, at least at first, did not have to take into account the full range of cultures represented in the whole population.

That situation began to change, however, almost as soon as the new nation established its independence from Great Britain. Free, educated people of color had always lived here, and increasingly their voices were heard from pulpit and platform. For example, William Apess, an Indian of mixed Wampanoag and Pequot background who became a Methodist minister, spoke out for Indian civil rights in Massachusetts in the 1830s. He delivered his "Eulogy on King Philip," or Metacomet, leader of a seventeenth-century war against the English colonists, in 1836, and led the Mashpee Indians in a successful battle to throw off their oppressive white overseers.

Apess called on all men of color to unite against white supremacist racism, which he saw as originating in the Puritan colonists' genocidal attitudes and actions toward Native Americans. But the issue that most motivated such activism in the antebellum United States was the abolition of slavery. African American women (as noted above) and men took the speaker's platform in unprecedented numbers to denounce this evil and to campaign for civil rights for all African Americans. In so doing, they had to develop rhetorical strategies for heterogeneous and hostile audiences, to claim a hearing that their very appearance would often seem to deny them, and thus to add entirely new elements to the Western rhetorical tradition.

Foremost among the African American men who blazed this trail was Frederick Douglass (p. 1061), who escaped slavery as a young adult in 1838 and became a powerful agitator against slavery and for black civil rights. He began his work as a paid agent for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society under the tutelage of European American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, but after a wildly successful tour of Britain in 1845–46 he became independent of his mentor's guidance. Douglass published his own abolitionist newspaper, first entitled *The North Star* and later, as his fame spread, simply *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. His power on the speaker's platform was legendary, since he combined an arresting appearance, a well-modulated voice, and extensive self-taught European American cultural learning with a deeply convincing passion for African American rights. Abandoning Garrison's teaching that political attempts to foster social justice would not work, Douglass spoke eloquently for a number of reform causes, notably temperance and women's rights, and campaigned for political candidates who promised to support his views. He also published three versions of his autobiography, which powerfully depicted the horrors of slavery and his own triumph over them, showing just what a talented black man could accomplish. During the Civil War, he advised Abraham Lincoln on freeing the slaves and admitting black men to the Union Army on equal terms with whites. After the war, Douglass accepted several

accounts that  
couldn't  
differentiate

"had always  
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audience, a stage

rhetorics that  
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audience

this is particularly  
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government appointments honoring his respected position and his staunch support of the Republican party, notably the post of minister to Haiti. He also continued to fight for African American rights, joining forces late in life with antilynching crusader Ida B. Wells. At his death in 1895, Douglass was the best-known African American in the United States.

Douglass was certainly not the only, or even the first, African American man to make an impact, however. Preceding him on the speaker's platform in New England was Charles Parker Remond, who became his close friend. Remond, born free, was the first black agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and an orator of such power that he was sent to England before Douglass as the Society's representative to attend a world antislavery convention and raise money for the cause. Although his health failed at a relatively early age and he died at sixty-three, Remond lived long enough to see the Civil War abolish slavery and to fight for the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed the franchise to black men.

Another black Boston abolitionist who worked with Douglass was William C. Nell. Born free, Nell had trained as a lawyer, but true to his Garrisonian beliefs, refused to practice law in a corrupt, racist legal system. He was an effective local agitator, organizing protests, for example, against Boston's segregated schools, but he served African American causes primarily through writing. Nell assisted in the publication of *The North Star* and wrote the first history of African Americans, detailing their contributions during the Revolutionary period.

Martin R. Delany also worked for a time on *The North Star*. He had been born to a free mother and a slave father, and his mother took him from his native Virginia to Pennsylvania so that he could be educated without breaking the law (slave states such as Virginia forbade literacy to blacks). Although denied a degree from Harvard Medical School because of his race, Delany became one of the leading African American physicians in Pittsburgh and also a vigorous activist for black civil rights. He published his own newspaper before briefly joining Douglass's venture, and he also wrote several books on black causes. During the Civil War, like Douglass, he argued for black men's right to join the Union Army on equal terms with whites, and he became the Army's first black combat officer, at the rank of major. Unlike Douglass, Delany tended to be separatist in his views for the future of African Americans. He believed that they needed land for their own communities, whether in the western territories of the United States or abroad, although he denounced the racist resettlement schemes of the American Colonization Society, which included slaveholders among its founders. He worked for his own resettlement vision both through the Freedman's Bureau after the Civil War, where he held a prominent position, and through colonization plans that attempted to remove American blacks to Central America or Africa.

Sharing Delany's black nationalist views was Henry Highland Garnet. Like Douglass, he was born a slave in Maryland but escaped as a young boy with his family. He became a Presbyterian minister and a fiery advocate of black civil rights, rivaling Douglass in his power on the speaker's platform. He was also noted for his eloquent journalism. Garnet was more militant than many other black abolitionists,

there is a  
tracing of  
a network  
happening  
here: and  
in these  
introductions  
generally

advocating violent resistance to slavery, black separatist political agitation, and resettlement either in the western territories or outside the United States, although, like Delany, he opposed the American Colonization Society as essentially racist in motive. As a prominent black leader after the Civil War, Garnet was awarded the post of minister to Liberia, where he died.

These courageous African American speakers faced dangerously hostile audiences to forge their own unique rhetorical identities, adapting traditional rhetoric and also bringing important new elements to the repertoire of Western rhetoric.

but the style  
isn't really  
discussed here

## THE RHETORIC OF COMPOSITION

By the middle of the nineteenth century, written composition had become a clearly defined branch of rhetoric. Here, as in education for oratory, the ideas of Blair, Campbell, and Whately dominated. In addition, a rather mechanistic approach to efficiency or economy in style was popularized by the work of the influential scientific writer Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Spencer's "Philosophy of Style" (p. 1154) proposes that successful communication is that which requires the least expenditure of mental energy to achieve successful reception. Spencer does not declare poetic language to be useless—quite the opposite, in fact. Nonetheless, his essay raised the old eighteenth-century idea of perspicuity to new heights. In a culture increasingly characterized by industry, the cult of efficiency easily spread to rhetoric.

from speech to  
writing and  
discourse more  
generally

These influences can be seen in *Elements of the Art of Rhetoric* (1850, revised as *The Art of Discourse*, 1867) by American academic Henry Day. Day treats oratory as the proper form of rhetoric, but he anticipates an approach that characterized the rhetoric of composition in the United States through the latter half of the nineteenth century. For Day, rhetoric is the art of discourse and discourse is the "faculty" of communicating thoughts. Rhetoric, in Day's scheme, is connective rather than creative; it is grounded in the sciences of grammar, logic, ethics, and aesthetics, and so it has no content of its own. Rhetorical invention, then, consists of arranging the elements of the parent sciences into forms that will appeal to the faculties of thought. There are four of these forms: *explanation*, *confirmation*, *excitation*, and *persuasion*. Later compositionists retained the idea that rhetoric is derivative, and they sought to delimit forms of discourse that correspond to the mental faculties, but they dispensed with the idea that invention is a part of rhetoric. They also turned away from theoretical discussions of rhetoric such as Day's and focused instead upon writing textbooks for the burgeoning composition market. In this, they followed the influential work of Alexander Bain.

I think we could  
say more than  
"characterized by  
industry" and to  
say something more  
intellectually  
flavored—intensified

Bain (1818–1903), a Scotsman from Aberdeen, used the rhetorical theory of his countryman Campbell to devise a psychological approach to written composition that still influences the field. Bain is a major figure in the development of psychology before Freud; his two psychology books were standard texts through the last half of the nineteenth century. In his rhetoric, Bain applies his versions of the theories of associationism and physiological psychology to composition. He identifies the chief mental operations as discrimination, retentiveness, and agreement. These operations are associative, bringing ideas together through contrast, contiguity, and

this is "thru" silhou  
bullet against  
rhetoric since the  
beginning

similarity. In *English Composition and Rhetoric: A Manual* (1866; p. 1145), Bain says that the most important figures of speech—metaphor, metonymy, and antithesis—are parallel to mental operations. The outline of Bain's rhetoric is Aristotelian, and it is the pathetic appeal, quite naturally, that most interests him.

Bain is also responsible for the decisively influential formulation of the modes of discourse—description, narration, exposition, and persuasion—and for the notion of paragraph unity as an important feature of written discourse. Bain's modes included poetry, but his successors dropped it. Whately had already disengaged the belles lettres from his rhetoric, and others were disengaging rhetoric from their belles lettres. Despite the continued use of Blair's textbook and the persistent connection between poetry and rhetoric that shows up in literary criticism (including Thomas De Quincey's essays and Walter Pater's reflections), a contrary notion was gathering strength. As Coleridge plainly put it, poetry is not rhetoric at all. Poetry, unlike rhetoric, is the expression of the poet's feelings. It is a mimetic art that mediates between people and nature. If poetry, like rhetoric, seeks to stimulate the emotions, it does so for quite different reasons—poetry for contemplation, rhetoric for action. Moreover, it is a mistake to reduce two such different forms of language use to the same theory, even if they seem to have similar ends. Coleridge emphasizes the critic's responsibility to distinguish poetry from rhetoric, philosophy, and other prose works and to allow to each its own forms, objects, and effects.

Under this pressure from both sides toward independent development, rhetoric and belles lettres split. In 1828, a chair of English literature was established at London University; in 1845, Edinburgh separated rhetoric and literature; in 1876, Johns Hopkins and Harvard did the same; and in 1904, laggard Cambridge followed. By the end of the century, a further split had occurred in the United States: Speech departments had formed, taking the elocution course and the study of rhetoric with them.

Adams Sherman Hill took the chair of rhetoric at Harvard following the creation of a separate chair of literature. Hill was content to teach style, usage, and editing. His book, *The Principles of Rhetoric* (1878; p. 1149), helped to spread this approach through the greatly expanded university system that arose as the United States entered the commercial-industrial era following the Civil War. Hill's method is congenial to the practical aims of the new system. He defines rhetoric as "the art of efficient communication." Efficiency requires, above all, getting it right. Grammar and usage, secondary concerns to the previous generation of rhetoricians, thus come at the beginning of Hill's book. He treats argument rather mechanically, as a patchwork of syllogism, signs, and testimony, and persuasion gets a perfunctory few pages near the end of the book. Exposition, not argument, is the ideal form in Hill's rhetoric. As scholar of rhetoric and composition James Berlin puts it, freshman English in Hill's day becomes a course in technical writing, one of the skills needed to earn a living.<sup>7</sup>

In the new middle-class colleges, composition was a required course taught by assistant professors and graduate assistants, and the emphasis was on expository

<sup>7</sup>James Berlin, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 63.

mind the  
distinctions



Burke would later  
blow this up

yes, but what does  
Berlin mean by  
"technical writing"?

writing. Persuasion, deemphasized in Hill's book and its successors, came to be associated with oral performance and was relegated to the elocution course. The "current-traditional" model of composition teaching that was thus created in the last years of the nineteenth century combines Bain's modes of discourse and paragraph unity with Hill's prescriptivism in grammar, usage, and style. This stripped-down rhetoric was a necessity because of the large number of students and the constant turnover of new instructors who needed clear guidelines on how to teach a subject that they generally hoped to leave behind as soon as possible. The efforts of teachers like Fred Newton Scott and a few others to criticize such methods and improve this gloomy situation produced no competing rhetorical theory or pedagogy. Only recently have scholars begun to examine Scott's insistence on the value of the rhetorical tradition in composition teaching, his use of linguistics and behavioral psychology, his emphasis on the composing process, and his sensitivity to the social uses of language.

disciplinary  
Splits

I would say  
"thought  
necessary"

## ROMANTICISM AND RHETORIC

The exigencies of the academy may also account for the absence of any significant response from professional rhetoricians to two other lines of inquiry into language: romantic theories of literary composition and the continuing philosophical debates about semantics. The central themes of Romanticism are, as noted previously, fundamentally antirhetorical. Rhetoric was allied with literature and literary criticism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of the reigning didactic conception of literature. Rhetoric was compatible with the view that literature should instruct by pleasing and that literary criticism should judge works and define rules for production. Both rhetoric and criticism operated empirically in an empirical age, examining successful works and identifying the features that made them effective; both relied on classical works as models of enduring effectiveness; and both defined human nature as the general experience of humankind. But during the eighteenth century, poets and critics were developing a new model of literature that focused not on its ends but on its creation. The artist's mind, in this new view, is more relevant to an understanding of art than the mind of the audience is. The recurrent ideas of the Romantic revolution reflect this turn toward the creator of art. The key terms are *solitude*, *spontaneity*, *expression of feeling*, and *imagination*—all quite opposed to the rhetorician's concern for society, planned discourse, communication, and moving the will through reason and passion. The Romantic poet is engaged in a soliloquy, not an argument, and the poet's aim is reflection, not action. The ideal genre is the lyric, not the oration or the essay.

Byron Hawk has  
done more to  
complicate some  
of this telling

Blair's discussion of poetry is part of this development, for he combines definitions of literature and criticism drawn from both the old and the new models. He could say without apparent contradiction that poetry should move the reader by presenting the sincere feelings of the poet. To appeal to human nature, Blair says, the writer should be natural, boldly expressing strong emotions. William Wordsworth, too, used this mixed critical vocabulary, speaking of both poet and audience and appealing to common experience as the basis for poetry. Wordsworth took seriously

the doctrine of uniform human nature and concluded that human nature could best be seen not in classical literature but in unsophisticated characters—leech-gatherers and idiot boys, for instance. Thus, although his poetic practice was radically Romantic, much of his defense still followed well-established lines of thought. It was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who recognized the need for a thoroughly new theory of poetic composition. Grammar, logic, and psychology, he said, are, of course, the basic principles of writing and the foundation of rules of judgment. But *psychology* means the mind of the writer, in whom perception is not passive but creative. Coleridge accepted the theory of faculty psychology but distinguished the associative process, the fancy, from the creative process, the imagination. Where the fancy worked mechanically to combine the ready materials of the memory, the imagination synthesized, generated new and unexpected ideas, worked through dialectical processes, and made the mind change.

helpful  
discussion of  
this distinction

For all the Romantic emphasis on the artist, the actual artifacts—the poems, novels, and essays—are not, finally, private utterances directed to the artist himself, with the rest of us merely overhearing them. A soliloquy is, after all, a dramatic performance, a convention for externalizing an equally conventional internal monologue. Romanticism is, in part, the celebration of that convention, not the end of communication itself. Critics who examined the relationship between the artist and the audience could turn once again to rhetoric, as did Thomas De Quincey. De Quincey's distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power renewed the useful categories of purpose and effect in criticism. Ralph Waldo Emerson, too, appealed to rhetoric in calling for a powerful Romantic form of oratory. He advocated a rhetoric of personal expression that would stir the audience to their own creative perception. Emerson suggested the fundamental question of Romantic expression: how to represent one's experience in language in a way that will duplicate or generate that experience in the audience.

and yet, Emerson  
isn't included here

## LANGUAGE, RHETORIC, AND KNOWLEDGE

The prominent philosopher John Stuart Mill held that “eloquence, like poetry, is impassioned truth.” Yet he insisted that poetry was soliloquy: “Eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *overheard*.”<sup>8</sup> Although Mill acknowledged that soliloquy is a convention, he maintained that the poem-soliloquy is an internal dialogue repeated later to an audience. For poetry, utterance is the end, not, as in rhetoric, the means to an end. Mill's distinction, repeated by many a critic and rhetorician well into our own time, seems to have been a response to an earlier argument by Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher of utilitarianism. Bentham takes poetry to be a persuasive art because ideas conveyed poetically are readily believed by virtue of the pleasure poems impart. Bentham does not approve of this situation: With Plato, he complains that both poetry and rhetoric too often subvert rational judgment by giving attention to style and effect, rather than substance.

hum?

But of course.

Bentham's theory of utilitarianism, whose goal is the greatest happiness for the

<sup>8</sup>John Stuart Mill, “Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties,” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 1, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 348.

greatest number, is based on the principle (already noted by Campbell and Bain) that people seek pleasure and avoid pain. Bentham notes that individuals would always act selfishly were it not for the external constraints—physical, moral, religious, and political—that make societies possible. He also recognizes that individuals vary in their desires and their responses to social constraints. Reasoning itself, he concludes, is a process of persuasion: Reasons can be judged on their utility (that is, on the likelihood of producing pleasure), but their effects are uncertain. Furthermore, probability must also refer chiefly to persuasiveness rather than to facts. Bentham allows that in some sense all knowledge depends on persuasion and belief, on people's psychological reactions and society's bounds. It follows that language can be no mere vehicle of ideas but must be part of the process of persuasion that leads to knowing.

Bentham's contemporary, Wilhelm von Humboldt, dissatisfied by Lockean semantics and grammar-bound philology, argues that language can be understood only as a process, not as a system. He takes an anthropological approach, examining discourse as it is used and understood in a cultural context. Anticipating the formula of modern linguists, von Humboldt regards syntax and lexicon as products of analysis and seeks for language in the accumulated instances of actual speech: "Discourse is not composed of words that precede it . . . the words issue from the totality of discourse." Words don't begin, that is, as designations of objects; rather, man sees reality "exclusively as language presents it to him."<sup>9</sup> Thus von Humboldt argues that language use reflects one's inner state, in two senses: the personal and the national or cultural. Language is a tool for studying both personality and culture.

The most radical formulation of the relation between language and knowledge comes from the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who says quite bluntly that all language is rhetorical (p. 1168). The very nature of language is unconsciously rhetorical, an effort "to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses." All words are tropes, signs that stand for some part of the thing they represent, like the synecdoche. For Nietzsche, the traditional philosophical search for truth that lies beyond language and convention is a hopeless delusion. We will understand our world better, he suggests, if we honestly accept that we must deal with it through the very metaphorical kind of knowledge that is all we can reasonably achieve.

The potential connections between rhetoric and philosophy suggested by these theories received little attention from philosophers or rhetoricians until the twentieth century. To some extent, the connections were obscured by the academic situation of rhetoric and by the development of scientific psychology, which dominated discussions of perception, belief, and personality. Psychology tended to counterbalance Romantic individualism by seeking empirically for universals of human thought and behavior. If all we know is our ideas, not external reality, then we are in some sense limited to the subjective reality of feelings. But if this point argued for the isolation of the individual, it also stimulated the intensive cataloging of external reality that characterized nineteenth-century science, including the search for

Sometimes critiques  
of rhetoric are also  
its strongest  
defenses: See here  
C 15!

Connections to  
Kantian thought?

remains a  
persuasive  
argument

<sup>9</sup>Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language*, trans. Peter Heath (1836; trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 49.



but some in  
psychology  
are "retrograding"  
to rhetoric

well-said!  
I still like  
this, even though  
I might agree  
that response is  
more complex  
than I'd  
previously  
imagined.

answering all

psychological principles that allow us to share experience and deny isolation. This search focused on the structure of the mind and all but ignored language, let alone rhetoric.

The history of nineteenth-century rhetoric attracted vigorous and sustained attention at the end of the twentieth century as scholars gained sufficient distance to see its effects on present-day theory and pedagogical practice. It was only in the late twentieth century, too, that *rhetoric* became a respectable word again in some English departments, as composition specialists demonstrated the value of paying closer attention to rhetorical theory and practice. Literary theorists, too, began to acknowledge the arbitrariness of most definitions of literature and the wider scope afforded by a rhetorical approach to discourse. Departments of speech and of English (or at least their writing programs) began seeking greater contact, making tentative efforts to heal the century-old breach. As we shall see in Part Six, the story of twentieth-century rhetoric remains, at this juncture, highly speculative, highly theoretical. It is too soon to trace the influence of such theorists as Kenneth Burke (see Part Six); disconcerting though it may be to admit it, we are still reacting to the work of Whately and Bain.

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