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THE POLITICS OF RHETORIC
IN THE NEW AMERICAN REPUBLIC, 1783-1828

DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Wade Daniel Williams, M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1997

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Rhetoric was central to the project of national-building and national self-fashioning in the new American republic between 1783 and 1828. Politics was rhetoric by other means in the creation of the new republic. The most important political issues of the period—the nature and extent of political representation, the standards of public truth, the rise of public opinion, and the proper character of the elected official—were informed by the rhetorical discourse of civic humanism. This tradition of rhetoric was based not only on neoclassical rhetoric texts but on a host of political and cultural discourses, and its cultural efficacy stems from its presence in pamphlets, sermons, broadsides, letters, diaries, and newspapers.

Civic humanist rhetoric provided the leaders of the Revolutionary movement with a public voice to declare American independence and constitute a government. It was persuasive as long as the social order and ideologies on which it rested were unchallenged. But as the American political scene changed, so too did the uses of eloquence and the standards by which people judged speech to be persuasive and eloquent, with important implications for what kind of a rhetoric was appropriate for the new republic. Emergent rhetorics began to contest this construction of public
speech. Thus, Federalist ideals of eloquence and the orator perfectus changed because the social conditions and the ideology that supported these ideals were increasingly challenged by Antifederalist and Republican notions of public speech, representation, and citizenship.

After their political defeat in the 1800 elections, Federalists articulated a new ideal of orator perfectus—the "man of letters"—to reinforce the cultural and political order in American society by invoking a rhetoric of taste based on Scottish Common Sense philosophy. If they could not control the political institutions of the United States, Federalists rationalized, perhaps they could control its cultural life through literary institutions such as the literary review. Thus, Federalist periodicals such as the Monthly Anthology and the Port Folio constitute an important response to the political and cultural changes occurring during the period.
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about it is another. We survived the convention relatively unscathed.

Scott Miller kept me excited about the history of rhetoric over home-brewed beer and lunch. Jim Fredal immediately understood what I was trying to do, and he helped me see that issues of voice are central to an understanding of rhetoric and politics.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Change in Early America, 1783-1828</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ciceronian Orators and Deliberative Discourse: The Ideology, Theory, and Practice of Republican Civic Eloquence in Eighteenth-Century America</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. (Re)Constitutions of Rhetoric and Authority in Post-Revolutionary America: The Case of Dr. Benjamin Rush</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Politics of Culture: The Uses of Taste and Belles Lettres in the New American Republic</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RHEToric, Ideology, and Social Change in Early America, 1783-1828

When can we first speak of a distinctively "American" tradition of rhetoric? What does it mean to speak of an "American" tradition of rhetoric (or multiple rhetorics)? Perhaps most importantly, as a discipline should historians of rhetoric locate their objects of study in texts or contexts and what's at stake in this choice? Historians of rhetoric such as Warren Guthrie, Ota Thomas, and S. Michael Halloran have convincingly demonstrated that most rhetoric texts present in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America were reprints of classical, British, and, to a lesser extent, Continental rhetorics. If early Americans were privileged enough to learn rhetoric at all, it was either directly through Quintilian and Cicero, or from the British rhetorics of John Ward, Hugh Blair, and George Campbell. According to Guthrie, "American rhetoric from 1785 to 1850 was dominated by the great English works of Blair, Campbell, and Whately" (1948 70). Only a few rhetorics were actually authored and published in America before the appearance of Samuel Newman's A Practical System of Rhetoric in 1827, most notably John Witherspoon's Lectures on Eloquence and John Quincy Adams's Lectures on
Rhetoric and Oratory, and even these were largely derivative and their circulation and influence were small compared to classical and British rhetorics. I want to argue that only locating rhetoric in British and Continental or derivative texts presents only one possible narrative about the place of rhetoric in early America. This type of historical narrative confines rhetoric largely to classrooms and libraries. However, there are other stories to tell.

Building on the work of earlier historians of rhetoric, this dissertation examines the political and cultural uses of rhetoric in the new American republic between 1783 and 1828. The dates are significant in the history of rhetoric and politics. The year 1783 witnessed both the signing of the Peace of Versailles, which both finalized the end of the revolutionary war and signalled the beginnings of American nationhood. Similarly, it was the year that Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was first published in London. Four and a half decades later, President John Quincy Adams’ loss to Andrew Jackson in the 1828 presidential election marks the ascendancy of new cultural and political attitudes towards the type of public speech and leaders that a majority of voting Americans supported. Similarly, it was a year after Samuel Newman published his *A Practical System of Rhetoric*, the first commercially successful bellettristic rhetoric in America. I would argue that these seemingly disparate occurrences are related. The changes that Americans from all ranks of society experienced during this period were dramatic. In ways both large and small, the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations were participants in the birth of a new and more "modern" world of democracy.
capitalism, and individualism—some embraced the future and the possibilities of modernity enthusiastically, while others resisted change as best they could. But most Americans were affected to some degree. Attitudes towards public language during the period are inseparable from these ideological and social changes.¹

Economic and social historians often attempt to quantify the changes occurring in early America. Cultural and ideological historians, by contrast, often tend to focus on less tangible, but no less important, changes in how Americans constructed identities and how they represented these identities to themselves and others. The political historian J. G. A. Pocock once stated that "the history of ideology really amounts to . . . tracing history in terms of contemporary self-understanding" ("1776" 75). Basing much of my work on Pocock’s insight, this dissertation examines how rhetoric provided newly-independent Americans with materials to fashion national and individual identities in a time of tremendous social and ideological change. Specific discourses of rhetoric, especially the civic humanist tradition of eloquence and the Scottish Common Sense tradition of taste, provided various and often competing groups with rationales, ideals, categories, and models—in short, a common vocabulary—with which revolutionary and post-revolutionary Americans imagined the proper forms of statecraft, citizenship, civic discourse, and education for a republican nation. Anyone familiar with recent scholarship in eighteenth-century American history will know that similar claims

¹ This is a broad assertion, but it does represent the direction of research in American history over the past few decades in the work of historians as diverse as Gordon Wood, Charles Sellers, Linda Kerber, Joyce Appleby, and Sean Wilentz.
have been made for the influence of other intellectual traditions. For example, Bernard Bailyn, in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, argues that the "rhetoric" of English Whig ideology provided early Americans with an ideology that was not only "illustrative" but also "determinative" of the thought and actions of the revolutionary generation. On the other hand, Carl Richard, in *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, argues that classical literature, not Whig ideology, served to homogenize and facilitate political discourse during the period by supplying the revolutionary generation with "a common set of symbols, knowledge, and ideas" (10).

Bailyn’s is the stronger claim, while Richard, whose work came twenty five years after Bailyn’s and who has the benefit of scholarly hindsight, argues for a less deterministic and, ultimately, more sophisticated understanding of the historical relationship among language, thought, and action. Of course, the argument over which intellectual tradition or discourse "determined" (the verb is Bailyn’s) the revolutionary generation’s thought and actions is moot if one accepts that the project of writing history is itself a vexed enterprise, that historical evidence is at best a partial and biased record of the past, that it is impossible to speak of causality and even influence, and that the ideal of "objective" history is, in the end, only an ideal. What can be said about the influence of rhetoric during the period? Acknowledging these constraints, this dissertation examines the "influence" of civic humanist constructions of eloquence and the *orator perfectus* and the Scottish rhetoric of belles lettres and taste on the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations.
While these constructions were first definitely articulated in texts outside of the United States (in the rhetorical-political writings of classical antiquity or the civil and aesthetic rhetorics of mid-eighteenth century Scotland), they were successively modified through various receptions and various uses at different cultural moments in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century America. My argument about the intersections of rhetoric, politics, and culture during the period is at once broader and more specific than the types of claims that Bailyn and Richard make. No one discourse of rhetoric "caused" the American Revolution, nor am I particularly interested in isolating one or two primary causes. However, many of the political discourses circulating during the period were grounded in assumptions and ideals that were also central to the Western rhetorical tradition. In short, rhetoric and politics were mutually constitutive discourses for the leaders of the revolutionary generation. The political and social events of the last decades of the eighteenth century—the ways that revolutionary Americans thought about the prospects of independence and nationalism—gave rhetoric an ideological immediacy and urgency that it had previously lacked. If we are to understand what is distinctively "American" about the discourses of rhetoric circulating during the period, we must begin by understanding the cultural contexts that framed these discourses and the uses to which these discourses were put.

Debates over what type of government and what type of education best suited the new republic illustrate rhetoric's central role in the project of building a nation and a national culture. In June, 1789, an anonymous article in a Philadelphia-based
magazine, the American Museum, aptly summarized the lines drawn in one of these debates. "We are told," the author complained, "that the Roman and Greek authors are the only perfect models of taste and eloquence, and that it is necessary to study them, in order to acquire their taste and spirit. Strange language indeed! What! Did nature exhaust herself in Greece and Rome? Are the ancients the only repositories of the great principles of taste and genius? I reject the supposition" (Rush Languages 16). What models, the author asks, should Americans use to construct a national identity? Written just a year after the United States had ratified a new national Constitution, this quote suggests that, far from being a settled issue, the question of what type of rhetoric best suited America played an important part in early American's attempts at national and cultural self-fashioning. The author was subsequently revealed to be Benjamin Rush, an early American doctor and social reformer. His anonymous musings were later published in his influential Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical (1798). For years to come Rush's attack on the classics prompted, in turn, a series of conservative rebuttals. In April, 1810, the Port Folio, a Federalist magazine published by Joseph Dennie, still thought Rush's arguments important enough to rebut with parody and sneers: "Would you have your children healthy, polite, and sentimental? Let their early youth be employed in genteel exercises; the theater, that coffeehouse, and the card table, will refine their taste, instruct them in public affairs" (qtd. in Kerber 117). The terms "eloquence," "taste," "models," and "genteel" each carried political and cultural connotations that resonated with the audiences which Rush and Dennie sought to address. Each of
these terms implies a certain construction of nationality. In short, the presence of these rhetorical keywords in these quotes suggests that discourses of rhetoric were not only confined to classrooms and libraries: rather, they were central to issues of political and cultural identity.

Examining the relation of education to politics during the early American republic, Linda Kerber writes that "Federalists and Jeffersonians alike assumed that social stability in a republic requires an educated and politically sophisticated elite" and that "argument over educational policy often took on political overtones" (95). Reading the newspapers, pamphlets, letters, and political literature of the period, it is obvious that early Americans were passionately concerned about nationalism, eloquence, and education. Moreover, these concerns provided a radically different context for the reception of discourses of rhetoric than the relative stability of latter eighteenth-century Britain, where the interactions of a relatively stratified and fixed social structure, a stable constitutional monarchy, and moribund curricula at Oxford and Cambridge created a different context for the uses of public speech. Federalist political literature employed rhetorical strategies emphasizing political stability and consensus--"We the People" being the most conspicuous example--in order to "forge artificial unities amidst a contentious, far-flung populace" (Ferguson 352). But, while Federalist rhetoric emphasized stability, historians point out that the character and fate of the new republic were by no means decided or assured. One historian observes that in the chaotic socio-political conditions of revolutionary America, "very little must have seemed stable or predictable to the founding fathers and the
people they governed" (Simpson 44). This social and ideological instability produced a crucial period for the history of rhetoric in America, a period in which questions of politics subsumed those of language and education, and a period that foregrounded the relations between liberty and eloquence, force and persuasion, freedom of speech and demagoguery, and political and linguistic reform. How does early American politics inform rhetoric, and vice versa? How were exemplary models of eloquence and the *orator perfectus* employed to fashion a new national identity for America, both cultural and political, in the post-revolutionary separation from Britain? For example, Federalists, who sought to centralize governmental power and to remove it as far as possible from the unpredictable passions of the people, represented themselves as Ciceronian statesmen employing a specific model of rational and consensual public discourse. Antifederalists, who opposed the new Constitution, responded with competing models of what types of public speech and citizens were appropriate for a representative government. To understand both the transformations in ideas about rhetoric and the important functions they served in early America, we must widen our historical lens and examine the cultural contexts that framed the reception of important rhetorics such as Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), Noah Webster's *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789), John Quincy Adams's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (1810), and Samuel Newman's *A Practical System of Rhetoric* (1827).

Rhetoric was central to early American's attempts to constitute a national identity. Having declared their political separation from England in 1776, many
Americans were faced with the exciting but daunting task of redefining who they were. Informed by a patchwork mix of classical, Christian, and Enlightenment ideas, the signers of the Declaration saw in their self-declaration of independence an opportunity to create a new kind of republican government and society. They quickly discovered that declaring independence was a relatively easy act, but actually constituting a representative government presented a host of question and problems that the signers of the Declaration had neither anticipated nor were prepared to address. At the heart of these problems were two related issues. First, Americans wrestled over the question of what should be the proper character of American government and culture. It was, in short, a question of identity: What defined the ideal statesman? What defined the ideal American citizen? Or, as Crevecoeur famously asked (and attempted to answer) in his *Letters from an American Farmer*, "What is an American?" As wealthy and highly-educated white men, Federalists let their own vision of the American republic and the American citizen dominate the authoring and the ratification of the Constitution—they saw national identity through a specific ideological lens. However, other social "interests," to use the language of the period, also argued for a stake in defining and controlling the institutions of government and culture. Other groups fashioned competing models of American identity. Once we get beyond the rhetoric of national union and consensus that defines so much of Federalist political literature, we begin to see different groups in post-revolutionary Americans defining and redefining themselves in many different ways. For example, various receptions of
the orator perfectus during the period included the evangelical New Light minister. 
the Federalist Ciceronian orator. Thomas Jefferson's virtuous yeoman-citizen. 
Benjamin Rush's "republican machine." the democratic "plain man" who represented 
the interests of his constituents over national concerns. and, eventually, the "man of 
taste" constructed by Federalists and formalized in rhetorical education by Samuel 
Newman. 2

The second issue that lay at the intersection of politics and rhetoric during 
the period was how, after the introduction of liberal theories of the individual and 
the state into public discourse during the revolutionary crisis, the conservative 
leaders of society could channel and control the democratic tendencies of the 
people. 3 How could the "few" regulate the "many" if the latter were entitled by a 
contractual theory of government to participate in public life? The question of why 
and how to grant people the right to participate in theory, but limit that participation

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2 This perspective, of course, rests on redefining the concept of rhetoric. In this 
dissertation, rhetoric is not only a set of formal precepts about persuasive language. Rather, 
it is a discursive practice that encompasses a complex of assumptions, attitudes, categories, 
and models centering on the nature and uses of civic identity and discourse.

3 The eighteenth-century philosophical connotations of "liberal" have been largely 
obsured by twentieth century political party rhetoric. Traditionally, liberalism meant a 
system of law that placed the rights of the individual above those of the state. Definitively 
articulated as a doctrine in the philosophical and political writings of John Locke, liberalism 
rests on the social and economic changes occurring in the seventeenth century such as the 
rise of a mercantile middle class, the proliferation of religious sectarian movements, and the 
establishment of a constitutional monarchy in England after the Glorious Revolution of 
1688. Liberalism is a doctrine, explains political philosopher Michael Sandel, that rests on 
"the separateness of persons" rather than their communal identities (11). The 
communitarian notion of the self emphasized the influences of family, culture, and tradition. 
The liberal ideal introduced the idea that persons are "free and independent selves, unbound 
by prior moral ties, cable of choosing our ends for ourselves" (12). Obviously, such 
fundamental changes in how individuals thought about their own private and public identities 
would have important effects on how they thought about public and private speech.
in practice, is a central organizing principle of this dissertation, and each chapter examines a different response to this dilemma. In the 1770s and 80s, the leaders of the Revolution used the political tradition of republicanism and the civic humanist tradition of eloquence to institute a government that would subsume individual and local interest to the common good (chapter two). However, this republican ideology, conveyed in specific representations of eloquence and the ideal orator, was increasingly contested by interests such as the Antifederalists and Jeffersonian Democrats, who presented oppositional models of public speech and representation in the 1790s (chapter three). Another significant response that incorporates the rationales of both classical and Enlightenment rhetorics emerges in the writings of the Philadelphian doctor and reformer Benjamin Rush, who used a mechanistic theory of language to reconstitute citizens into pliable "republican machines" (chapter four). After the turn of the century, conservative educational reformers and magazine editors attempted to use the discourses of eloquence and taste to ameliorate and control the political passions of the people (chapter five). The most important political issues in the new republic—the nature of political representation, the role of public opinion, the character of the politician—were questions of rhetoric. Political debate was often couched on the discourse of rhetoric, invoking ideals of eloquence, citizenship, and the Ciceronian *orator perfectus*. At heart, American politics was
about rhetoric as well—about who gets to speak in a free society, what entitles that person to speak, and what makes civic discourse persuasive.  

Attitudes towards eloquence in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America must be understood within a specific intellectual tradition shared by both rhetoric and politics in the West: a persistent discourse known as civic humanism. This tradition had a powerful ideological force on the revolutionary generation, influencing ideas about both the relation of the individual to the state and the role of public speech in a self-governing society. I acknowledge that the civic humanist tradition of eloquence, and its political counterpart, republicanism, are inherently masculine, racist, and elitist models of politics and rhetoric. Throughout history in the West, privileged white males used the ideological rationales of civic humanism to construct definitions of public and private life that excluded many more people from power than they included. Because of their "dependent" status (a rationale that dates at least to Aristotle's *Politics*), white women, white men with little or no property, immigrants, servants, freed slaves, slaves—anyone not defined as sufficiently independent—were classified as non-citizens and relegated, in the words of Hannah Arendt, to the "shadowy realm of the household" (38). As I will show.

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1 The term "republican" must be kept distinct from the contemporary political party. During the eighteenth-century, republicanism was a model of government and society that rested on some degree of representation and popular sovereignty. Republicanism was often invoked as an alternative model to critique the arbitrary power that rested in monarchical and aristocratic governments. While the members of the party that formed around Thomas Jefferson in the 1790s called themselves "Republicans," they just as easily called themselves "Democrats." And while both Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans were informed by the discourse of republicanism, their visions of society were significantly different, revolving largely around questions concerning the proper amount of representation and sovereignty of the people.
this classification translated into ideas about human nature: independence was equated with an essentialized model of human rationality and dependence with irrationality. While many of the revolutionary leaders could use the discourse of republicanism to demand a public voice in British colonial government, they used the same ideological assumptions of republicanism to deny a public voice to all those groups classified as dependent, particularly after American independence. In different forms, there was resistance to this exclusion by some members from each of these groups. But most of their histories are either lost or waiting to be written. Given the socio-political climate, it should not be surprising that small- and middle-propertied white men (the agrarian and mechanic interests of society) were those first able to contest publicly the traditional networks of power and publicity controlled by the colonial elite (the landed and commercial interests).^5

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^5 When discussing eighteenth-century social structure, I avoid the modern term "class" in favor of the eighteenth-century vocabulary of "interests," "ranks," and "sorts" because of the former's post-Marx connotations. Rather than tensions between upper, middle, and lower classes, social tensions between the agricultural and mercantile interests defined the political issues of the first four decades of the American republic (Sellers 5-33). This does not mean that politics did not have a social dimension. Gordon Wood notes that Federalist Era politics were fundamentally rooted in economic modes of production and patterns of social organization (Creation 483-499). A good deal of historical research over the two decades has focused on the fundamentally different world-views or mentalités of rural agrarian and urban mercantile early America (Henretta 218). While significant inequalities in wealth and social striation are products of the social changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, at the same time it should be noted that in Eastern urban centers such as New York City the origins of both a labor and a middle class consciousness were beginning to appear. For the origins of a labor class, see Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850. Stuart Blumin traces the rise of an American middle class in The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900.
Along with other revisionist historians, I am suspicious of the liberal myth stating that the status of disenfranchised groups was destined to improve after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. On the contrary, many feminist historians argue that the political and social status of women actually deteriorated with the coming of American independence. In her article "Independence, Citizenship, and the American Revolution," Joan Gunderson contends that colonial women enjoyed more rights under pre-revolutionary British common law than they did after American Independence because, while arguments for direct representation empowered the white colonial men who were able to voice them, no one spoke publicly for women (62-63). Justified by republican theory, women were increasingly classified as dependent on male heads of households and denied any right to property. The exception that, in the end, proved the rule is the case of New Jersey. From 1776 to 1807, women in New Jersey had the right to vote in state elections. But after widespread fraud at the polls, the legislature voted to deny the franchise to women (and extend it to all white men) on the basis that "the men had herded [the women] to the polls and they thus were not independent voters" (66). Women's dependent status was deeply embedded in the institutions and ideologies of the new American republic. At the same time, P. Joy Rouse points out that nineteenth-century feminists such as Margaret Fuller used rationales encoded in civic

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My thinking about the status of women during the period has been especially influenced by Linda Kerber's ground-breaking Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America, Joan Gunderson's "Independence, Citizenship, and the American Revolution," and Ruth Bloch's "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America."
humanist rhetoric (along with the more feminized idea of "self-culture") to construct a "rhetoric of citizenship" and argue for a place in the public sphere (114-117).

Because so many of the arguments that disenfranchised groups would make for a public voice were first articulated during the early national period, it is important to historicize these arguments and to understand their relationship to the discourses of rhetoric present at the time.

Historians of rhetoric have only recently begun to examine the political and cultural functions of rhetoric in both the early American period and, indeed, in much of the history of rhetoric. There are several reasons for this. A defining characteristic of the rhetorical tradition—indeed, the characteristic that allows us to identify a "tradition" in the first place—is its self-reflexivity: one generation's self-conscious use of previous rationales, theories, and practices. This self-reflexiveness, in turn, has influenced how historians have written the history of rhetoric. The most comprehensive accounts of transformations in early American rhetoric examine how these rhetorical elements are transmitted to the nineteenth century and incorporated into an amalgam of theory and practice. In *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America*, Nan Johnson argues for the dependence of nineteenth-century rhetoric on the "epistemological justification of rhetorical principles and practices" of the New Rhetoric. In Johnson's words, "the epistemological and belletristic rationales underlying the New Rhetoric and the neoclassical commitments that these rationales explicitly and implicitly supported constituted the theoretical foundation of nineteenth-century theory and shaped its pragmatic enterprise" (66). Johnson's
history highlights an important and complex diachronic narrative of rhetoric: the lines of theoretical influence between neo-classical rhetoric, the New Rhetoric, and nineteenth-century rhetoric. My project, on the other hand, proceeds from a more synchronic perspective of reception and transformation. I explore how, at certain historical moments and at specific cultural sites, rhetorical formations were appropriated for specific political and cultural uses. I investigate the social rationales for specific uses of rhetoric, and ask how specific rhetorics were variously employed by individuals who sought to shape a national identity and destiny for the newly-independent United States.

Surveying scholarship on eighteenth-century rhetoric in Britain and America, Winifred Bryan Homer notes that despite "the need for scholarly attention to an age so full of rhetorical activity. . . . the research continues to be scarce and primarily limited to description" (114). Given the importance of the eighteenth century in the history of intellectual thought, this scholarly neglect is puzzling. But important work has been done in the period. Warren Guthrie and David Potter have provided important descriptive histories about rhetorical theory and practice. S. Michael Halloran has examined the period as it embodied shifts from a classical to vernacular curriculum and from scripted orality to silent prose. More recently, in collaboration with Gregory Clark, Halloran has taken an ideological turn and examined how both the shift from a civic humanist to an individualist paradigm and the rise of professional discourses affected rhetoric in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thomas Miller has also pursued important lines of historical inquiry in
early American rhetoric, focusing on the transmission of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy to American in the works of John Witherspoon. Finally, H. Lewis Ulman has examined the role of grammar and theories of language in the rhetorics of Campbell, Blair, and Sheridan. And yet, in spite of this historical work, I believe that Horner’s complaint remains valid. Many historians of rhetoric have not followed up on the exciting and important work done by recent American historians that attempts to situate discourses of rhetoric in political and cultural contexts. In contrast, much of the scholarship by historians of rhetoric is narrowly descriptive, limited only to accounts of which rhetorics were present in college libraries and curricula. We are left with important interpretive questions about rhetoric’s social and cultural functions during the period.

To illustrate how notions of “tradition” influence scholarship on early American rhetoric, I want to examine the work of two influential historians: Warren Guthrie and S. Michael Halloran. Both have taught the field a great deal about rhetoric during the period, and I see my own research as building on the foundation that they laid. Guthrie, the period’s first prominent historian, focuses primarily on the academic progression of rhetorical theory and practice from the seventeenth to
the mid-nineteenth century. His five articles, collectively titled "The Development of Rhetorical Theory in America, 1636-1850," comprise the most comprehensive archival account of rhetoric in the early American period. The types of historical generalizations that Guthrie makes rest on a survey of primary rhetorics found in various sites, primarily college curricula and libraries. Reacting against claims that early rhetorical training was either wholly classical or unsystematic, Guthrie set out "to present the factual data which are available on the rhetorical works used, and the academic discipline in rhetoric, as a basis for setting out and interpreting the rhetorical theory and speech training of the period" (1946 14). Guthrie's history does an admirable job of identifying "the factual data" available, providing a solid base on which other historians of the period have freely built. His interpretive narrative, however, is limited by his descriptive method of enumerating and summarizing his sources. Focusing on academic rhetorics, Guthrie can tell us little about early Americans' attitudes towards eloquence and taste, or why these attitudes changed.

According to Guthrie, popular Ramist rhetorics such as Omer Talon's *Rhetorica*, William Dugard's *Rhetorices Elementa*, and Thomas Farnaby's *Index* dominated American education from the founding of Harvard College in 1634 until about 1750. However, these Ramist rhetorics lacked the "old-time vitality" of the "full classical approach" and were subsequently displaced by a revival of classical
rhetorics (1954 53-54). During the mid eighteenth century, Cicero’s *de Oratore* and John Ward’s neoclassical *A System of Oratory*, enjoyed wide popularity in the American colonies (1954 54). From 1785 to 1850, American rhetorical theory "was dominated by the great English rhetorics of Blair, Campbell, and Whately" (1948 70). Guthrie’s historical conclusions are sweeping: a distinctively American tradition was slow to develop, reaching full stature only in the mid-nineteenth century (1949 113). Rhetorical theory and pedagogy in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America were essentially the same as in Britain. Indeed, the "productive and creative era" of American rhetoric did not begin until the mid nineteenth century. Before Samuel Newman’s rhetoric in 1827, Guthrie locates only two "American" rhetorics: John Witherspoon’s *Lectures on Moral Philosophy and Eloquence* (1797) and John Quincy Adams’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (1810) (98-103). He tells us little about how different rhetorics were valued, why they emerged when they did, and why they faded. In short, Guthrie’s history documents what exists in the archival record, but not why.

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8 For a more comprehensive perspective that positions Ramist rhetoric within the socio-cultural conditions of the American colonial period, see Perry Miller. *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, especially pp. 300-362.

9 The common perception that an original American literature arose only with the "American Renaissance" authors such as Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville echoes Guthrie’s claim that a distinctively American rhetoric was not established in until 1850. In *The Politics of American English, 1776-1850*, David Simpson questions this claim, writing that "For many readers and critics, that which is distinctly American appears for the first time around 1850, . . . however, a close study of the language and literature of the early nationalist and Jacksonian periods can provide a quite alternative idea of what the American experience was" (8). I extend this claim to the history of rhetoric, arguing that an "alternative" reading of the role of rhetorical theory and practice in politics and society would complement more mainstream studies of rhetoric during the period.
Subsequent historians of American rhetoric such as S. Michael Halloran have built on the work of Guthrie, exploring many of the questions that Guthrie’s research raises. Halloran’s 1982 article "Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse" explores the fate of public discourse in early America between the seventeenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. Halloran argues for the renewal of a civic humanist rhetoric that would restore rhetoric to an art of public discourse. This, he contends, is necessary to legitimize composition studies and train citizens to participate in public life. Halloran’s central question is, how did we get from the "fullest expression" of the rhetorical tradition "in the works of Cicero and Quintilian" to the sterility of current-traditional rhetoric (252)?:

At the end of the 18th century, rhetoric at American colleges was the classical art of oral public discourse. It stood very near if not precisely at the center of pedagogical concern. It provided students with an art, and more importantly with copious experience and with a tacit set of values bearing directly on the use of language in managing public affairs. Within a century the picture had changed drastically. . . . The most obvious changes were the move to a primary focus on written rather than oral communication, the demotion of rhetoric to a minor place in the curriculum, and the detachment of classical learning from the general concerns of rhetoric. (257)

10 Other historians of nineteenth-century rhetoric who rely on Guthrie’s research are Albert Kitzhaber, James Berlin, and Sharon Crowley.
While Halloran relies on Guthrie’s research, his interpretive framework goes beyond the latter’s in scope and implications. Halloran notes that Ramist rhetoric was truncated and anti-classical, making "a sharp distinction between substance and form in discourse" and concerned only with tropes and figures, "the surface features of discourse" (247). Like Guthrie, Halloran argues that a full revival of classical rhetoric occurred around 1750, displacing the impotent Ramist rhetoric of style and delivery with the classical art of public discourse. Classical rhetoric became the penumbra of the liberal arts curriculum: "The more specialized studies in philosophy and natural science and the classical languages and literatures would be brought to a focus by the art of rhetoric and made to shed light on problems in the world of social and political affairs" (252). However, the emergence of belletristic rhetoric "distracts the gaze of rhetoricians from their central concern with public discourse" and heralds the end of the classical tradition (259). Unlike Guthrie, Halloran speculates about the causes of this decline of public discourse. But the causes are complex and he admits that the reason for this transformation--"the emergence at the beginning of the 19th century of certain vitalistic assumptions about the human mind and the creative act"--is only partly satisfactory (257). Finally, he suggests three factors that would be central to a history of this transformation: the emergence of the concept of belles lettres, the specialization of the curriculum during the nineteenth century, and shift from an education focused on public interest to one centered on self-interest (259-260). Halloran’s subsequent work has explored each
of these factors to some extent and his research remains the most sensitive to the complex web of influences that affected the teaching of rhetoric in early America.

These historical narratives raise two important issues that I explore in this dissertation. First, many historians look to the period to discover a model for a public and participatory discourse, ultimately based on the classical studia humanitatis ideal of Cicero and Quintilian. Halloran valorizes neoclassical rhetoric for its "tacit set of values bearing directly on the use of language in managing public affairs" (257). He and other historians present this ideal as the fullest expression of the rhetorical tradition, and measure against it everything before and after. By positing a now-lost democratic public sphere or Golden Age of Oratory, historians use the early American period to revitalize and legitimize the place of rhetoric and composition in late twentieth-century higher education. This goal is admirable, and I believe that early American attitudes towards eloquence and education can tell us much about what we can and should expect from public discourse and education in today. However, we must also revise the concept of a public sphere in early America, specifically examining who could speak and write in public (and who could not), the relation of democracy and eloquence, and the role of "influence" and

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11 The myth of a Golden Age of Oratory is an important part of American national mythology. Nineteenth-century Americans elevated their early national statesmen such as Patrick Henry, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay to the status of eloquent Ciceronian statesmen. In the early twentieth century, Stephen Vincent Benet's "The Devil and Daniel Webster" reworked nineteenth-century folklore by pitting American eloquence against the Old Deceiver himself. Represented as such, these orators performed an important function in the process of American national self-fashioning. In works such as James Spear Loring's The Hundred Boston Orators (1852) and Edward G. Parker's The Golden Age of American Oratory (1857), nineteenth-century Americans found examples of virtuous and persuasive orators, imagined along classical lines yet distinctly American in character.
ideology in the seemingly mythic act of creating a nation by a declaration of words. While all histories speak to the present, one of the responsibilities of historians is to inquire into ideological biases, both of their own methods and their areas of inquiry. One of the main goals of this project is to demonstrate how systems of rhetoric convey more than theories and pedagogies of language. Rhetorics also convey ideological assumptions about communication in society: they contain implicit assumptions about social order; they maintain the boundaries between public and private; and, in the words of Sharon Crowley, they function "to invent and discipline" the individual ("Biting" 17).

Secondly, histories of early American rhetoric are often concerned with the academic rhetoric of college lectures and textbooks. This perspective, while an important first step towards recovering early American rhetoric, does not tell us much about its cultural function—the ways that these texts are received, framed, and enacted in various cultural sites. The curricular history of academic rhetorics, while important, often neglects the wider political and social contexts that framed individual and communal attitudes towards the nature and uses of eloquence. Furthermore, separating academic rhetorics from the cultural attitudes towards public speech that frame these rhetorics leads historians to make unwarranted claims about the originality of early American rhetoric. For example, Warren Guthrie argues that early American rhetoric was largely derived from British and Continental

12 In his article "Was There Ever a Public Sphere? If So, When? Reflections on the American Case," Michael Schudson critiques the myth of a Habermasian public sphere marked by rationality and common sense, plain-spoken eloquence, and mass democratic participation in eighteenth-century America.
sources and that a distinctively American rhetorical tradition did not appear until the mid-nineteenth century (1948-70). This claim puts Guthrie in the tenuous position of having to define an "American rhetorical tradition" as consisting of rhetorics authored by Americans. The question of originality becomes moot once we begin to examine how early Americans were defining and using ideals of eloquence in response to social and political change. To excavate the cultural and political meanings of various constructions of eloquence and the ideal orator, we need to widen the historical lens and examine the contexts that sustained and resisted rhetorics during the early American period.

A review of historical research on eighteenth-century rhetoric illustrates this tendency to isolate and decontextualize rhetorics from their cultural milieu. For example, in the scholarship of the period, classification has been a central organizational trope. In his 1952 article "On Systems of Rhetoric," Douglas Ehninger announced four "dominant trends" in the history of rhetoric: 1) classical, 2) psychological-epistemological, 3) elocutionary, and 4) belletristic. He isolates and identifies the distinguishing characteristics of each. Subsequent scholarship presents minor variations on this theme. For example, in their "Introduction" to The Rhetoric of Blair, Campbell, and Whately, James Golden and Edward P. J. Corbett similarly identify four schools of thought in eighteenth-century rhetoric: 1) classical.

Furthermore, such claims to originality in American history are often heavily informed by notions American exceptionalism on the part of the historian. This is not to say that exceptionalism was not (and is not) a powerful ideological force in America. As we will see, many in the revolutionary generation felt that the new American republic was unique in world history, that is was indeed a religious and political fulfillment of history.
2) elocutionary. 3) belletristic, and 4) psychological-philosophical. Michael Moran, editor of the recently published *Eighteenth-Century British and American Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*, expands the scheme to encompass 1) neo-classical, 2) stylistic, 3) elocutionary, 4) belletristic, 5) psychological-philosophical, and, reflecting a new trend of scholarship in the field, 6) women's rhetoric. Of course, the reasons for the popularity of classification are not difficult to understand. Categories are inevitable because they give the historian control over the subject at hand; indeed, categorization is an inherent function of language itself. However, classification and categories also limit the perspective of the historian. While most of the historians I listed admit that their categories are fluid and often overlap one another, the sites in which real individuals actually encounter these rhetorics, and how and why they interiorize or resist them, and the specific rhetorical situations in which individuals employ these rhetorics, are issues that are often overlooked.

Recently, alternative models of history have begun to influence the ways historians of rhetoric think about their subject. The history of rhetoric as a field of inquiry has begun to focus on the rhetoric of history. Questions of historiography and problematics of method increasingly occupy a central position in most histories. Many scholars are moving from descriptive to interpretive models of historiography that problematize traditional notions of canonicity and influence and that seek to position rhetorics within larger cultural contexts. The history of rhetoric in early...

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14 Various examples of this new interpretive approach to the history of rhetoric can be found in the work of James Berlin, Sharon Crowley, Victor Vitanza, Susan Jarrett, John Schilb, Carole Blair, Kathleen Welch, and William Covino.
America, or of any era, is not only a description of what rhetorics existed or a synopsis of their content. While this descriptive work is important, it often becomes a narrowly focused history of ideas. Guthrie’s history, for example, is limited by a descriptive treatment of the text with such strategies as paraphrase, summary, and survey. From this perspective, rhetorics are studied in isolation from the social and ideological contexts that sustain or resist them. Given its focus on the persuasive function of language, it is surprising that the history of rhetoric has, for many years, been a narrative of an ahistorical ideal of rhetoric situated in the irretrievable past of classical rhetorical systems. According to this ideal, later systems of rhetoric are simply measured against this classical ideal, and the rhetorical complexity of specific historical moments is effaced. "This tendency to eclipse the historical materials themselves," argues Carole Blair, "is not an accident of application in influence studies; it is inherent in the model of influence itself. The historian who traces influences attempts to find in a theory only what has been said before" (406).

Measuring the rhetoric of a period against a classical ideal is common in many histories of rhetoric. Assuming this "classicist stance," these historians have sought to recover a classical ideal of rhetoric that existed neither in classical Athens nor in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. This stance, and the historical

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15 Nan Johnson has critiqued the "classicist stance" in the historiography of rhetoric: "The problematic consequence of adopting such a stance in accounts of the nineteenth-century tradition, or any other tradition for that matter, is that such a posture focuses attention on a fixed notion of what rhetoric ought to be rather than on what an individual tradition actually entails" (12). For a good discussion of historiographical issues in the field see the essays in Writing the Histories of Rhetorics, ed. Victor Vitanzia, particularly those by Hans Kellner and Sharon Crowley.
method that it implies. determines just one reading of rhetoric during the period: the story of the rhetorical Fall, a disintegration of classical rhetoric from its "fullest expression" to the sterile nineteenth century practices of belles-lettres poetics and 'scientific' philosophies" (Johnson 12). It overlooks the important role that eloquence, taste, and constructions of the ideal orator played in the post-Revolutionary struggles to define the national character of American politics and society. We need a better understanding of the social and ideological contexts that affect rhetorical theory and practice. What is important is not the idealized pre-Lapsarian eloquence of Athens or even Philadelphia, but the conditions that supported this ideal and the uses to which it is put—not its historical manifestation and loss, but its ideological employment as a cultural tool for specific purposes.

Rhetorical theory and practice are always part of larger social and political attitudes towards public and private speech. To capture the interplay between the social and the ideological dimensions of rhetoric, historians must use perspectives from both intellectual and social history. Accordingly, I examine how rhetorical theory responds to transformations in ideologies and social practices in early America. Historians have recently begun to examine rhetoric in relation to ideology. For example, Thomas Miller's work on Scottish rhetoricians' responses to the civic humanist and natural law paradigms in *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces* provides a fascinating account of the relation among ideology, rhetorical theory, and practice. However, there has been very little examination by the field as a whole of how either social
changes reconfigure audiences and occasions, or how rhetorical theory accounts for these changing speech situations. A social history of rhetoric would attempt to read rhetorical theory as not only a pattern for communicative practices, but ultimately as a product of these social performances of speech. In this project, I assume that rhetorical uses of language, particularly political eloquence, are contingent on patterns of social organization. Therefore, a social history of rhetoric assumes that communication cannot be understood apart from historical conditions.

Formal systems of rhetoric encompass more than invention strategies, modes of discourse, and tropes and figures. They reflect both the material conditions and ideological stances of individuals in particular historical moments. Following the theoretical lead of Michael Foucault, James Berlin argues that "new histories of rhetoric" must examine formal statements about rhetoric as a set of discursive "rules," sanctioned by the dominant culture, concerning who is literate, and what literacy entails:

These rules are of course inscribed in a rhetoric, a systematic designation of who can speak, when and where they can speak, and how they can and must speak. Educational institutions inculcate these rules, determining who is fit to learn them and who has finally done so—in other words, who is authorized to be heard. A rhetoric codifies these rules for the members of a society. It is therefore never simply a set of disembodied principles that discuss the way language is used for purposes of persuasion and communication. It is a set
of strictures regarding the way language is used in the service of power.

(52)

Cultural attitudes towards the nature and uses of eloquence are products of these "strictures." Moreover, these attitudes are supported by social ideas concerning how one should be educated, the character of the orator, and what register of speech is appropriate for civic eloquence.

Changes in attitudes towards eloquence and taste register and reflect broader changes in the audiences, occasions, and strategies of rhetoric. I believe that a social perspective on rhetoric necessitates a distinction between formal rhetorical theory and everyday communicative practices— the latter being a more comprehensive level of discourse that encompasses and ultimately defines the former. Ultimately, patterns of social organization and interchange define the available repertory of communicative practices available to communities and individuals. Communicative practices, in turn, are the culturally-specific strategies, conventions, and modes of persuasion that individuals employ to communicate effectively and to create community in given rhetorical situations. They are contingent on social patterns of organization, interchange, and authority— sometimes in direct, and other times in subtle ways. While they provide the possible communicative patterns for formal systems of rhetoric, they are not limited to forms and strategies defined in theoretical systems of rhetoric. Communicative practices comprehend other uses of discourse not formally encoded in these "rhetorics." By placing rhetorical theory at one level removed from rhetorical practice, I am following Aristotle's justification
of rhetoric: "Now among the general public, some do these things [argue effectively] randomly and others through an ability acquired by habit, but since both ways are possible, to do the same by following a path; for it is possible to observe the cause why some succeed by habit and others accidentally, and all would agree that such observation is the activity of an art" (29. my emphasis). Speaking of this passage, the translator, George Kennedy, notes that "to observe" (theorein) literally means "to see," with the implication "to theorize." My point here is that this empirical observation occurs post facto. As an art, rhetoric theorizes and, if the system of rhetoric gains widespread acceptance and authority, sanctions those communicative practices already in existence that are perceived as effective. Notions of effectiveness, in turn, rely on the ways in which the dominant culture authorizes who speaks, when, and how.

In pre-revolutionary American communities, for example, public rhetorical situations were often controlled by the strong authority invested in the town minister--the authority that the audience invested in his words rested as much on traditional assumptions of order, gender, and patterns of social subordination as they did on his rhetorical strategies. Indeed, the two were mutually reinforcing. Formal rhetorics can also serve to "mask" the structures of authority and power operative in society. In short, communicative practices are contingent on social relations and must always be historicized. The challenge to civic humanist traditions of eloquence from liberal models of public speech originates in the changing communicative practices and rhetorical situations of eighteenth-century America. Thus, to
understand changes in rhetoric during this time, students of the period must start by examining the material, social, and ideological changes occurring in the eighteenth century.

In his short story "Rip Van Winkle," Washington Irving gives the twentieth-century reader one perspective on the social and ideological transformations occurring in America between 1783 and 1828. Through the fantastic narrative device of Rip's twenty-year nap, Irving is able to capture the extent and impact of these transformations. After twenty years of sleep, Rip wakes to a seemingly different world. Entering his village after two decades, the narrator notes that it was "altered—it was larger and more populous" (36). Indeed, "the very character of the people had seemed to change" (37). For Irving, the timing of Rip's return is symbolic. Of all the changes that occurred in the wake of the Revolution, Irving singled out popular participation in the political process as the most unsettling and potentially dangerous: Rip, for better or worse, has returned on election day. A sense of disorder is conveyed through the democratic oratory that mark the occasion. In the spot where the old village patriarch had sat, an "orator . . . was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens--elections--members of Congress--liberty--Bunker's Hill--heroes of seventy six--and other words which were a perfect babylonish jargon to the bewildered Rip Van Winkle" (37). To Rip, the discourses used to justify the democratic changes brought about by the Revolution were nothing but "babylonish jargon." Ignoring Rip's outlandish appearance, the orator demands to know "on what side he voted" and "whether he was Federal or Democrat?" (37).
His world reeling and his sense of identity shaken. Rip can only reply "I'm not myself--I'm somebody else" (38). Removed from political life for twenty years, Rip returns to find that he has no public identity at all. Indeed, the only identity that he has ever known, loyal subject of the British king, no longer exists. Granted, Rip's experience is a fantastic case, but most of the traditional structures and supports of communal life had been affected by the changes accompanying the Revolution. Individually and collectively, these changes called identities into question and opened up the possibility that new identities might be created.  

Historians of rhetoric have neglected a fact that American historians have long taken for granted: the American Revolution signified not only a legal and constitutional separation of the American colonies from England but also, and more importantly, dramatic shifts in social structure and world-view. To recover the social functions of rhetoric in early America, historians must also attend to these shifts. The Whig historian David Ramsey, in his celebratory History of the

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16 At the same time, one could argue Irving's point is that the social and ideological changes did not cause a significant shift. For example, on the sign above the village inn, someone had painted George Washington's coat, sword, and name over those of King George III, but those are only external trappings--the face is instantly recognizable as the same. More importantly, Rip quickly settles back down into the lazy and quiet life he enjoyed before his absence. The reader can usefully question whether the village had changed at all. In fact, the only significant change over twenty years was the death of Rip's wife, Dame Van Winkle (a change that certainly suggests an interesting reading from a feminist perspective). I think that we can best read this question through Irving's political sympathies and intentions. Irving was no social progressive, and, like the Federalists of the first decades of the nineteenth century, he distrusted the democratic tendencies of America. He once disparagingly labelled the United States a "logocracy," which he defined as "a government of words" (144). His Federalist sympathies are clearly evident in his satirical attacks on the Jeffersonian Republicans (subsequently published in his book Salmagundi). Thus, I would argue that "Rip Van Winkle" is an attempt to rewrite history and to downplay what Irving considered to be the radical democratic implications of the Revolution that Irving and other Federalists found distasteful.
American Revolution (1789), notes these changes when he states that "When the war began, the Americans were a mass of husbandmen, merchants, mechanics and fisherman; but the necessities of the country gave a spring to the active powers of the inhabitants, and set them on thinking, speaking and acting, in a line far beyond that to which they had been accustomed" (II 316). Ramsey represents the Revolution as much more than a political separation. Indeed, his account suggests that the Revolution occasioned nothing less than the emergence of a liberal political consciousness in those groups who had previously been disenfranchised. Of course, the intention of Ramsey's history is to celebrate these transformations as much as it had been Washington Irving's intention to disparage them. However, conservative Whigs and even Loyalist historians were also struck by the politicization of the American populace.

In 1774 Philadelphia, Gouverneur Morris, a conservative Whig politician, observed in the rise of crowd protests and citizen's militia that "the mob begin[s] to reason and think" (qtd. in Kramnick, Federalist 24). Writing just two years before the political tensions between the American colonies and England would break out into open and armed rebellion, Morris complains about what Ramsey and subsequent historians have identified as the real American "revolution": the social disruptions that, in Ramsey's words, "gave a spring to the active powers" and transformed American society in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The alarm behind Morris's observation indicates both a well-founded fear and a socio-political change. Classical republican assumptions about social order and human nature held that only
members of the gentry were fully rational and disinterested human beings. This rationality, based on gender, property rights, political independence, and classical education, entitled certain orders of society to the upper rungs of the social ladder. The lower classes, unlearned, disenfranchised, and dependent, were viewed (and feared) as beings controlled by passions and self-interest. By the 1770s, however, clear social distinctions were disintegrating and the overt markers of status, once taken for granted in the traditional social order of the Anglo-American world, were beginning to fade.

That the latter eighteenth century was a volatile period is the theme of several recent historians who emphasize the profound changes that occurred in the social hierarchy of America in the decades immediately before and after the Revolution. These historians have traced how social and economic change unsettled the realities of everyday life, particularly in the urban areas on the East coast such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. It disrupted traditional patterns of social organization and interaction, and it reconfigured the situations in which people communicated. Social historians have documented how the demographic pressures of increased population growth and mobility, and the emergence of a free market economy and culture of consumption, affected early American social

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17 The most important study to emphasize the profound changes occurring in the eighteenth century is Gordon S. Wood's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1991). According to Wood, "By the time the Revolution had run its course in the early nineteenth century, American society had been radically and thoroughly transformed. One class did not overthrow another . . . but social relationships—the way people were connected one to another—were changed, and decisively so" (6). Social historians who have influenced my thinking about the period are James Henretta, Joyce Appleby, and Gary Nash.
structure. Society, however, underwent another transformation in early America closely tied to these changes. In 1774 Philadelphia, even though a majority of the artisans, mechanics, skilled and unskilled laborers were still excluded from the circles of political and social power, they had at some point during the revolutionary years acquired the ability to "reason and think," or, as Ramsey characterizes it, experienced a revolution in "thinking, speaking, and acting." In the eyes of the gentry, the "mob" had suddenly developed politically significant ways to communicate that threatened the traditional social order. Rather than criticize the calls for citizens’ committees, political franchise, and social levelling issued by radical Patriots in 1770s Philadelphia, Gouverneur Morris implies that the real danger to social stability is a universally literate, educated, and politically-engaged population. Many individuals traditionally excluded from speaking and participating publicly began to voice opinions in the public arena. In this sense, latter eighteenth-century America experienced a revolution in attitudes towards the public nature and political uses of speech.

Underneath this ideological revolution, social and economic changes had been working for several decades. Cultural anthropologists and social historians have invented categories to describe types of individuals based on patterns of social organization to mark these changes. While generalized and abstract, these categories, particularly the distinction between the "traditional" and "modern" individual, indicate the shifts in both social structure and individual personality that were occurring in the latter eighteenth century. Within this framework we can say
that the predominant social type during the period was the "traditional" individual. According to Lawrence Kohl, "traditional man"

was so closely bound to others that he had difficulty considering himself as a distinct individual. He lived amid a seamless web of intensely personal relationships. Such relations were the natural and spontaneous products of everyday contact where the scale of life was limited. They were the result of tradition and necessity; they rarely involved a conscious choice to seek out new relations or to question old ones . . . Authority in such a world was similarly lodged by custom in certain people to whom the rest were expected to defer. It was a nurturing authority, bound to its dependents by reciprocal obligations and emotional commitments. In a large sense, however, all were bound, rulers and ruled alike, by the force of tradition. (8)

However, social changes were breaking down these relationships in the eighteenth century. One factor that heavily influenced social change in America was the phenomenal growth and increased mobility of the population. As early as 1751 Benjamin Franklin noted in Observations on the Increase of Mankind that the American population was doubling every twenty to twenty-five years. Between 1750 and 1790, the population exploded from one million to more than four million people due to high birth rates and a massive influx of immigrants (Wood, Creation 125). Especially in New England and the Middle Atlantic states, centuries-old communal patterns of life were at first strained and then increasingly transformed by population growth and mobility, a change that forged "new networks of relations
which extended far beyond the old boundaries" of traditional communities (Kohl 9). An increasingly mobile, politicized, and heterogeneous "middling class" began to establish itself in urban and increasingly commercial rural areas and shift the balance of political power away from the landowning and mercantile elite. With the increasing deterioration of traditional patterns of thought and behavior, individuals, according to Kohl, developed "a new, more flexible type of character structure, one not so dependent on the perpetuation of shared values, enduring personal relationships, and traditional patterns of economic activity and political authority" (10). As we will see, this new, "modern" subject, the individual, was the primary audience that found in the rhetoric of taste a means of socio-cultural and moral self-improvement. Similarly, the "modern" individual served as a template through which Newman conceived his ideal rhetorical subject, the "man of taste."

Changes in the economic lives of early Americans also significantly altered the traditional social order of colonial America. Of course, early American society was not totally recast into the modern industrial and capitalist mode of the latter nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some communities, particularly rural areas, continued to live according to social patterns and traditions that had held sway for over a hundred years. But transformations were occurring. Accompanying the growth of the middle classes was a new free market economy of consumption. The impact of this development on both social organization and the individual psyche was tremendous. "The development of the free market." states social historian Joyce Appleby, "was one of the few true social novelties in history, changing the
relation not only of person to person and of people to government, but also of human beings to nature" (939). For example, paper money and credit opened up extensive, distant, and impersonal networks of trade to individuals who formerly bartered in immediate, face-to-face communicative situations. Luxury items, once the preserve of the rich, became more widely available as booming transAtlantic markets turned the middle classes into a culture of consumers. Social boundaries fixed by traditional criteria such as wealth and family status weakened as a new class of merchants, artisans, and investors began to make money and connections in the new market economy of the eighteenth century. Conservatives became increasingly alarmed "by this conspicuous consumption and the social disorder it engendered" (Wood 136). A 1773 editorial, published in a Charleston, South Carolina newspaper, complained that emulative spending was eroding the bonds of traditional society, promoting "one continued race: in which every one is endeavoring to distance all behind him, and to overtake or to pass by, all before him: every one flying from his Inferiors in pursuit of his Superiors, who fly from him with equal Alacrity" (qtd. in Wood 135).

Culturally, this increase in material consumption represents other forms of consumption during the period that contributed to the transformation of the social order. Loosened from their traditional social moorings, the emerging middle classes sought to buy into the "genteel" culture of the upper classes by creating their own civil sphere marked by the polite belletristic arts of eloquence, poetry, drama, history and criticism. Richard Bushman, in *The Refinement of America*, traces the
emergence of this "dilute" or "vernacular gentility" for the middle ranks of American society (xv). Similarly, Kenneth Silverman documents the "rapid rise in American culture":

By the time the country inaugurated its first president, in 1789, Americans could attend American plays, see dozens of good paintings by native artists, hear skillful performances of hundreds of tunes by native composers, read thousands of poems and stories written and printed. . . . In a quarter of a century of startling innovation, the country had produced its first novel, first epic poem, first composer, first professionally acted play, first actor and dancer, first museum, its first important painters, musical-instrument makers, magazines, engravers—indeed most of the defining features of traditional high culture. (xv)

The upper classes complained that the traditional marks of distinction were either disappearing or being appropriated by the lower classes. Increasingly, "polite" culture once reserved for the colonial gentry was being commodified in the form of luxury items, fashions, styles, manners, and printed materials. Eighteenth-century British rhetoricians, particularly the "polite" rhetorics of Adam Smith and Hugh Blair, participate in this process of cultural commodification. As we will see in chapter five, the popularity of Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres rested on the social conditions in America at the time of publication. Blair's Lectures spoke to the need many middle class readers felt trying to comprehend and organize both their new status in society and the proliferation of printed matter in
the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Lectures provided Americans with both theoretical rationales and practical methods of criticism by which to recognize and arbitrate aesthetic merit in works of art and nature. Taste was so important to Blair’s American readers precisely because it was no longer the sole possession of the genteel ranks of society. Now, taste could be bought and taught, a valuable asset for many upwardly mobile individuals. By departing from the classical system of dividing discourse into deliberative, judicial, and epideictic rhetoric, Blair’s Lectures both reflect and promote new belles-lettres categories of discourse based on literary form. Eighteenth-century rhetorical theory, responding to the educational needs of the emergent middle classes, created rationales and categories that accommodated these needs. These categories, ultimately, represent alterations in the ways that Anglo-American society defined and valued literacy.

Politically, the new republic was faced with unprecedented challenges in the wake of its recent separation from Britain. Americans were acutely aware of both the possibilities and dangers inherent in the act of peacefully constituting a representative government. According to Alexander Hamilton, in newspapers, coffeehouses, and state houses, a "great national discussion" was occurring over the extent to which Americans were capable of self-government (88). This discussion reflected the shifting balance of political and social power in eighteenth-century America. The gentry and the orthodox protestant ministry, the traditional leaders of colonial society, were losing their monopoly on power in an increasingly secular, liberal, democratic, and capitalistic America. Increasingly, previously
disenfranchised social interests began to voice their interests in the public and political sphere in the decade after the Revolutionary War began. At both the local and national levels, constituents, heady with the revolutionary rhetoric of liberty, equality, and independence, began to send a new class of statesman to state and national assemblies: the popular politician who Federalists criticized for representing the local interests of his constituents over national interests.

In the eyes of many Federalists, the statehouses were quickly transforming into places where self-interested politicians competed for the local interests of their constituents. In the span of a decade, the revolutionary ideal proclaiming that representative government was the only guarantor of individual liberty was seemingly turned upside down. America, it appeared to many conservatives, now suffered from too much liberty, too many capricious and arbitrary laws passed by unchecked state assemblies. By the mid 1780s it was clear to many Americans that their first attempt at constituting a government, the Articles of Confederation, was a failure because it had failed to provide for a strong central government to balance the power of the states and deal with foreign nations. The question of how much power the central government should have in relation to the state and the individual set the agenda for the Constitutional ratification debates of 1787-88. Throughout the 1780s and 90s, and culminating in the debates over the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the tension between two ideals of the orator perfectus, the "virtual" versus the "real" representative, and two ideals of the civic good, a single public truth or a polyphonic public opinion, were major issues in political debate. As we will see in
chapter three. these debates about representation and public opinion provide important points of contact between politics and rhetoric.

The victory of Thomas Jefferson's Republican party over John Adams's Federalist party in the 1800 presidential election signalled a political and social changing of the guard in the United States. After their defeat, conservative Federalists were at a crossroads. Contemplating the American political and social scene after the 1800 election, Federalists concluded that their vision of a hierarchical and ordered world was disintegrating. Bitter about past defeat and cynical over America's future, some of these conservatives turned to the printed word and founded literary and political journals such as the Boston-based *Monthly Anthology*, to which John Quincy Adams was a regular contributor, and Joseph Dennie's Philadelphia-based *Port Folio*, established in 1801. These Federalist journals used rationales and ideals from rhetoric to reinforce the cultural and political divisions in American society and to attempt to control the political passions of the "mob." They framed education, and consequently rhetoric, in the politics of culture and nationalism by presenting a Federalist vision of a political and cultural elite saving America from its democratic tendencies. Conservatives used satire, their most effective rhetorical form, to lambast both Republican politics and reforms in language and education perceived as innovative or revolutionary. Noah Webster's spelling and grammatical reforms were a regular target in the pages of the *Port Folio* and other Federalist journals. During this period, politics became increasingly cultural as key terms such as "taste," "decorum," and "propriety" began to accrue
ideological capital. These partisan journals constructed visions of eloquence and the ideal orator that editors and contributors thought appropriate for the times, and in doing so they influenced the direction and shape of rhetorical theory and practice in America.\textsuperscript{18}

The transformation of a rhetoric of eloquence and public deliberation into a rhetoric of taste and civility has been noted in earlier scholarship, but the reasons for these changes remain unexplored. Historians of rhetoric either consider this transformation outside the scope of inquiry or, like Thomas Miller, take it for granted: "it is not surprising that such a politically engaged rhetoric [civic humanism] was supplanted by a belletristic rhetoric in the era of High Federalism that followed the revolution" (403, my emphasis). I contend that the fate of eloquence in post-revolutionary America was not as determined as Miller suggests. Indeed, the social and ideological revolutions continued unabated in the decades after the Treaty of Versailles brought an end to the American Revolution in 1783.

Central to these revolutions was the "surprising" role that definitions of eloquence, the ideal orator, and rhetorical education were to play in the American political and social scene. To recover the complexity and importance of rhetoric in early America, we must understand how it was tied to political institutions and ideologies. Politics was rhetoric by other means in the formation of the new republic. Indeed, the most important political issues in the new republic--the nature and extent of

\textsuperscript{18} Charvat, Farrell and Noone, and Chambers and Mohrmann provide good overviews of the journals during the period, particular those that espoused particular theories of rhetoric, poetic, and criticism such as \textit{Port Folio}, the \textit{Monthly Magazine}, and the \textit{Boston Magazine}. 

43
political representation, the standards of public truth, the rise of public opinion, and the proper character of the elected official—rested as much on the discourses of rhetoric as they did on politics.

While my specific goal is to argue for the relevance of rhetoric outside of academic institutions in early America, my larger interests lie in understanding the relation among ideology, theory, and practice. How do ideologies influence the formal systems of rhetoric? By what mechanisms do social and cultural changes influence the pedagogies and definitions of rhetoric at specific historical moments? What, exactly, is "influence"? These are questions not just for early America but for any historical period. They particularly concern teachers, those who are actively involved in fostering specific literacies in students. If we are to understand the ideologies and institutions of contemporary public life, we need to historicize the rhetorical categories on which public life rests. The early national period of American rhetoric is important because it was the specific moment when these rhetorical categories and lines of influence were definitively articulated and encoded into institutions. Rhetoric has important political, social, and cultural dimensions. Indeed, in the early national period, the ideology of eloquence and representations of ideal orators were central to the project of forging new national identities in the post-revolutionary separation from England. This project examines why and how.

The next chapter examines what historian Robert Ferguson calls the "cult of eloquence" in the new American republic. How did civic humanist ideology inform this "cult of eloquence"? And how did it inform the theories and practices of
eighteenth-century American politics and rhetoric? Historically, there has always been a strong relationship among republicanism, civic humanism, and eloquence. The reception of civic humanist traditions of rhetoric by the revolutionary generation was conditioned by universalist attitudes towards history—the idea that human nature and actions are essentially the same. These attitudes lent the reception of civic humanist rhetoric an ideological immediacy for the classically-educated leaders of the revolutionary generation. In its theory and practices, civic humanist rhetoric conveyed models of eloquence, citizenship, and statesmanship to a specific class of Americans. While it seemed to provide a set of common political ideals during the revolutionary crisis, the rhetorical political discourse of civic humanism would become increasingly divorced from its initial uses. The third, fourth, and fifth chapters trace how various socio-political groups used rhetoric to fashion identities. But before discussing the various uses of the civic humanist tradition of eloquence, I first need to provide a brief history of republicanism and show how it was initially received in the 1770s. The next chapter lays the foundations for chapters three, four, and five by demonstrating how republican civic ideology was translated into rhetorical theory and practice in the 1770s and 80s.
CHAPTER 2

CICERONIAN ORATORS AND DELIBERATIVE DISCOURSE:
THE IDEOLOGY, THEORY, AND PRACTICE OF REPUBLICAN CIVIC
ELOQUENCE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

Rhetoric was indispensable to the task of nation-building for the leaders of
the revolutionary generation. When Thomas Jefferson, under the direction of the
first Continental Congress, drafted the Declaration of Independence proclaiming
America's political separation from England, the act was exactly what the title of
document implied: a declaration of words. Whether the signatories of the
Declaration believed they were preserving their traditional English liberties against
the encroachments of a corrupt parliament and king, or whether they subscribed to
the Enlightenment dream of founding a new republic removed from Europe's *ancien
regimes*, all acted according to Cicero's dictum that "there is no other occupation in
which human virtue approaches more closely the august function of the gods than
that of founding new states or preserving those already in existence" (*de Republica*
1.7.12). They were, in effect, acting out the role of the Ciceronian orator-statesman
(the *orator perfectus*) and situating themselves in two mutually constitutive traditions
of Western political and rhetorical thought: republicanism and civic humanism. In
these traditions, the functions of "founding" and "preserving" were not carried out primarily through the force of arms, though arms were often necessary, but through eloquence, the persuasive power of public speech. And early Americans were acutely aware of the importance of eloquence in the new republic. Their writings are full of references to relationship between eloquence and representative government. Both the Declaration of Independence and Constitution are enabled within the intellectual contexts of republicanism and civic humanism, which both hold speech to be the constitutive element of society and individuals to be social by nature. Fundamentally, the Continental Congress's act declaring independence in 1776 and the Constitutional Convention's act of forming a government in 1787-88 are, to borrow a phrase from political historian Quentin Skinner, "rhetorical political" acts. They assumed a necessary convergence of political and rhetorical discourses.

Accordingly, this chapter examines republicanism and civic humanism in America during the 1770s and 80s, specifically as it informs the theory and practice of eighteenth-century rhetoric. After briefly surveying the historical relationship among republicanism, civic humanism, and eloquence in the Western "rhetorical tradition." I argue that issues central to civic humanistic traditions of rhetoric in the West--the role of speech in society, the relation of truth and opinion, the role of ethos, pathos, and logos in persuasion--were also central to the political experience of early America. Next, I examine eighteenth-century attitudes towards history, arguing that the universalist idea that human nature and actions are essentially the
same gave the reception of civic humanist rhetoric an ideological immediacy for the Revolutionary generation. Finally, I examine how republican ideology was manifest in rhetorical theory and practice during the period. In its theory and practices, civic humanist rhetoric conveyed models of eloquence, citizenship, and the *polis*. In addition, it conveyed a specific model of the "public" (and, by implication, the "private") and an implicit vision of social order. But the common conceptual vocabulary that civic humanist traditions of eloquence introduced to the American educated elite during the period did not necessarily mean that they would hold homogenous opinions about national self-fashioning. To the contrary, as Americans got closer to the task of actually constituting a government, the ways that various interests used the "rhetorical political" discourses ultimately defined a number of possible visions for America's institutions and ideologies.

Because almost all of the leaders of the revolutionary generation were college-educated men, their ideas about the nature and uses of public discourse owe a great deal to the classical, liberal arts curriculum they learned at the colonial colleges. The rhetorics that they studied, mostly classical and neoclassical works, certainly imbued in them specific inventional techniques, patterns of arrangement, a familiarity with stylistic tropes and figures, and modes of delivery.¹ Historians of rhetoric such as Warren Guthrie, David Potter, and Michael Halloran have studied

¹ For a specific example of how a specific political document is based on the conventions of rhetoric, see Stephen Lucas's reading of the Declaration of Independence as a rhetorical document in his article "Justifying America: The Declaration of Independence as a Rhetorical Document." In addition, several articles have appeared in the pages of such communications journals as *Quarterly Journal of Speech* that analyze the rhetorical conventions of political sermons, speeches and documents during the period.
neoclassical rhetoric in the colonial colleges, examining its revival, dominance, and eventual decline. This revival began in the middle 1700s with the increased popularity of classical rhetoricians, particularly Quintilian and Cicero, whose *de Oratore* became "one of the most popular works on speech in the colonies" (Guthrie, 1947, 40). Similarly, neoclassical rhetorics such as John Holmes's *The Art of Rhetoric Made Easy* and John Ward's *A System of Oratory* (London, 1759) enjoyed a great popularity during the period. The terms vary, but all historians agree that the recovery of classical rhetorics signalled a shift to a more comprehensive theory of the language arts, one focused on rhetoric as the practical art of persuasion rather than an exclusive concern with style. I certainly agree, but take a broader view and situate these classical and neoclassical rhetorics within the political and cultural discourses that framed them, particularly the republican civic tradition that placed eloquence at the center of representative governments.

The civic humanist discourse of rhetoric provided key assumptions with which early Americans declared their independence and constituted their government. While it was a particularly salient discourse for the leaders of the revolutionary generation during the 1770s and 80s, civic humanist discourse actually constitutes a long line of thinking about the nature of eloquence and its role in politics in the West. This discourse is definitely articulated in the writings of the Sophists and Isocrates, the "civic" writings of Aristotle (the *Ethics*, *Politics*, and the *Rhetoric*), and most influential, the writings of Cicero. It was recovered by the Italian Humanists and spread North, influencing Agricola, Erasmus, and other
humanist rhetoricians, and then disseminated in the *ratio studiorum* of Latin Europe. The *belles-lettres* movement of seventeenth-century France, and the Anglo-American oratorical and neoclassical revivals. Finally, it influenced Enlightenment thinkers who were interested in the role of speech in society. Historians of rhetoric such as Tom Miller and S. Michael Halloran have suggested that civic humanism and neoclassical rhetoric were related. In this section I want to explore why and to what extent.

The "rhetorical tradition" in the West owes a great deal to the political tradition of classical republicanism. At the same time, the latter owes a great deal to rhetoric. Throughout history, these two traditions have shared a set of assumptions about the nature and uses of eloquence based on the idea that speech is the essential precondition for both humanity and society.\(^2\) In this view, speech is what separates humans from animals and barbarians. Wise and beautiful public speech, or eloquence, enables civilization and is "the bond of society and the instrument for its change" (Mooney xii). This construction of eloquence has been an influential concept, containing ideas about human nature, knowledge, language.

\(^2\) Few historians of rhetoric have investigated the relation between civic humanist rhetorics and the classical political assumptions that they convey. One could argue that this relation is implicit in George Kennedy's notion of *letteraturizzazione*, which he defines as "the tendency of rhetoric to shift its focus from persuasion to narration, from civic to personal contexts, and from discourse to literature, including poetry" (5). Kennedy locates this fundamental transformation in the nature and uses of rhetoric in the opportunities afforded by education, with only a brief nod to the fact that education is always political. Kennedy rarely explores the political contexts of rhetoric beyond noting that Cicero was a republican or that Quintilian wrote during the Imperial period. This approach is common in the history of rhetoric: historians acknowledge the civic uses of rhetoric but few examine how civic rhetoric influence the political systems that support it and vice versa.
education, and government. More than the private or phatic speech uttered between two individuals, eloquence encompasses and defines the *sensus communis* of the listeners. The *sensus communis*, in turn, gives eloquence its moral and communal authority. Eloquence transcends private speech; it persuades and creates community. This ideal of public speech is both civic and humanist: civic because it holds that eloquence is necessary for life in the *polis* (it enables the *polis*), and humanist because it foregrounds the power of individuals to affect change through speech, unaided by divine will. Isocrates articulated this fundamental dictum about the power of speech, writing that "because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts: and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us establish" (327). For Isocrates, eloquence is tantamount to the civilizing power in civilization. The ideal of *logos*, the union of wise thought and beautiful expression, formed the basis for Isocrates’ system of rhetorical education (*paideia*). As products of this rhetorical education, eloquent orators are capable of almost divine acts on the stage of history, the highest of which is founding, defending, and preserving republics through publicly voicing the will of the people and the law. This figure of the orator-statesman plays a central role in the political experience of Americans during the eighteenth century.
Another important assumption of civic humanism is that eloquence is grounded in the realm of practical knowledge—public experience in politics, the courts, and the marketplace—and not in the abstract epistemological realms of certainty that attracted Plato and his intellectual successors. Contingent on history and circumstance, eloquence is based on the idea that individuals can never attain absolute certainty in human affairs. Practical wisdom, what the Greeks called *phronesis* and the Romans termed *virtu* or *prudentia*, consists of probable knowledge arising out of public debate. Very much in the tradition of Sophistic rhetoric, Isocrates denies absolute knowledge in civic matters and makes human agency the determinative force in history. In the *Antidosis*, Isocrates is clear about the role of knowledge in public and private affairs: "For since it is not in the nature of man to attain a science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say, in the next resort I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course" (335). In the absence of certainty, deliberation will serve as the best guide. Similarly, the "civic" Aristotle of the *Politics*, the *Ethics*, and the *Rhetoric* holds that rhetoric is a mode of inquiry and communication for the nonspecialist in public matters where truth can provide no certain guide. While he presents three modes of discourse—deliberative, judicial, and epideictic—it is clear that Aristotle's interests lay primarily with the public and political aspects of speech. "Deliberative subjects," he argues, "are finer and more important to the state than private transactions" (32). Deliberative oratory is the only mode that directly affects the public life of the *polis*; thus, unlike the
limited audience for forensic oratory, deliberative discourse addresses all citizens as judges (32).

One way to understand the cultural power of civic humanist eloquence is to examine it in relation to the inability to speak publicly (the absence of eloquence) and demagogy (the abuse of eloquence). From the Sophists and Cicero to the Italian humanists, Vico, and beyond, orators have equated the absence of eloquence with barbarism and social chaos. The civic biases of this idea are obvious: eloquence enables solitary individuals to come together and form societies, to find and articulate shared interests, to institute laws, and to constitute governments. Without eloquence, individuals would exist in a feral state, not the Enlightenment state of nature that Rousseau and his followers idealized, but a savage and ruthless existence. Celebrating a society civilized by the power of eloquence. Giambattista Vico contrasts it with a nightmarish, post-Deluge world where individuals are lawless and impious, wandering like vagabonds wherever their ability lead them through the great forest of the world, all humanity lost. language confused, dissolved into a brutal, uncertain, and--because uncertain--often wicked lust, rotting in an idleness brought on by the abundance of fruit that nature gave them, like wild beasts, each separated from the next, not knowing their own kind and leaving their dead unburied on the ground. (qtd. in Mooney 93)

Similarly, the political opposite of wise and beautiful speech is its abuse, or demagogy. Historians of rhetoric have been surprisingly quiet about the role of the
demagogue in the rhetorical tradition, but the specter of demagogy haunts both rhetoric and politics in the West.³ Demagogy has always been central in classical republican and civic humanist political thought. Throughout history there has been a fixation with the power of demagogues in the writings of Classical, Renaissance, and Enlightenment theorists. It has been a convenient label with which orators, politicians, and historians have demonized the political presence of others in the polis. In effect, labelling one a "demagogue" is an attack on an opponent's ethos and mode of rhetorical delivery. In classical political theory, demagogy is an abuse of public language, an attempt to manipulate the passions of the people. A demagogue is one who, unable to maintain the disinterest and virtue required of a citizen, succumbed to the temptations of power, interest, and ambition. Abusing the power of language, demagogues bring down republics by appealing to the interests of the people. This in turn, creates factions and eventually incites civil war. Therefore, demagogues were a continual threat to the established political and social order.⁴

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³ Given the importance of the idea of demagogy in the Western political tradition, it is surprising that no historians have either traced the concept or examined its influence at specific historical moments. Even Conley, whose research explores rhetorics "not just as responses to but as having implications for the realities of political life," disregards demagogy as a component of the rhetorical tradition (20).

⁴ The threat of demagogy translated into assumptions about government and the citizenry. In the classical polis, only the equality, independence, and rationality—the virtue—of the citizens ensured that demagogy would not flourish. A common rhetorical strategy of republican orators and writers was to raise the fear of demagogy in the minds of the audience. In his Reflections on the Rise and Fall of Ancient Republics, Edward Wortley Montagu blamed the collapse of Athens on the moral corruption of its citizens, along with their weakness for "venal orators, who encouraged that corruption to maintain their influence" (14-15). Early American political writings are full of dire warnings against
Because any form of republican government relies on some form of representation, whether citizens representing the interests of others (republics) or citizens representing one's own interests through direct participation (democracy), understanding civic discourse is central to the operation of a free government. And the question of what makes civic discourse persuasive (whether ethos, pathos, or logos, to use the Aristotelian categories) has been an important issue in the writings of both political and rhetorical theorists in the West. From this perspective, ideals of eloquence and the orator perfectus create a patterned response to change because they are embedded in assumptions about the individual and the polis. Rhetoricians, those who are responsible for thinking and educating others about civic discourse, play as much a political as pedagogical role in the polis. Since the ancient republics of Athens, Sparta, and Rome, civic humanist assumptions have informed rhetorical theory and practice, particularly in times of political and social change. Historian Thomas Conley notes that "rhetoric, historically, become[s] particularly important to people during times of strife and crisis, political and intellectual" (ix). One can trace the reemergence of civic humanistic eloquence at those historical moments when people began to question received opinions, values, and institutions (ix). Civic humanism acquires ideological capital, whether progressive or conservative, at those historical moments in the West when change begins to affect modes of

"blustering, haughty, licentious, self-seeking men" who were "gaining the ear of the public... in times of public confusion, and in the demolition of ancient institutions" (qtd. in Wood Creation 397). As we will see, Federalists regularly charged their political opponents with demagogy, a rhetorical strategy that simultaneously served to silence the opposition while bolstering the way that the public perceived the modes of address that the Federalists used.
thought, values, and institutions: the rise of the Greek City-States of the fourth
century B.C., the disintegration of the Roman Republic, the fall of Rome, the
emergence of the Italian Republics in the fourteenth century, the English
Commonwealth period, and the ideological and social revolutions of the latter
eighteenth century. And this "rhetorical political" ideology of eloquence continued
to be invoked during the American Revolutionary crisis, reaching into the topoi.
common idioms, and media of the public sphere to a greater extent than ever before.

For many revolutionary Americans, the ideology of eloquence combined with
the model of the orator perfectus in the figure of Cicero. Among all the orators of
the Western political tradition, Cicero most symbolized the civic humanist ideal of
rhetoric and influenced how people thought about wisdom and the power of speech
in the West. In his de Oratore, Cicero was not so much concerned with the
rhetorical precepts of an oration as with the nature of oratory and the figure of the
orator. For Cicero, eloquence was "wisdom speaking," and the eloquent statesman
was the figure who could not only conceive and articulate a vision for society but
also sway others to this vision. By nature, eloquence was inherently public,
encompassing the forum, the court, and the marketplace. It was the key to
individual and social regeneration, and it encompassed every conceivable field of
study: "Eloquence embraces the origin, the influence, the changes of all things in
the world, all virtues, duties, and all nature, so far as it affects the manners, minds,
and lives of mankind. It can give an account of customs, laws, and rights, can
govern a state, and speak on every thing relating to any subject whatsoever with
elegance and force" (*de Oratore* 213-214). Thus, the training of the orator, both intellectual and moral, was a primary concern in civic humanist traditions of rhetoric.

For the past three decades, political historians have become increasingly aware of the role of rhetoric in the Western political tradition. Much of this awareness centers on the role of civic humanist eloquence in republican political theory. The noted "Cambridge School" historian Quentin Skinner begins his two volume *Foundations of Modern Political Thought* with a chapter entitled "Rhetoric and Liberty," which examines the development of a distinct "rhetorical political style" in the thirteenth-century Italian City-States (35). According to Skinner, during this period "the self-image of the rhetorician, and the teaching of rhetoric, began correspondingly to assume an even more public and political character" (31). The politicization of rhetoric in thirteenth-century Italy was interwoven with a "heightened self-consciousness about the special value of political independence and Republican self-government" (26). Indeed, the early Renaissance humanists viewed "the structure of civic government entirely from the perspective of teachers of the rhetorical arts" (35). However, the historian whose work lays the most important theoretical and historical foundations for the central role of rhetoric in politics is J. G. A. Pocock. In his many influential books and articles, Pocock reveals how the discourses of republicanism and civic humanism were central in political thought.
from the Renaissance until the American Revolution, influencing how individuals thought about human nature, communication, and social organization.5

While eighteenth-century Americans were well aware that republics have differed from one another historically, the normative ideals that were inherent in republicanism had a powerful effect on the political and social thought of eighteenth-century America. Specifically, classical republicanism presented later political and rhetorical theorists with specific models of statecraft, citizenship, public speech, and the polis. It stipulated the qualifications for participation in public life and the duties required of the citizen. Just as importantly, it presented later rhetoricians and politicians with the ideal orator-statesman. Even though there are several different intellectual strands of republicanism, those that were embraced by eighteenth-century Americans share a number of fundamental assumptions about the individual and the state. At their core is the classical idea that man (traditionally, the exclusion of women is absolute) is a social and political animal: a homo politicus. Man's nature is realized to the extent that he actively engages in public life (an idea that Italian humanists would call the vita activa). The purpose of political participation is the maintenance of liberty, and the maintenance of liberty is contingent on the

5 While not talking specifically about rhetoric, the implications of Pocock's work for the history of rhetoric are clear. For example, Thomas Miller has used Pocock's research in his The Formation of College English to illustrate how eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoricians transformed rhetoric from a civic art to a civic art. However, there is much work to be done on the relation between politics and rhetoric given the fact that many rhetoricians also wrote about republicanism, including the Sophists, Aristotle, Cicero, Tacitus, many of the Italian and Northern Humanists, Charles Rollin, Joseph Priestly, Thomas Sheridan, James Burgh, and John Quincy Adams.
preservation of virtue. Virtue is the animating principle of the republic, achieved when individuals sacrifice their private interests for the sake of the public interest, or the "common wealth." Thus, in republics, issues of public morality are continually held before the population (the issue of public morality was especially salient in traditionally Puritan New England, where religion and politics were intimately tied to each other).

From republican theory, early Americans learned that only qualified citizens could actively participate in the republic. Thus, in both a real and metaphorical sense, citizenship was equated with a having a public voice. Those entitled to a public voice could speak in the forum and the courts, the primary means of self-actualization within the polis. Those not entitled to speak not only remained silent but were also denied the possibility of fulfilling their political, social, and moral natures. Even though it is based on a political ideology, the republican ideal of citizenship must also be understood in economic, social, and political terms. Property, particularly landed property, was the basis of political independence.  

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6 "Virtue" is an important keyword in eighteenth-century political discourse, signifying the disinterest, rationality, and morality accorded by economic independence and political autonomy. Etymologically, the root of virtue is the Latin "vir," or "man," and the word retains its masculine connotations throughout eighteenth-century political discourse. In this classical usage, it must be kept distinct from either the traditional Christian connotations of virtue or the gendered meanings that the word was beginning to develop in the eighteenth century, feminine connotations that would come to govern the usage of the term by the mid nineteenth century. For the gendering of the concept of virtue, see Ruth Bloch's essay "The Gendered Meaning of Virtue in Revolutionary America."

7 Historians generally distinguish between two strands of republicanism present in eighteenth-century America. The first strand, moral republicanism, emphasized strict standards of morality within the community. Because moral republicanism was amenable to Congregational and Calvinist attitudes, it flourished in puritan New England where there
Since at least fourth-century B.C. Athens, republicanism has rested on the assumptions that landed property was essential to a citizen's independent status, that a citizen was first and foremost the undisputed head of the household, and that to be independent a household had to be self-sufficient, thus enforcing a strict separation of the public and private. Based on this model, civic speech and action were by nature inherently public, while the private sphere was outside the polis, and outside the equality and status it afforded. In republican theory, independence meant the freedom from social and economic dependence and obligation. All dependents, including women, children, propertyless men, servants, and slaves, were denied a public voice.

The reception of republican discourse in eighteenth-century America was also affected by the conservative structure of colonial politics and society. Theoretically, the citizen of a republic defined both his social status and his superior nature (i.e. his refinement, rationality, disinterest) against those below him in the social order—an assumption that the colonial gentry who defined their status against those below them in the social order of colonial America readily endorsed. The ideal of republican citizenship required leisure, not in the modern sense of rest or time away.
from work, but in the classical sense of time spent in the active participation of public service. Leisure, in turn, was the privilege of economic self-sufficiency and political independence. It enabled the individual—whether the ideal republican citizen or the colonial gentleman—to maintain disinterest, and only a completely independent and autonomous individual could be sufficiently disinterested for public life. Thus, in a republic the entitled citizen is of a special political, social, and moral nature. He is a natural leader of society, qualified to this position by a construction of rationality that was defined against the passionate and irrational identity of the crowd or the masses. Based on these assumptions, it is easy to see how republicanism could by used by the gentry class to rationalize, justify, and defend the existing social order. Whether invoking moral or agrarian republicanism, all of the colonial gentry held that some degree of social order, deference, and paternalism was necessary for society and that they were qualified by status, property, and education to represent their dependent’s interests. For the leaders of colonial society who were informed by republicanism in the 1770s and 80s, the

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8 Essentialized in Western political discourse, this political construction of human nature held that the autonomy and integrity of the political personality is the basis of the stability of the polis (Pocock "Anglo-American" 100-101). Most historians agree that the first disruptions in the classical political conception of virtue occurred with the emergence of capitalist modes of thought in the eighteenth century, most notably in the writings of Scottish Enlightenment sociologists. According to Pocock, there was "a continuing attempt throughout the eighteenth century to explain how the individual of an urban and commercial society could be a citizen, free, virtuous, and above all incorrupt" (101). The most systematic attempt to explain the new ideal of homo economicus was made in the writings of Scots such as John Millar, Adam Smith, and Adam Ferguson, who rationalized emergent commercial society in the new science of political economy. For a collection of essays that explores the emergence of political economy in relation to the civic humanist concept of society see Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, eds., Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment.
answer to the question of how to channel and control the political passions of the "many" was the subsume them to the "common wealth" of the nation. Since republics were hierarchically and organically structured, republican theory taught the gentry that they would naturally speak for those below them. As Gordon Wood has pointed out, the "elite rhetorical world" of the revolutionary leaders rested on the republican idea that the leader's "speeches and writings did not have to influence directly and simultaneously all of the people but only the rational and enlightened part, who then in turn would bring the rest of the populace with them through the force of deferential respect" ("Democratization" 67). Thus, republican civic ideology was used to rationalize and justify the operative power structures in eighteenth-century colonial society.

Colonial America's reception of republicanism and civic humanist rhetoric was conditioned by eighteenth-century ideas about history, which mattered to the revolutionary generation in ways that have disappeared with the coming of modernity. No early American, college-educated or otherwise, would have separated agrarian and moral republicanism like historians do today. Colonial Americans made few historiographical distinctions: if the historical material suited the issue at hand then it was useful. For early Americans, history was a mode of consciousness, a way of using the past to make meaning out of the present. Whether it was the Christian view of history as the will of God professed by Cotton Mather, or the newly emergent view of history as a telos of human Enlightenment professed by Thomas Paine, or some combination of the two, history was a
determinative force in the lives of colonial Americans. The American patriot
Patrick Henry once exclaimed, "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided,
and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no other way of judging the future
but by the past" (Colbourn x). Henry, like most of his compatriots, makes little
distinction here between ancient or modern history. Historical events illuminated the
present with the light of the past.⁹

While historians and politicians often like to think of the eighteenth century
as a Age of Enlightenment in which philosophical truths provided sufficient reason
to cast off the burden of the ancien régime, "for many, history afforded an argument
more persuasive, more tangible" than philosophy (vii). "Experience must be our
only guide." said John Dickinson in the Constitutional Convention of 1788, "reason
may mislead us" (qtd. in Bowen 44). Historical truth, whether it be based on
recurrent patterns of events, the actions of individuals, or an accretive body of
experiential knowledge such as law, possessed a universal character. According to
one eighteenth-century writer, history was useful because it is based on the
universalist premise that "like causes will ever produce like effects" (Montagu 5).
Thus, analogies with classical Athens, the late Roman Republic, Renaissance
Venice, or seventeenth-century England were immediate and real for early
Americans. These analogies provided early Americans with specific attitudes
towards politics and rhetoric. Perhaps the most famous self-conscious use of history

⁹ The reading habits and reading material of the early American colonists supported
this historical consciousness. Research into colonial library possessions and the colonial
book trade by historians David Lundberg and Henry May confirm that, when combined with
law, history was the largest category of books printed and sold in America.
is James Madison’s extensive study of the rise and fall of republics that he made before attending the Constitutional convention. Similarly, the *Federalist Papers* are full of historical analogies. Speaking about the dangers of demagogy in *Federalist* No. 1, Alexander Hamilton declares that "History will teach us . . . that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people, commencing demagogues and ending tyrants" (89). It happened once, reasoned Madison, Hamilton, and a generation of Americans, and it could happen again.

History mattered to educated Americans during the period, particularly the literature of classical antiquity. Eighteenth-century Americans were highly selective in their readings of classical antiquity, concentrating on those authors "who had lived either when the [Roman] republic was being fundamentally challenged or when its greatest days were already past and its moral and political virtues decayed" (Bailyn, *Ideological* 25). These classical authors presented an idealized version of the Roman republic, a *polis* characterized by the manly virtues of simplicity, integrity, frugality, courage, and patriotic love of liberty, in opposition to a corrupt and venal present (26-7). The analogies with the present crisis were compelling to Americans, who contrasted their own love of liberty and virtue with a corrupt British ministry attempting to enslave the colonies. From the literature of classical antiquity, eighteenth-century Americans learned that eloquence played an important role in the formation and direction of republics. "In the flourishing periods of Athens and Rome," John Quincy Adams extolled, "eloquence was POWER" (19).
Republican eloquence was a necessary component of a successful republic not only because it defined the political and social *sensus communis* but also because it provided a language with which representatives could persuade the masses of the most prudent course of public action. Of course, this ideal of republican eloquence and the *orator perfectus* rested on a narrow selection of classical rhetorical systems as well, particularly orator-statesmen of the Augustan period such as Cicero. However, introduced through neoclassical rhetoric and a classical curriculum, republican civic eloquence became the dominant register of public discourse in the last decades of the eighteenth century. To a great extent, the classic-based college curriculum was geared towards producing the neoclassical *orator perfectus* for the new American republic. Republican eloquence, and the values it conveyed, was the sanctioned public voice through which the Revolutionary generation declared its separation from Britain and constituted its government.

The influence of the Ciceronian *orator perfectus* on public identity in the new republic is one of the important ways that the rhetorical tradition affected American politics. Conveyed in the republican civic tradition, the *orator perfectus* serves as a site for the overlap of politics and rhetoric, and for theory and practice. The

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10 The *orator perfectus* can be traced back through the civic humanist tradition of rhetoric, receiving its early ideological articulation in the writings of Isocrates and later Cicero, Machiavelli, Vico, and Milton. Closely related to the model of the *orator perfectus* was the figure of the eloquent Lawgiver. The representatives at the First Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention adopted a powerful and ideologically-laden public ethos by signing the Declaration and Constitution. Even today, American nationalist mythology celebrates these men as "Founding Fathers." According to Francis Bacon, the Lawgiver was the highest figure on the ladder of fame. In his *Essays*, Bacon provided colonial Americans with a five-stage model for classifying famous individuals by the actions they perform from least to most significant: fathers of their country, champions of empire.
revolutionary generation was steeped in this tradition, and one cannot read the political literature from the period long without encountering references to the orator perfectus who would herald, in the words of Revolutionary American poet Joel Barlow, "the rising glory of America." In Federalist No. 38 James Madison observes that "It is not a little remarkable that in every case reported by ancient history in which government has been established with deliberation and consent, the task of framing it has not been committed to an assembly of men, but has been preformed by some individual citizen of preeminent wisdom and approved integrity" (247). Madison then proceeds to praise the great orators and lawgivers of history, listing Lycurgus, Minos, Solon, Romulus, and Brutus. James Wilson, in his Lectures on Law (1790), predicts that "When some future Xenophon or Thucydides shall rise to do justice their virtues and their actions, the glory of America will rival—it will outshine the glory of Greece" (69). The ideal of the orator perfectus, especially Cicero, provided ambitious young revolutionaries such as Adams, Madison, Jefferson, and Hamilton with a public identity in last decades of the eighteenth century. As historian Howard Mumford Jones once wryly observed, John Adams "always wrote as if he had a toga on" (259). In response to the social and ideological changes occurring during the revolutionary crisis, the literature of classical antiquity provided the revolutionary generation with republican civic models for self-fashioning, both individual and communal. Both social conservatives

saviors of empire, the great law givers, and, at the pinnacle, "FOUNDERS OF STATES AND COMMONWEALTHS" (Adair 14). Eloquence was important because all of these types employ wise and well-wrought language to found, maintain, and defend the republic.

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and progressives employed these models to focus, justify, and advance their social and political visions for the new republic. Nor was this national self-fashioning restricted to men. While college education was exclusively a white male privilege. Nina Baym has shown that women historians such as Mercy Otis Warren also used the republican narrative to position female emancipation as an inevitable product of the American Revolution (31).

History, particularly the writings of classical antiquity, provided the raw materials with which Americans sought to forge new public and national identities. One incident, recounted by Thomas Jefferson in a letter to Benjamin Rush years later, offers a glimpse of this process at work. Jefferson relates how, having settled certain questions of state over dinner in his Philadelphia home in 1791, he, John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton turned to a discussion concerning the nature of fame:

The room being hung around with a collection of portraits of remarkable men, among them were those of Bacon, Newton, and Locke, Hamilton asked me who they were. I told him they were my trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever produced, naming them. He paused for some time: 'the greatest man,' he said, 'that ever lived, was Julius Caesar'. . . . Hamilton [was] honest as a man, but, as a politician, believ[ed] in the necessity of either force or corruption to govern men. (1236)

Here we see a self-representation of the public Jefferson, an idealized figure of the Enlightenment statesman-scientist, settling affairs of state while surrounded by
the icons of Reason and Progress—an image that Jefferson adopted, cultivated, and projected back to the public and history. Hamilton, on the other hand, both adopts a persona and is filtered through Jefferson’s own ideological lenses. We know through Hamilton’s earlier writings that he identified with Caesar as the "soldier-legislator." the strong-willed founder of empires. Hamilton thought of himself as an American Caesar. After all, it was Hamilton who demanded from President Washington that he be allowed to lead the Federal troops to crush the Pennsylvania Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 (an event that turned out to be relatively harmless). But if this historical persona of the imperial ruler appealed to Hamilton, it disturbed Jefferson, who associated Hamilton’s belief "in the necessity of force or corruption" with the distrust that Federalists had of the general population. Thus, the passage reveals three different public personae, each based on an invocation of history, each informed by a specific ideology, and each enabling the individual to position himself (the public stage was always perceived as masculine) in relation to both others and the processes of historical change.\(^{11}\)

The orators of the civic humanist tradition had an important influence on the revolutionary generation’s self-perceptions. Classical images, values, and themes were central to the public identities of many of the "Founding Fathers." As these

\(^{11}\) Seyla Benhabib, discussing ethos in the classical republican tradition, aptly summarizes this notion of the public stage as that "space of appearances in which moral and political greatness, heroism, and preeminence are revealed, displayed, and shared with others. . . a space in which one competes for recognition, precedence, and acclaim" (78). Publicity was crucial in the classical model of politics. In chapter three I argue that, in the wake of the emergent liberal model of politics, this notion of a strict separation of a public and private ethos was turned against the Federalists by the Antifederalists, who proposed a new rhetorical situation and a new ideal of eloquence.
college-educated men increasingly came to perceive themselves as performing actions on a world stage, as agents in the course of history. They invoked the figures of the eloquent Lawgiver and the Founder of the Commonwealth to position themselves in history and to give public meaning to their words and actions. In this way, American revolutionaries modeled their own public personae on the classical statesmen-orators of Greece and Rome. As Bailyn observes, "They found their ideal selves, and to some extent their voices, in Brutus, in Cassius, and in Cicero" (26). The emphasis on the "voice" of classical orator-statesmen here is significant: early American revolutionaries had a distinct public voice, an eloquence patterned after the great statesmen-orators of classical antiquity. John Adams and John Quincy Adams, father and son, exemplify the influence of civic humanist ideals, particularly those rationales and ideals conveyed through classical literature. When he was 23, John Adams would stand alone at night in his room and declaim Cicero's Catilinarian orations in order to improve his public speaking (26). Similarly, John Quincy Adams read Cicero's Orations every morning during the period he served in Congress (Gustafson 373). Both father and son saw in the Ciceronian ideal of eloquence and the orator perfectus the means for representatives to preserve liberty in the new American republic.

But John Quincy Adams's generation had to live up to an extra burden of history as well. Whereas the senior Adams, Jefferson, and Hamilton could readily imagine themselves as actors on a world stage actively creating a new republic, the next generation had to live in their shadows. By the turn of the century, nostalgia
for a past ideal of the republic and a despair about the future had crept into the Federalist’s grand vision of American national identity. Changes in American political institutions, particularly the development of effective political party machines and the marginalization of the Federalist party, resulted in a political and social world significantly different from the classically-informed republican civic expectations of the revolutionary generation. These transformations, I would argue, help to explain the failure of John Quincy Adams’s Lectures on Oratory and Rhetoric (1810) to affect the direction of rhetorical education in America and his brief career as the first Bolyston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard. "Is there among you a youth," John Quincy Adams asked at the close of his 1806 inaugural lecture,

whose bosom burns with the fires of honorable ambition; who aspires to immortalize his name by the extent and importance of his service to his country; whose visions of futurity glow with the hope of presiding in her councils, of directing her affairs, of appearing to future ages on the roles of fame, as her ornament and pride? Let him catch from the relics of ancient oratory those unrestricted powers, which mold the mind of man to the will of the speaker, and yield the guidance of a nation to the dominion of the voice. (30)

The eloquent words and high tone of this passage are suggestive, especially when placed in cultural context. Like his father before him, Adams was a member of the Federalist party and a product of the Bostonian cultural elite. Unlike his father,
though, the Federalists of John Quincy’s day existed as a political minority who were increasingly alienated by the political and social changes occurring in America. Whereas John Adams had used neoclassical rhetoric to fashion a viable and culturally-valued political identity, John Quincy presents the neoclassical ideal of his father as a panacea to the politics of the *vox populi*. Speaking to a sympathetic and conservative Boston audience of Harvard faculty and students, Adams sees in the republican civic tradition of eloquence—"the relics of ancient oratory"—a means of national regeneration (as did his father). But there is an both urgency and, as the word "relics" suggests, nostalgia in Adams’s words. Where, asks John Quincy Adams, is the Ciceronian orator who would save America from its populist democratic tendencies? The opening question is more rhetorical than real, and the promise of a young Harvard student "yield[ing] the guidance of a nation to the dominion of his voice" was increasingly an empty ideal as the political vision of the Federalists gave way to the political realities of the early 1800s Jeffersonian America. It is no wonder that Adams only taught rhetoric for four years or that his *Lectures* were not reprinted for over a 150 years.

When we examine the relationship between the republican civic political tradition and rhetorical theory and practice in Revolutionary America, we see that they are intimately linked. In the colonies, republican rationales for eloquence began to surface around the mid-eighteenth century, receiving a greater articulation as republicanism emerged as the political alternative to monarchy. The various discourses of republicanism provided rhetoric with ideological rationales: indeed.
these rationales permeate rhetorical theory, practice, and model in early America.

The declamation or forensic disputation provided the young revolutionary generation
with a means to translate republican ideology into rhetorical practice. In the works
of popular elocutionists, rhetoric played a key role in conveying republican and civic
humanist rationales. Rhetorical speakers and readers employed ideologically-
laden examples to inculcate republican virtues. Finally, republican education
reformers placed oratory, eloquence, and public virtue at the center of the
curriculum. Together, these sites provide a rich picture of how early Americans
incorporated ideology into education. They illustrate how the theory and practice of
rhetoric work to inculcate political ideas into a broad program of education, and
they demonstrate how inseparable rhetoric and ideology were in the new republic.

Pedagogies reflect the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the dominant culture,
and this relation is readily seen in eighteenth-century America. During the
seventeenth century, when the focus of college education was on the training of

12 Historical scholarship on elocution and the oratorical revival of the eighteenth century
has failed to make this connection. Indeed, there has been almost no research done on the
cultural function of elocution. The judgement of historians of rhetoric has been harsh:
according to Howell, elocution was a disastrous two hundred year mistake in an otherwise
illustrious tradition of rhetoric. In the 1940s and 50s, when speech communications scholars
turned their attention to the eighteenth-century elocution movement, they proceeded almost
entirely from a formalist perspective, surveying what elocution texts said, but not why.
While the goal of this scholarship was to legitimize the discipline of speech communications
by establishing a history of elocutionary theory and practice, I am struck by the narrowness
that marks much of this research. What is surprising is that so few historians have returned
to the study of elocution, which I understand as a complex and powerful cultural response to
the material and ideological transformations in the eighteenth century Anglo-American
world. For two important exceptions to the otherwise formalist histories of the eighteenth-
century elocutionary movement see Jay Fliegelman's *Declaring Independence: Jefferson,
Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* and Michael Shortland's "Moving
Speeches: Language and Elocution in Eighteenth-Century Britain."
ministers, the primary college exercise was the syllogistic disputation. As early as 1642, and probably from its founding in 1621, Harvard prescribed weekly disputations for all students, and later colleges such as Yale followed its example (Potter 4). With the syllogistic disputation, scholars demonstrated that they were familiar with the logical classification of accepted truths and the commonplace arguments for and against these truths— it was a weapon for the orthodoxy against heresy. As a college exercise the syllogistic disputation was conducted in Latin, and this limited the size of the audience that it could address. When addressed to wider audiences during such occasions as commencement the purpose was more performative and ritualistic; the larger community witnessed but did not really understand the Latin erudition of its ministers. By the first decades of the eighteenth century there were complaints from students and faculty alike about the usefulness of the syllogistic disputation. In 1721 a Harvard student complained that "most of the Disputes wherewith we are daily entertain'd (or rather perplexed) are nothing but Packs of Profound Nonsense" (qtd. in Potter 24). The syllogistic disputation waned in the colonial college during the eighteenth century, increasingly eclipsed by the

13 Much has been made about how the syllogistic method was an inherently conservative exercise primarily concerned with preserving and defending accepted truth, but we should not absolutely equate the method with its sanctioned cultural use. A popular seventeenth-century logical manual, the Systema Logica of Bartholomaus Keckermann, states that "The object or material of disputation ought not to war against good manners or public peace, or piety and likewise should not deal with scandalous material" (qtd. in Potter 10). However, I find it interesting that Keckermann must make a proscription against "scandalous material." At times, the syllogistic disputation could also inquire into (and question) orthodox belief. For example, in 1766 a disputation that posed the question whether God knew "Things of a contingent nature" caused a commotion because it greatly offended the conservative and orthodox Boston clergy (10).
more popular and flexible forensic debate. Its eventual passing is recorded by Yale President Ezra Stiles in a journal entry for July 21, 1789: "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" (360).

As political institutions and commercial networks were established in the eighteenth century, colleges began to focus more on training political leaders and professional men than ministers of the gospel. This change is best illustrated by the fact that in 1700 most college graduates were ministers while by 1800 the majority were lawyers. Rhetorical instruction in the colleges changed to meet the needs of society. English replaced Latin as the medium of communication, and English composition and belles lettres increasingly became a separate and respectable field of study (Thomas 194). By 1766, Harvard had changed its course of study to include Saturday morning lectures in "Elocution, Composition in English, Rhetoric, and other Belles Lettres" for all students (qtd. in Thomas 196). Educators began to replace the Ramist rhetoric of tropes and figures with more flexible and comprehensive classical systems of rhetoric that focused on eloquence and the persuasive function of rhetoric. Most importantly, the forensic debate replaced the syllogistic disputation as the primary rhetorical exercise—a significant development because forensic exercises incorporated public issues into rhetorical theory and practice. Unlike the dry logical proofs of the syllogistic method, the forensic dispute incorporated ethical and pathetic appeals, and it was typically conducted in
English. Thus, the audience for the forensic disputation, particularly when performed at commencement and other public occasions, was larger and more inclusive.

While the commercial and political changes of the eighteenth century were important influences on college rhetorics, the Revolutionary crisis of the 1760s and 70s invested the forensic debate with a public and political dimension that far surpassed its previous uses. Historian Ota Thomas notes that "the political turmoil of the eighteenth century" hastened "the trend toward anglicizing and informalizing speech training in the colleges" (194). In the wake of these changes, rhetoric began to include contemporary and practical matters, particularly the increasing political tensions between the Colonies and England. Consequently, political issues moved to the center of rhetorical practice. Two important types of debate theses emerged during this period, one indicating changes in the definitions of rhetoric and the other registering the importance of republican political theory as a subject for rhetorical practice. Furthermore, these types are related at a fundamental level.

Defining rhetoric was a common exercise in both syllogistic and forensic disputations, and this practice provides insight into the type of rhetorical education that pedagogues thought was important to society. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, students debated a distinct set of syllogistic questions, the theses rhetoricae, which focused on their familiarity with the Ramist system of rhetoric. The following theses, debated at Harvard during the seventeenth century, support a Ramist rhetoric of tropes and figures: "Dialectic especially aids the
Orator" (1647); "Tropes and Figures are the flowers of Rhetoric" (1653); "Prolatio
is a form of irony" (1653); "Rhetoric is the udder of Eloquence, tropes and figures
are the teats" (1670); and, "Rhetoric is the art speaking ornately" (1708, 1720). By the early decades of the eighteenth century, however, theses began to register the reemergence of classical rationales for rhetoric as persuasion began to replace ornament as the central focus of academic rhetoric. In 1718, students at Yale syllogistically disputed the question of whether "Rhetoric is the art adapting words, sentences, and voice to persuading"; in 1720, they disputed whether "Rhetoric is the faculty of revealing and bringing forward all that is persuasive" (19). By focusing more of persuasion than on tropes and figures, rhetorical exercises began to express changes in rhetorical theory and the situations for rhetorical practice.

Whereas definitions of rhetoric were often confined to classroom debate or academic performances, the forensic debates and commencement orations increasingly took on more secular and political content. The following commencement topics, delivered at the College of New Jersey during the Revolutionary decades, illustrate this shift: "Civil Liberty is necessary to give Birth to the Arts and Sciences" (1766); "It is lawful for every man, and in many cases his indispensable duty, to hazard his life in defense of his civil liberty" (1768); "the Non-Importation Agreement reflects a Glory on the American Merchants, and was a noble Exertion of Self-Denial and Public Spirit" (1770); "the Corruption of a State is

14 I owe these examples to the research of David Potter, whose *Debating in the Colonial Chartered Colleges: An Historical Survey, 1642 to 1900*, provides a comprehensive overview of the changing classroom practices associated with early American speech education.
not hastened by the Improvement of Taste and Literature, but by the introduction of Wealth" (1773). Similarly, Ezra Stiles recorded the following political questions that were discussed by Yale undergraduates in 1782: "Whether the Press ought to be free?": "Whether Females ought to be admitted to public civil Government?": "Whether Representatives are to act according to the wishes of their Constituents?"

As the subject matter of these theses suggests, political and social themes come to dominate rhetorical practice around the time of the Stamp Act crisis in the mid 1760s. To argue that the Non-Importation agreement was "a noble Exertion of Self-Denial and Public Spirit" in 1770 was itself a revolutionary act based on the political discourse of republicanism. These political theses continued for the next quarter of a century. When a 1786 Yale commencement speaker argued that "Eloquence always flowers and rules among a free people." he was reinforcing a dominant cultural and political assumption of the day. Rather than definitions of stylistic rhetoric, we see the merger of republican ideology with the social and political realities of the period. Theory was becoming practice.15

Another area where republican civic theory influenced rhetorical theory and practice is in the reception of elocution in revolutionary America, particularly the reception of the rhetorical and political works of the English Whig James Burgh. Donald Hargis begins his 1957 article "James Burgh and The Art of Speaking" with the observation that James Burgh, an eighteenth-century elocutionist, was "more

15 Thomas Miller provides a good discussion of forensic debate at Princeton during the 1760s and 70s, particularly its Revolutionary influence on James Madison, in his "Introduction" to The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon.
interested in education and in political philosophy than he was in speech" (275).

Hargis's easy separation of speech from education and politics is a typical assumption informing much of the history written in speech communications in the 1950s and 60s: a separation of text from context. The eighteenth-century elocution movement has not fared well in the hands of most historians. The last and, sadly, most influential pronouncement on the elocutionary movement came from Wilbur Samuel Howell, who faults the elocutionists for "confining their attention" to delivery and "continuing to think of themselves as rhetoricians and to refer formally to their subject as rhetoric" (145). Howell damns elocution as a "futureless idea that was destined against logic and common sense to have a two-hundred year future in England and America" (146). As I have argued throughout this dissertation, this removal of rhetorics from cultural contexts effaces the important questions of why and how they were being used at specific cultural moments. We do know that, in the latter eighteenth century, elocution texts by figures such as Thomas Sheridan, John Walker, and James Burgh were tremendously popular. But what were the politics of elocution during the period? James Burgh’s Political Disquisitions, for example, a republican political history, gave ideological capital and immediacy to the reception of his The Art of Speaking. Both were extremely popular, and both appeared in American editions in 1775. Political Disquisitions, according to historians Oscar and Mary Handlin, "had a widespread influence upon the revolutionary generation—not only upon the leaders, but even more upon the common folk" (38). Similarly, The Art of Speaking went through nine American
editions between 1775 and 1800 (Evans XIV 59). There are two related reasons for the popular reception of these texts. First, Americans found in Burgh's political and rhetorical works a strong association between eloquence, free speech, and representative government that fit nicely with their own developing ideas about American identity. Second, Burgh's elocution text was popular because he met the needs of new audiences and new rhetorical situations in eighteenth-century America.

Like other educated Anglo-Americans, Burgh looked to the past to find alternative models for the present. "I consider that history," he wrote, "is the inexhaustible mine out of which political knowledge is to be brought up" (Political vi). The authors that he turns to most "to teach the people a set of solid political principles" are Cicero, Aristotle, James Harrington, John Locke, and Thomas Gordon (xii). These sources are significant. I have already discussed the influence of the first two as both rhetoricians and politicians on the eighteenth century. To Burgh, Cicero was not only the "prince of orators" but also a source of sound political principles (Speaking 2). Harrington, Locke, and Gordon contributed another strand of republicanism that influenced Anglo-American thinking about the role of public speech in society. This other strand, the Commonwealth or radical Whig tradition, emphasized the individual liberties of the people, including their

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16 A comprehensive account of the elocutionary revival is yet to be written. When it appears, such a history is sure to take into account the influence of factors such as the low state of pulpit oratory, the development of print culture, curricular changes, the popular practice of public reading, the movement to standardize language, theories of natural language, and the cult of sentimentality. Moreover, all of this must be placed within changes in social order and status occurring in the period.
rights to elect and instruct officials, the right to own property, and the rights of free speech and press. Born in the political and social thought produced during the English Civil War, the radical Whig tradition opposed the aggrandizement of the crown and the corruption of the English parliament. Radical Whigs agitated for parliamentary reforms such as regular elections, the abolition of the rotten borough system, residential requirements for representatives, adult manhood suffrage, and a revision of the strict seditious libel laws that muzzled the opposition press.

In *Political Disquisitions*, Burgh used civic humanist assumptions about the role of speech in a republic to justify individual rights in the face of encroaching power. He defends the right of citizens to speak in public (and the right to a free press), and he taught them to defend their right to free speech in his *Art of Speaking*. Like other republicans of the period, Burgh inextricably links oratory, politics, and morality. Burgh contrasted present English degeneracy and corruption with an idealized state of oratory, liberty, and national greatness, alternatively locating this state in Greece and Rome, Saxon England, and the American colonies. In Burgh’s opinion, England suffered from the decline of religion, the corruption of crown and parliament, voting corruption, late marriages, the

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17 The radical Whig “rhetoric of liberty” used the representative and moralistic character of republics as a basis to critique the English government. Historians such as Bailyn, Kramnick, and Wood argue that the radical Whig tradition was central to the political and historical consciousness of early American revolutionaries.

18 In *The Ancient Constitution The and the Feudal Law*, J. G. A. Pocock explores the English tendency to contrast the present with a mythic English past (30-55). This mode of reading posited a Golden Age of liberty in the English past, when freeborn Englishmen jealously guarded their liberty with both oratory and arms.
insubordination of social inferiors, and the need to improve rhetoric (Handlin 39).

He connects the degenerate state of English politics and manners to the poor state of English education, particularly the lack of training in public speaking. As a corrective, he invoked idealized visions of Greece, Rome, and pre-Norman England to justify the study of speech. For Burgh, "the use of the tongue, the glory of man." is a political right of all freeborn Englishmen (Speaking 3). "Supposing a person to be ever so sincere and zealous a lover of virtue, and his country," he argues, "without a competent skill and address in speaking, he can only sit still, and see them wronged, without having it in his person to prevent, or redress the evil" (3). Burgh idealized the state of oratory in Greece and Rome. "when the tongue of the orator could do more than the scepter of a monarch, or the sword of a warrior" (6). He nostalgically looked back to an earlier England, where social order rested on the "sober and regular manners of our fathers" (Crito II 71).

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19 Burgh was influenced by Thomas Sheridan, another individual obsessed with the republican and Whig themes of political and moral regeneration. Sheridan's importance here rests on his association of degeneration with the deterioration of natural eloquence. For Sheridan, natural eloquence exists in a pre-Lapsarian state of language that people use to communicate not only ideas and understanding but also emotions and feelings. One of the reasons that Sheridan suggests for the "fall" from natural language is political and moral corruption. In his earliest statement on the subject, British Education, (1756), Sheridan paints a bleak picture of Britain, particularly the sad state of oratory. Religious declension, moral decadence, and political turmoil are all intertwined. Oratory was the panacea. If Britain's youth, the future politicians and clergy, could learn true pronunciation and natural delivery, if they could learn to express themselves eloquently, then British arts and sciences and national greatness would flourish. As with much language debate in the eighteenth century, the rationales for Sheridan's proposals are overtly nationalistic and political. For example, to attain linguistic purity, he argues for a return to the "Tuetonick" tongue before it was befouled by "Gallick structure and phraseology" (26).
Burgh also contrasted the degeneracy of England with an idealized vision of life in the American colonies, where, according to a popular stereotype at the time, a yeomanry of independent farmers lived, "wholly dependent on the produce of their lands, contented, and consequently, happy" (Political I 184). This image of the stout, virtuous, and free farmer resonated with many eighteenth-century Americans and, for their part, republican-minded Americans attempted to live up to this image. Thomas Jefferson, for example, idealized and romanticized the independent farmer as the moral backbone of the colonies in his Notes on the State of Virginia. In their processes of national self-fashioning, revolutionary Americans found in Burgh's writings not only an Englishman sympathetic with their cause but an idealized vision of early American life. Burgh presents nationalistic-minded Americans with an ideal of the citizen using discourse in a free and republican society. Moreover, Americans use Burgh to justify access to previously closed networks of power and prestige. Revolutionary Americans most influenced by this rhetoric of liberty and rights expanded the socially-restricted civic humanist ideal of eloquence and the orator perfectus into a democratic right possessed by all qualified citizens—an ideal that Antifederalist insisted should be written into a Bill of Rights.

Burgh's popularity was also driven by the changing situations and opportunities for public speech in eighteenth-century America. Moreover, Burgh was addressing a new audience—a new bloc of social, political, and cultural interests. Who was this new audience? How did they differ from the audiences for earlier eighteenth-century rhetorics? Popular interest in elocution during the period
signifies the existence of new rhetorical situations that encompass a much wider section of society. Along with the belles lettres movement, elocution is the first system of rhetoric in the West to extend rhetoric beyond the traditional public and professional scenes of the bar, the parliament, and the pulpit. Paralleling eighteenth-century patterns of conspicuous consumption, rhetorics encompassed wider audiences and reached farther down the social scale. Like the vernacular English composition classes that flourished in the English Dissenting academies, elocution arose outside the classical arts curriculum of the grammar schools and colleges. Indeed, its initial purpose was to meet the needs of a middling class population not covered in traditional educational institutions. Some reasons for the rise of the elocutionary movement include expanded educational opportunities and an increase in the sheer amount of print to read. But there are other reasons for the popularity of elocution as well. As Burgh argues, "Suppose a youth to have no prospect either of sitting in parliament, of pleading at the bar, of appearing upon the stage, on in the pulpit; does it follow that he need bestow, no pains in learning to speak properly his native language? Will he never have occasion to read, in a company of his friends? . . . . Cicero justly observes, that address in public speaking is . . . useful, even in private life" (2-3). Elocution was as much a private pursuit for those who wanted to improve themselves socially as it was an academic subject, and elocutionists capitalized on new middling-class rhetorical situations such as merchant meetings, commercial transactions, citizen committees, and social club—rhetorical situations not traditionally encompassed in the scope of neoclassical
rhetoric (6). Playing on the middling class search for social status and refinement. Burgh classified good public address with other "polite" skills such as penmanship, dancing, and music: "it is of important advantage for all . . . youth, whose station places them within the reach of a polite education, to be qualified for acquitting themselves with reputation, when called to speak in public" (6). These polite skills were no longer the sole possession of the social elite: increasingly, social status depended on a "polite education." which included the ability to speak with confidence and skill, to write with polish, and to judge with taste. Both the rhetorics of elocution and belles lettres arose to meet these needs.

The popular reception of Burgh's elocution text parallels changes occurring to the civic humanist ideal of eloquence and the orator perfectus. Eloquence was no longer understood only as the wise and beautiful speech of statesmen-orators, although Federalists like John Quincy Adams would cling to this ideal to justify either a hierarchical social order or a nostalgic republican ideal. Rather, eloquence increasingly came to be seen as a political right--the ability and duty of all citizens to speak in public. This ability to speak freely in an idealized public sphere entered easily into the mythos of American national identity. Perhaps echoing the title of Burgh's political work in his famous letter "What is an American" (1782). Crevecoeur celebrates the ideal American as a figure who "will carefully read the newspapers, enter into every political disquisition, freely blame or censure governors and others" (71, my emphasis). The extent to which citizens actually participated in government is another issue. Most states still had property
restrictions for voting. And, of course, women, free African-Americans, Native Americans, and slaves had no voice in the political process at all. But still, the ideological circumstances of the Revolution gave an urgency to issues of public speech, particularly those centered on the issue of representation. As Joan Gunderson notes, at the very least the revolutionary crisis introduced the discourses of representation into the American political and cultural scenes (she also notes that these discourses were used to further restrict the status of women). Eloquence, increasingly understood as the right to speak publicly, was to be ensured by democratic representation and was the guarantor of liberty, at least in theory. When nineteenth-century feminists such as Margaret Fuller would argue for the vote for women, the "rhetoric of citizenship" used was a mix of civic humanist eloquence, elocution, and Whig rhetoric first compounded and voiced during the Revolutionary period (Rouse 115-120).

Some of the most important and influential writings to make the association between eloquence and republican citizenship were those of educational reformers who included eloquence as part of a proper education for an American citizen. The American Revolution gave an air of importance and seriousness to education because the Revolution represented a new beginning in the minds of many Americans. "Americans, unshackle your minds and act like independent beings" exhorted Noah.

^ In my next chapter, I explore this issue further in the Constitutional debates concerning the nature of political representation and the role of public speech between the Federalists and the Antifederalist. The issues and vocabulary of these debates, in large part, rested on civic humanist assumptions introduced both through the writings of classical republican theorists and radical Whigs such as Burgh.
Webster (Essays x). Reading the various tracts on educational reform. I am struck by the optimistic, even utopian, tone: Americans had seemingly cast off blind servility to the institutions of Europe's ancien regimes and human happiness was now within reach. Struggling to construct a national identity, republican reformers focused on the nature and uses of public institutions, particularly government and schools, to inculcate republican virtue in the American citizenry. The idea that republics depend on an educated and virtuous citizenry was nothing new. In his "On the Education of Youth in America," Webster readily quoted Montesquieu's dictum that "in a republican government the whole power of education is required" (65). Echoing civic humanist assumptions, the reformer Benjamin Rush wrote in his 1786 essay "A Plan For the Establishment of Public Schools" that education is "favorable to liberty" because "a free government can only exist in an equal diffusion of literature. Without learning, men become savages or barbarians, and where learning is confined to a few people, we always find monarchy, aristocracy, and slavery" (3). These arguments led to tax-based public support for education in America. Prior to the Revolution, only New England had made public provisions for education (Rudolph xvii). They also provided ideological weight to the idea that a democratic and public education was central to the proper maintenance of a representative government. Summarizing this idea, Robert Corum writes in his Political Inquires (1791) that the "means of acquiring knowledge . . . should be an
inherent quality in the nature of government; that is, the education of children should be provided for in the constitution of every state (113). 21

In the new American republic, civic humanist eloquence was to be the foundation of an independent citizenry and a cornerstone of republican education. But unlike the literacy fostered in pre-Revolutionary Latin grammar school, eloquence was to be based on an English language curriculum and taught to all boys who would someday assume their proper roles as voting citizens in the political process. Removing rhetoric from its traditional basis in the classical curriculum was a significant change from an earlier system where a knowledge of the classical languages was the primary requirement for admission into colonial colleges. There are two reasons for this revolt against the classics in the United States. On the one hand, opposition to classical learning was rooted paradoxically in the republican ideology that dates back to classical antiquity. Many education reformers considered Latin and Greek too aristocratic and exclusive for a republican education. Echoing this assumption, Benjamin Rush noted that republicans should be "strangers to the formalities of a Latin and Greek education" (8). On the other hand, the opposition to the classics was motivated by utilitarian considerations. "What advantage does a merchant, a mechanic, a farmer, derive from an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman tongues?" asked the practical-minded Noah Webster (46). Motivated by this concern, Webster's subsequent education and language reforms attempted to define

21 The Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 contained a clause stating that "the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country" would insure "wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue. diffused generally among the body of the people" (qtd. in Wood, Creation 426).
and to teach Americans a national "American" language. Similarly. Benjamin Rush proposed to teach secondary and grammar school boys a civic humanist rhetoric based on an English language curriculum in "republican seminaries":

"Connected with the study of our own language is the study of eloquence. It is well known how great a part it constituted of the Roman education. It is the first accomplishment in a republic and often sets the whole machine of government in motion. Let our youth, therefore, be instructed in this art. We do not extol it too highly when we attribute as much to the power of eloquence as to the sword in bringing about the American Revolution." (Plan 19)

Here, a curriculum that includes eloquence is justified with republican rationales. Like Burgh, Rush repeats the Ciceronian dictum that the tongue is as powerful as the sword. However, eloquence was to be conducted in English and available to all youth (or, at least, those privileged enough to receive a republican education). No longer reserved for the social elite who attended the colonial colleges, eloquence was to be, in theory, a part of public education--a right of all male citizens.

Nor had this masculine and political ideal of rhetoric yet acquired the more feminized connotations of the emergent belles lettres tradition--an uneasy synthesis

\[22\] For an excellent overview of the attacks on classical languages during the period, see Meyer Reinhold's article "Opponents of Classical Learning in America During the Revolutionary Period."
that would occur in the nineteenth-century.\textsuperscript{21} Loaded with the classical republican associations of independence, rationality, disinterest, and virtue, eloquence retained its masculine connotations in the writings of education reformers. Republican reformer Samuel Harrison Smith notes in 1798 that rhetorical education was still distinct from an "ornamental instruction" in belles lettres, which rests "more on the principles of expediency than of necessity" (217). But, similar to changes in the connotations of "virtue," the purpose of rhetorical education was increasingly justified by feminized rationales. Even though Smith distinguishes between "ornamental" and "liberal" instruction, he concedes that a "polite education" has a limited but necessary place at the college and university levels (219). For a justification he quotes Lord Kames, who argues in his influential \textit{Elements of Criticism} that "a just taste in the fine arts, by sweetening and harmonizing the temper, is a strong antidote to the turbulence of passion" (I 10). In his \textit{Plan for a Liberal Education} (1799), Samuel Knox similarly argues that "polite learning is found by experience to be friendly to all that is amiable and laudable in social intercourse, friendly to morality. It has a secret but powerful influence in softening and meliorating the disposition. True and correct taste directly tends to restrain the extravagances of passion by regulating the nurse of that passion, a disordered imagination" (8-9). With Smith and Knox, we see how the gendered meanings

\textsuperscript{21} For the opposition between a masculine tradition of political eloquence and an emergent feminized polite letters in eighteenth-century England, see Adam Potkay's \textit{The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume}. Ann Douglas discusses the "feminization" of religion and politics in nineteenth-century America in her book \textit{The Feminization of American Culture}. 

89
assigned to a rhetorical education changed in the span of two decades. In the 1770s, eloquence, based on a classical curriculum, was considered essential in the development of independent, disinterested, and rational citizens. By the latter 1790s, a new rhetoric of taste and politeness, once associated only with female education, was itself justified as a means to control the passions and improve one's social distinction. 24

These transformations left women who were interested in acquiring an education in a curious position. Indeed, the influence of republicanism arguments about the proper curriculum for women's education raises some paradoxical issues. Educational reformers such as Rush, Webster, and Simeon Doggett used republican theory to argue that women's education was important because women were primarily responsible for educating future male republican citizens. This ideal of "republican motherhood," as historian Linda Kerber has called it, necessitated the education of women. But the question was, of course, how much education? Was women's education to be equal to men's? Or was it to be curtailed to women's dependent status as wives and mothers? While some women (and a few men) argued the former, by and large most republican schemes of education limited women's education to a finishing school for the "polite accomplishments." Noah Webster justified a limited education for women by stating that it should be "useful" in her proper sphere: "In all nations a good education is that which renders the

24 Even though philosophers such as Locke were rethinking the relation between reason and passion, the notion of the passions retained its overtly political meanings in the eighteenth century. In the next chapter I show how passion was associated with social and political disorder.
ladies correct in their manners, respectable in their families, and agreeable in society. That education is always wrong which raises a woman above the duties of her station" (Education 70). Women were to be educated for civil but not civic purposes; according to republican education reformers, their education was for private, not public use. In their writings on women's education, neither Rush nor Webster mention the study of eloquence or elocution for women. Webster concedes that "belles-lettres" is "useful" because it "seems to correspond with the dispositions of most females" (70). But this acknowledgement is more of a restriction than a political right when compared to the masculine ideal of American citizenship offered to men. To teach women eloquence based on a classical arts curriculum would be to acknowledge that women were capable of becoming independent rational beings, and that they had a right to a public voice—a political status that women would spend more than a century fighting for.²⁵

Thus, the tradition of civic humanist eloquence constituted much more than the neoclassical canons learned in the college classroom. Together, republicanism and civic humanism provided a model for the ideal relationship between the

²⁵ Of course, as Lawrence Klein emphasizes in his article "Gender and the Public / Private Distinction in the Eighteenth-Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure," the categories of public and private are only generalized descriptors that were, in actually, never so easily separated. In Women of the Republic, Linda Kerber argues that the ideal of "Republican Motherhood" blurred the boundaries of public and private by making women primarily responsible for instilling civic virtue in children, even if it was in the home. Through republican motherhood, women's domestic roles were politicized. Similarly, Nina Baym argues in American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860 that through the act of writing republican histories, a number of women were able to participate in the masculine republic of letters and position female emancipation as the telos of America's republican destiny.
individual and the state. While it could be used to critique monarchy and aristocracy, this model was also used to exclude on ideological grounds. Feminist historians Nancy Fraser and Mary Ryan contend that the republican model of government set up definitions of the public and private that disenfranchised groups would have to overcome. As the next chapter reveals, the first groups to effectively challenge the traditional networks of power and publicity in eighteenth-century America were, not surprisingly given the patriarchal culture of the times, white males whose property was not sufficient to qualify them for public life. They challenged the established networks of power with, among other means, an oppositional model of eloquence and the orator perfectus. The tensions that this challenge produced were subsequently written into the Constitution of the United States. Thus, these tensions concerning representation, accessibility, public voice, and individual rights are inherent in—literally written into—American political institutions. The next chapter examines how.
John Quincy Adams used the occasion of his 1806 inaugural lecture as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard to emphasize the power of eloquence in a free republic such as the United States:

Under governments purely republican, where every citizen has a deep interest in the affairs of the nation, and, in some form of public assembly or other, has the means and opportunity of delivering his opinions, and of communicating his sentiments by speech; where government itself has no arms but those of persuasion; where prejudice has not acquired an uncontrolled ascendancy, and faction is yet confined within the barriers of peace: the voice of eloquence will not be heard in vain. (30-1)

This passage aptly summarizes the "rhetorical political" connotations that eloquence carried for the Revolutionary and Federalist generations. In true republican fashion, Adams assumes that citizens would be politically active and able to participate in public discussions; they would be disinterested and virtuous men who were above
the influence of the passions. Yet the hypothetical structure of Adams's passage—if a government is "purely republican." then the "voice of eloquence will not be heard in vain"—suggests that things might be otherwise. Adams's Ciceronian paean to the powers of eloquence soars so high precisely because of eloquence's nostalgic character. Adams was trying to defend and preserve an ideal of speech, of the ideal orator, and of society that was becoming increasingly outdated. As the historian Thomas Gustafson points out, by the turn of the nineteenth century "print culture displaced the tongue as the medium of political communication in the nation-state. The Romantic movement made rhetoric appear more artificial and the orator more imitative. The maneuvers of Walpole's politics and Napoleon's army and not the words of any orator (or assembly of orators) represented the new order" (373).

While somewhat isolated by ocean and ideology, these changes were also at work in America, with important implications for the type of public speech that was to be privileged in the United States.

Historians of rhetoric also note that by the time Adams assumed the Boylston Chair in 1806, civic humanist rhetoric was on the decline. While classical and neoclassical rhetorics such as Cicero's *de Oratore* and John Ward's *A System of Oratory* had dominated American college curricula between the 1750s and 80s, the increasing popularity of the "New Rhetorics" of Hugh Blair and George Campbell in the 1780s and 90s signalled an end to the classical ideal of an orator "who embodies all that is best in a culture and brings it to bear on public problems through eloquent discourse" (Halloran 246). According to historians, by the early 1800s belletristic
rationales and Scottish Common Sense epistemology had stripped neoclassical rhetoric of its civic functions. The civic art of rhetoric became a civil art of taste and criticism that encompassed the "polite arts" of poetry, essays, historical writing, and criticism. Based on this theoretical configuration, rhetoric was only a short step away from being reduced to the four modes of discourse—description, narration, exposition, and argumentation—that governed rhetoric in the latter nineteenth century. Moreover, the faculty of taste—the power to appreciate and judge the sublimities of art and nature—emerged as a central component in nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and practice. Taste also became associated with moral and intellectual superiority.

This reading, while providing a good overview of changes in library lists and college course descriptions, leaves the student of the period with several questions about the role of eloquence in society and politics. What is the relationship between neoclassical traditions of eloquence in colonial colleges and the function of eloquence in other cultural contexts? Given Adams's and other politician's celebration of the power of the word, is "decline" a misleading description of what occurred in regard to eloquence? Throughout this project, I have argued that accounts of early American rhetoric focusing only on colonial colleges overlook the important role eloquence played in the post-Revolutionary struggles to define the national character of American politics and society. To revise and extend the history of rhetoric in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, more attention needs to be paid to the social and ideological contexts that affected
rhetorical theory and practice. While the traditional narrative reveals what happened, it does not explain why. Students of the period know little about either the social and political dimensions of eloquence and taste in early American culture or why the cultural functions of civic humanist rhetoric changed.

To understand why these changes occurred, historians need to identify rhetorics as constructed discourses, or, in the words of Sharon Crowley, as "historical artifact[s]" (Memory xi). As historical artifacts, discourses of rhetoric are responsive to contexts of reception and use. Rhetorics mean differently for different groups, and they have social histories that can be traced. In the Revolutionary and Federal periods, different and competing interests adopted and employed neoclassical and, after the turn of the century, belletristic rhetorics to influence the shape and character of the new American republic. Rhetoric was an important element in this decisive period of national self-fashioning, which, in turn, revolved around issues of inclusion and exclusion in the institutions of public life.

Who was qualified to participate in the polis? What qualified individuals to participate? During the period, the rationales and ideals of specific systems of rhetoric played an important defining and legitimizing role for various socio-political groups struggling either to maintain control of or, alternatively, to establish access to networks of power and publicity. The ways that different social interests argued for accessibility during the period rest on the mutually constitutive discourses of politics and rhetoric.
Hugh Henry Brackenridge, one of the most astute observers of American life during the Federal period, brilliantly characterizes the social and political contest over rhetoric and accessibility to the institutions of public life in 1780s and 90s. In 1792, Brackenridge published the first two volumes of Modern Chivalry while practicing law in the (then) western frontier town of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The work, a picaresque novel loosely patterned after Don Quixote, featured the wanderings of Captain John Farrago and his servant Teague O'Regan. While Farrago has the benefit of an "academic education," Teague is an illiterate Irish ne'er-do-well (32). Together, the pair stumble through the American countryside, among other episodes moving from a college to a brothel to a session of Congress. Brackenridge once stated that it had been his goal to "talk nonsense eloquently" and to give the reader "something to read without the trouble of thinking" (qtd. in Ellis 97). But underneath these jests, the author's purpose was serious and his intent was clear: to instruct Americans in the principles of republicanism. Read in this light, Modern Chivalry is both satirical and didactic, highlighting the excesses of both liberal democracy and conservative Federalism in an attempt to make some sense of and find common ground in the social and ideological changes occurring in early American society. But at the same time, Brackenridge's political sympathies are undoubtedly Federalist. He clearly believes that a natural aristocracy should and would provide leadership in the new American republic.

Upon entering a town on a local election day, Farrago and Teague encounter a crowd of people gathered to elect a new representative to the state legislature.
(interestingly, an election is the same public occasion that Rip Van Winkle encounters when he returns to his village after two decades.) Two candidates, a weaver, who "seemed to have a great deal of interest among the people," and a "man of education," begin to address the crowd (35). The educated man argues that it is better for the audience "to be represented by a man at least of some letters, than by an illiterate handicraftsman" (35). Farrago, himself a man of education and property, finds sense in this argument and speaks against the candidacy of the weaver. "To rise from the cellar to the senate-house," argues Farrago, "would be an unnatural hoist . . . There is no analogy between knotting threads and framing laws. It would be a reversion of the order of things" (36). But his words fall on deaf ears. Unable to convince the multitude with his speech, Farrago moves from rhetoric to dialectic and attempts to reason with the weaver. To "warp a web" is one thing argues Farrago, but "to make laws for a commonwealth" is another:

suppose that the making of these laws, requires a knowledge of commerce, or of the interests of agriculture, or the principles upon which the different manufacturers depend, what service could you render? It is possible you might think justly enough; but could you speak? You are not in the habit of public speaking. You are not furnished with those commonplace ideas, with which even ignorant men can pass for knowing something. There is nothing makes a man so ridiculous as to attempt what is above his sphere. (37)

Despite Farrago's attempts at eloquent reasoning, the actions of Teague and the crowd slide out of his control. "Hearing so much about elections and serving
government." Farrago's servant Teague decides that "he could be a legislator himself" (37). He is supported by the crowd, who, subject to "a disposition to what is new and ignoble," favored his pretensions (37). Horrified that the crowd would endorse Teague, who "had so much of what is called the brogue on his tongue, as to fall far short of an eloquent speaker," and surrounded by unsympathetic ears. Farrago proceeds to express one of the central political problems in the new republic. Acknowledging that while in theory a free and representative government is based on equality and the right of every citizen to become an elected official. Farrago argues that, in practice, "it is sufficient to possess the right; not absolutely necessary to exercise it" (38). But the political interests of the crowd are clear, and they counter that even though Teague "may not yet be skilled in the matter, . . . we will empower him; and it is better to trust a plain man like him, than one of your high flyers, that will make laws to suit their own purposes" (38-9).

Again unable to sway the crowd, Farrago attempts to deliberate and reason with Teague: Teague is an uneducated immigrant, with no knowledge of public affairs or the increasingly specialized field of political economics. "Even if you had knowledge," argues Farrago, "have you a facility of speaking. . . . This is not the fault of your nature, but of your education; having been accustomed to dig turf in your early years, rather than instructing yourself in the classics, or common schoolbooks" (39). "Never let it be said," Farrago concludes, "that you quitted an honest livelihood, the taking care of my horse, to follow the newfangled whims of the times, and to be a statesman" (40). Although Teague is persuaded to remain in
a "private station." the obstinate crowd is not renewing its support for the weaver. Neither side yields; neither side is persuaded by the arguments of the other.

This episode offers a striking introduction to issues at the intersection of rhetoric and politics in post-Revolutionary America: the nature of political representation, the role of public opinion, and the character of the ideal legislator. Most importantly, it highlights the role of a specific type of rhetorical education in the maintenance of social order. Each of these issues is intimately tied to ideas about eloquence and public speech in the new republic. Farrago and the "man of education" both represent the classical Ciceronian orator perfectus--a political type on the decline in latter eighteenth-century America. Each man endorses a republican civic ideal of the self defined by the public virtues of independence, disinterest, rationality, and education. Echoing the arguments of many Federalists, Farrago maintains that political leaders should be men of intelligence and character, not "from the cellar." Eloquent public speaking is an overriding concern for Farrago, and the social and ideological dimensions that he attaches to it are clear. Twice Farrago invokes the civic definition of eloquence as wise thought plus artful expression as a qualification for public life. He argues that even if the weaver or Teague were knowledgeable about the affairs of government, neither would be able to convey that knowledge to others: "Even if you had knowledge" asks Farrago, "have you a facility of speaking?" (39). Neither the weaver nor Teague are eloquent men; in fact, Teague is an illiterate, "who can scarcely speak the dialect in which
your laws ought to be written" (37). For Farrago, as for most of the leaders of the revolutionary generation, eloquence based on a broad classical education is an essential qualification for the would-be eloquent statesman. For these men, eloquence is the means to persuasively and artfully arrive at and convey public truth, and it is the *sine qua non* of political participation in early America. From the republican perspective of Farrago and other Federalists, eloquence is what enables and supports a republican government.

Ironically, the actions of Teague and the crowd continually undermine Farrago's eloquence. The same language of republicanism that Farrago employs to *dissuade* the weaver from seeking public office *persuades* Teague to join the race. Moreover, the crowd quickly sees through Farrago's Federalist rhetoric of social hierarchy and station, arguing that such assumptions merely serve to keep a certain class—"high flyers"—in power. Farrago's attempts to reason with the weaver and the crowd are unsuccessful—they no longer share the same political *sensus communis*. The crowd's resistance represents an emerging alternative to the republican civic ideal of the self and society, a popular notion of representation that "impowers . . . plain men" of local interests. The weaver and Teague represent a new type on the American political scene: the local and self-interested politician, closely bound to his constituents (by ideology and law women could not hold public office). These

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1 This passage should also serve to remind us that debates concerning whether there should or should not be an official language of public life have been around since America constituted itself as a nation. Some Revolutionary period Americans such as John Adams proposed a national language academy to standardize English. But, as Shirley Brice Heath explains in her article "English in our Language Heritage," "these efforts were rejected as out of keeping with the spirit of liberty in the United States" (6).
challengers assert that representatives need only to voice the interests of their constituents: they do not need the public ethos conferred by station, property, and extensive education. In this way the ideal of the eloquent orator is challenged by the ideal of the effective representative.

The tension between these two types of public and political figures, and between the value systems on which they rest, creates the political problem in the new republic. While many of the leaders of the revolutionary generation endorsed the enlightened principles of equality, right, and popular sovereignty associated with the contractual notion of government in general, few could accept the social implications of these principles in practice. Farrago’s response that "it is sufficient to possess the right: not absolutely necessary to exercise it" summarizes the conundrum in which many leaders found themselves in the 1780s and 90s. Resting on a communitarian system of government, republican civic discourse taught every male American that, in the words of Benjamin Rush, "he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property" (Public Schools 7). But the Whig rhetoric of liberty and contractualism invoked during the revolutionary crisis also taught that every American citizen possessed certain inalienable rights. This individualist rhetoric outlived the Revolution that it was used to justify and emerged as a powerful discourse of contractual liberalism. Thus, the problem for the Federalists was that once the right to participate in politics was granted, how could it be channelled and controlled?
During these decades, particularly in the Constitutional ratification debates of 1787-88 and the Alien and Sedition Act debates of 1798, an alternative model of public speech emerged to compete with the republican civic model of speech endorsed by the Federalists, and it is the tension between these two models of eloquence and public speech that Brackenridge captures so well. Whether eloquence requires property, social station, education, or some combination of the three is left unanswered, although Brackenridge certainly weights Farrago's arguments. What is certain from this passage is that issues of rhetoric and politics were inseparable in the minds of many Americans during the period. The important political debates about the nature of representative government were, in effect, debates about rhetoric. As American political ideologies and institutions changed, so too did the nature and uses of public speech and the standards by which people judged speech to be effective, persuasive, and eloquent, with important implications for what kind of a rhetoric was appropriate for the new republic.

One of the keys to understanding how rhetoric and politics interacted during the period is historicizing the various receptions of republican discourse by the revolutionary generation. In 1807, John Adams professed in a letter to Mercy Otis Warren that he "never understood" what republicanism represented to Americans (qtd. in Wood, Creation 48). The statement is revealing. That he could no longer claim, or even recall, the ideological fervor of his younger days attests to the changes that the Revolutionary generation witnessed in the Federalist period. In 1776, however, many Americans and all the leading revolutionary leaders claimed to
be ardent republicans. The problem was that few could agree on what this term exactly meant. To many, republicanism was inherently conservative, entailing a quasi-representative government that balanced and checked the interests of the three social estates. Others thought that it meant a government without hereditary monarchy, nobility, and ranks. A few radical Americans such as Thomas Paine argued that republicanism entailed a fully representative democracy (McDonald 67). Most simply knew that it involved some form of elective process and that it was a change from British governmental control, increasingly perceived as despotic. Indeed, the ideological power of republicanism in early America stemmed from its vagueness, from its capacity to conform to people's fears and hopes for the new nation. Republicanism, because it represented different things to different people, was a convenient and easy mantle for Americans to assume. Not until Americans actually had to institute a republican form of government encompassing various regional interests did real ideological divisions begin to manifest.

In classical republican theory, the republic (res publica or "common wealth") was a polis where power rested in the citizens and guided by the public good. The ability to sacrifice self-interest to the common good was the central component in republican theory; factions or parties, because they were defined by private interests, were anathema. Republican civic eloquence was the means by which citizen-orators

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2 The literature on classical republicanism and civic humanism is extensive. I have been most influenced in my thinking about these political traditions by Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Gordon Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, and J. G. A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. 104
established and voiced public views. Only wise deliberation by qualified citizens, only the eloquent lawgivers, could arrive at opinions "consonant to the public good" (Madison, Federalist 126). In the revolutionary climate of the 1770s and 80s, eloquence accrued a cultural capital that it was theoretically denied by the arbitrary nature of monarchical government. In his essay "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences." David Hume had argued that "eloquence certainly springs up more naturally in popular governments" (286). Similarly, a student at the 1786 Yale Commencement argued the thesis, "Eloquence always flowers and rules among a free people." The rationale for these statements highlights the relationship between eloquence and liberty in the minds of many Americans. The citizens of the new American republic considered their government and society to be a different rhetorical scene than England, and they expected public speech to function differently in a republic than it would in a monarchy. According to this idea, republican civic eloquence was the legal means through which citizens persuaded each other of the right course of action in the absence of monarchical coercion. In theory, republican civic eloquence undermined the monarchical relationship of individual liberty and political authority because it invested in each qualified citizen a political voice that checked the arbitrary operations of power. Eloquence both voiced and defined the sensus communis of the polis: it was the constitutive element of society. The ideology and structure of republican government were fundamentally based on this relationship. Theoretically, all citizens realized their political natures to the extent that they participated in the political life of the polis.
Through eloquence, their voices were harmonized into a single prudent course of action, a single public good. But, in actual practice, this begged the question of what qualified one as a citizen. Was it education, property, and status, as Farrago had argued? If so, how much? And what about gender and race? Few of the colonial elite who invoked republicanism to oppose England were aware of the radical implications that this would entail for American politics and society.

In 1776, James Otis's warning that "when the pot boils the scum will rise" may have been prophetic, but it went largely unheeded. Many in the revolutionary generation thought that leadership would be reserved for the traditional colonial elite because of their status, character, and education. It was one thing to suggest that the people as a corporate body had rights, but it was quite another to argue that minorities and individuals should be protected against the interests of the majority (Wood Creation 54). In the eighteenth century, the leaders of society believed that, because most Americans were not educated, were not financially independent, and thus, were not sufficiently disinterested, they were unqualified to participate in the public life. The vast majority of Americans were not eloquent: they had no public voice. Despite the enlightened liberal and contractual rhetoric of natural rights and equality, many revolutionary leaders, including figures such as John Adams and George Washington, clung to the social dichotomy of the "few" and the "many." In positing that the common good always came before individual interest, the republican model of society presented one solution to the problem of entitling citizens to a public voice in theory but limiting it in practice. Independent citizens
would sacrifice private interest to the good of the commonwealth. Dependents such as women, servants, and slaves had no public status to begin with.

In addition to a homogenous citizenry, republican civic eloquence presupposed a specific relationship between language and the self. Eloquent republican orators were specific social types: their eloquence was based on and could not be separated from the public virtues of disinterest, independence, and duty to country. These virtues gave their words persuasive and moral force. In the eighteenth century, as it had been in ancient Athens, republican Rome, and Renaissance Europe, the primary function of eloquence was to govern. Repeating this assertion in 1806, John Quincy Adams exhorted each Harvard student to "Let him catch from the relics of ancient oratory those unrestricted powers, which mold the mind of man to the will of the speaker, and yield the guidance of the nation to the dominion of the voice" (30). In their discussions of American social "interests," delegates at the Constitutional Convention regularly referred to "men of the better sort" and "men of the baser sort" (qtd. in Bowen 71). Public man, the "better sort," was eloquent man, and vice versa. He possessed a specific personality—a public ethos—marked by character and "decorum." Today, decorum signifies polite behavior or civility, but the eighteenth-century political and social connotations suggested actions suitable to the rank or station of an individual. Decorum was the ethos of the whole self—an integrated political personality marked by property and

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3 I owe this point about "decorum" to Kenneth Cmiel's *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America*. 107
status, cultivated through a classical education, and maintained through virtuous behavior. Influenced by this ideal, the authors of the Federalist Papers continually refer to "the ablest men" and "men who possess the most attractive merit" as a "natural aristocracy" that would arise to govern the United States. The relationship among republican civic virtues, education, and character made language persuasive. It was a relationship that Isocrates wrote about in the Antidosis, that Cicero elaborated in the Offices, and that Renaissance humanists incorporated into their educational programs. As the beneficiaries of civic humanist education, the eighteenth-century American gentleman translated this republican civic ideal of the eloquent self into social practice.

However, changes in the material lives of early Americans altered these traditional assumptions about who was eloquent, and why. Many American historians have stressed the enormous impact of economic changes on social structure—a pre-industrial phenomenon that American historians call the "market revolution." New systems of credit and finance drove many of these changes. The introduction of paper money and credit opened up extensive, distant, and impersonal networks of trade to individuals who formerly bartered in immediate, face-to-face communicative situations (Sellers 17). The market revolution dissolved deeply rooted patterns of behavior and belief by establishing a capitalist hegemony over the economy, politics, and culture (5). The social practice of conspicuous consumption also accelerated these changes during the last decades of the eighteenth century. Luxury items, once the preserve of the social elite, became more widely available as
booming trans-Atlantic markets turned the middle classes into a burgeoning culture of consumers (Bushman 238-279). Social boundaries that had been traditionally fixed by criteria such as wealth and family status weakened as a new bourgeois class of merchants, artisans, and investors began to make money and connections in the new market economy of the eighteenth century. Along with increased freedom from traditional social moorings, the middling class merchants, artisans, and mechanics became increasingly politicized during the Revolutionary War crisis. This political transformation, combined with changes in social and economic status, produced pressures that would manifest themselves in both social structure and notions of self-identity.

Against these material changes, concerns about the integrity of the political self and its relation to public language came to occupy an increasingly larger role in eighteenth-century Anglo-American thought. In Scotland, like America a colony of Britain, Enlightenment philosophers such as Adam Ferguson, John Millar, and Adam Smith worried that economic and social change was affecting the disposition and unity of the self, replacing disinterested public citizens with private, self-interested individuals. J. G. A. Pocock summarizes the problem that a free market economy produced for both Scots and Americans: if "the progress of civilization . . . necessitated the division of labor and the specialization of personalities," how could the individual resist becoming "more and more the dependent of those with

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4 For a discussion of the political and cultural influence of Scotland on America during the eighteenth century, see John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," and Thomas Miller, "John Witherspoon and Scottish Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy in America."
whom he had contracted to perform specialized functions other than his own, less and less a personality immediately related to society in its undifferentiated form" (Machiavellian 501-502). Given that classical republican theory held the autonomy of the political personality to be the basis of socio-political stability, the division of this personality would transform the social order. And this is precisely what happened. Historian Lawrence Kohl notes that as a result of the changes in traditional patterns of thought and behavior, individuals developed "a new, more flexible type of character structure, one not so dependent on the perpetuation of shared values, enduring personal relationships, and traditional patterns of economic activity and political authority" (10). These tensions produced conflicting impulses in American society and, often, in the writings of the same individuals, between contractualism and communitarianism. But even in the face of commercial changes and Lockean notions of individualism, republican civic assumptions about the organic and hierarchical nature of society still exerted a powerful determinative force on the Revolutionary generation. As I will show, the Constitution of the United States is one example of the uneasy negotiations between communal and contractual models of the individual and the state.

5 The eighteenth-century Scottish response to this problem was to argue that historical progress, whether it be in commerce, politics, or the arts, implied a progress in human nature. Reversing the republican civic assumption that self-interest introduced faction and precipitated the decay of government, Smith and other Scots argued that self-interest had a positive influence on the commonwealth. Thus, Smith was able to argue that "the introduction of commerce, or at least the opulence that is commonly the attendant of commerce . . . first brings on the improvement of prose" (Smith 131). Similarly, in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Blair announced that "language, style, and composition . . . mark the progress of society" (Golden and Corbett 30).
The emergent challenge to republican civic eloquence is closely tied to the failure of early American political institutions and ideologies. By the mid 1780s, many Americans believed that their first attempt at constituting a national government, the Articles of Confederation, had faltered. In Federalist No. 9, James Madison complained that, under the Articles, the states had degenerated into nothing but "little, jealous, clashing, tumultuous commonwealths, the wretched nurseries of unceasing discord" (120). What had seemed so promising as an ideal less than a decade ago—a nation founded on the enlightened principles of an individual's right to life, liberty, property, but tempered by the civic spirit of republicanism—was turning out to be a government of tyranny by the many in the eyes of many social conservatives. This turn of events was mainly due to a larger portion of the male population claiming political rights than the conservative leaders of the Revolution had foreseen or intended. Social interests previously excluded from the political process began to use the Whig political discourse that the revolutionary leaders had used to justify American independence. According to this discourse, centralized power always threatened and, if unchecked, eventually devoured the liberties of the people. "Power." Jonathan Mayhew exclaimed in 1776. "is of a grasping, encroaching nature . . . [it] aims at extending itself . . . wherever it meets with no balance, check, control, or opposition of any kind" (34). In England, so the perception went, a corrupt parliament had sacrificed the liberties of the people to

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6 For an account of the determinative influence of Whig political discourse on the thought and actions of the Revolutionary generation, see Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967).
their own self-aggrandizement. The only safeguard against the encroachment of power was a government kept close and accountable to the people, particularly with frequently-elected state legislatures.⁷

When written into state constitutions, the Whig discourse popularized in the Revolutionary War crisis produced new political blocs or "interests" in post-Revolutionary America, consisting primarily of farmers, smaller merchants, artisans and mechanics. These interests would eventually organize politically into the party of Jeffersonian Republicans in the mid 1790s. In the eyes of the social elite who had traditionally controlled a large share of colonial property and politics, these individuals were unqualified to frame laws and participate in public life. Gouverneur Morris, a conservative delegate to the Constitutional Convention, observed this change in the composition of members in the Pennsylvania statehouse:

I stood on the balcony and on my right hand were ranged all people of property, with some few poor dependents, and on the other the tradesmen, etc., who thought it worth their while to leave daily labor for the good of the country . . . . The mob began to think and reason. Poor reptiles! It is with them a vernal morning: they are struggling to cast off their winter's sloth.

⁷ America has always had a strong tradition of communal democracy. This was particularly true in Puritan New England where Congregational churches, rejecting the external authority associated with both the Established Church of England and Catholicism, determined local policy through form of democratic participation such as direct election. This religious democracy bled easily into civic democracy. However, this participatory government worked best in small rural communities, tightly knit by ties of religion, region, and class. For an excellent study of the communitarian and democratic processes at work in New England towns before the Revolution see Michael Zuckermann's *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century.*
They bask in the sunshine, and ere noon they will bite, depend on it. (qtd. in Kramnick 24)

Influenced by Whig political theory, the framers of the Articles had deposited a great deal of power in state assemblies, believing that the legislature and not the executive or the judicial would preserve the rights of the people. However, from the Federalist’s perspective the result was an abuse of popular sovereignty. Although Thomas Jefferson was not a Federalist, his famous observation that "173 despots" are "as oppressive as one" underscores the changing nature of Revolutionary politics (Notes 245). When the delegates of the Constitutional Convention gathered in Philadelphia to discuss the political crisis in the summer of 1787, most thought that they were meeting to revise the Articles of Confederation, not to form a new government. Few foresaw that the question of how much power the central government should have would split not only the Convention delegates but the country at large. During the Revolutionary War crisis of the 1770s, there had been a rough consensus among Americans about what type of government would suit the new republic. But during the Constitution debates of 1787-1788, two distinct discourses of government emerged, Federalist and Antifederalist, each reflecting the social and economic changes occurring in post-Revolutionary America. Historians have debated the political and social orientations of these two groups, classifying their various ideological stances as either liberal or communitarian. However, these ideologies can also be recovered in the context of eighteenth-century civic humanist rhetoric. From this perspective, the Constitutional debates over the
nature of representation, character, and public opinion were, at heart, debates about the nature and role of rhetoric in a representative government.

The ratification of the Constitution in 1789 signalled the establishment of the Federalist Party, which endorsed a strong central government with the power to check the perceived excesses of democracy. Federalists were united by an interest in mercantile and commercial development. Ideologically, they were influenced by a troubled mixture of classical republicanism and contractual liberalism. However, Federalists believed that the democratic potentials of this mixture should be severely restrained by centralizing and distancing political power from the unpredictable passions of the "many." Thus, their vision of society also rested on a social order of hierarchy, deference, and paternalism. Federalists believed in protecting the political and economic rights of the few against the tyranny of the *vox populi*.

Subscribing to the eighteenth-century idea that individuals are driven by self-interest, that they are, in the words of Madison, "ambitious, vindictive, and rapacious." Federalists favored a strong government to ensure the right to life, liberty, and property (104). In theory, most Federalists endorsed representative government. Alexander Hamilton once stated that he "desired above all things to see the equality of political rights, exclusive of all hereditary distinction" (qtd. in Miller 81). In

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8 For the past three decades American historians have debated the amount influence that republicanism and liberalism have each exerted on the Revolutionary generation. The emerging "republican synthesis" points more to the tensions produced by both systems than the predominance of one over the other. For two good overviews of these issues, see Robert Shalhope's "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography" and Isaac Kramnick's "Republican Revisionism Revisited."
practice, however. Hamilton and other Federalists had serious doubts about whether the Union could be preserved if just anybody could hold public office. Aristotle had taught in the *Politics* that democracies inevitably slide into anarchies (180).

Federalists, steeped in classical republicanism and reacting against what they perceived as the excesses of the state assemblies, similarly believed that too much liberty would result in demagogues, who would excite the passions of the people and eventually destroy the Union. Indeed, the Constitution in many ways designs a governmental structure intended to prevent demagogues from taking too much power for themselves and exciting the political passions of the lower classes, who would inevitably follow them. Thus, the central issues for Federalists were how to regulate the political passions of a large number of newly-enfranchised male voters and how to control the avenues to public life. How could a government be constituted that would channel and control a large segment of the population that was not sufficiently disinterested, educated, and, thus, eloquent?

However, some Americans, particularly those outside the networks of power, shared neither the Federalist enthusiasm for a strong national government nor their ideas about political independence, disinterest, and education. These Antifederalists distrusted plans for a centralized government, believing that republican government was only possible in power was kept close to the "producing classes" of the people. Like the Federalists, Antifederalists were steeped in classical republicanism and contractual liberalism, but their social position and political exclusion led them to a different national vision for America. In 1787, the Antifederalist James Winthrop of
Massachusetts stated that "the idea of an uncompounded republick, on an average one thousand miles in length, and eight hundred in breadth, and containing six millions of white inhabitants all reduced to the same standard of morals, of habits, and of laws, is in itself an absurdity, and contrary to the whole experience of mankind" (Bailyn *Debate* 6). In a large republic, the center of power was too far removed from the voice of the people, both literally and symbolically. The proposed Constitution, argued "Centinel," was "a most daring attempt to establish a despotic aristocracy" (54). And, asserted the Antifederalist Melancton Smith, if a centralized government was an inescapable evil, then the differences among the "great," the "middling," and the "poor" classes must be represented in a truly republican government (Elliot I 247). In this way, influenced by Whig political discourses, Antifederalists argued for a governmental structure that would be responsive to local interests.

Because words were the only legal means to secure assent in a representative government, Federalists recognized the necessity of public discourse in a republic. However, this discourse was to be carefully circumscribed by qualifications and a structure of government designed to produce and perpetuate a natural aristocracy of rational and disinterested orator-statesmen. The Federalist construction of the *orator perfectus* rested on republican civic notions of who was qualified for public office and why. According to this ideology, economic self-sufficiency and political independence allowed the individual to maintain disinterest. Only a completely independent and autonomous individual--the classical *homo politicus*--could be
sufficiently disinterested for public life. Idealized in Western political discourse since Aristotle’s *Politics*, this political construction of the self held autonomy, integrity, and rationality to be the basis of political and social stability (Pocock "Anglo-American" 100-101). Also implicit in this construction of political identity is the ideal of the rational citizen, defined against the passionate and irrational identity of the crowd or the masses: "When I mention the public," the Virginian John Randolph exclaimed in 1774. "I mean to include only the rational part of it. The ignorant vulgar are as unfit to judge of the modes, as they are unable to manage the reins of government" (qtd. in Wood *Democratization* 67). Paternalistic Federalist orators, expecting deference and due respect for their social station, felt it necessary to speak for those below them in society because the lower classes could not deliberate and judge for themselves.

In Federalist representations of eloquence, assumptions about politics and rhetoric reflect and reinforce each other. Furthermore, these representations function in a political narrative of consensus that effaces the social tensions surrounding the Constitution ratification debates. The ideal republican orator endorsed by the Federalists reached public truth through rational and cool deliberation and reflection, and this rationality was to be inherent in a representative government where the people chose the best, the brightest, and the richest to hold public office. Many Federalists believed that eloquence itself was a civic virtue. Deploring pure democracy, Hamilton stated that "the ancient democracies, in which the people themselves deliberated, never possessed one good feature of government .

117
When they assembled, the field of debate presented an ungovernable mob incapable of deliberation" (Elliot I 253). By nature, the "people" cannot deliberate on affairs of state amongst themselves because they are too volatile, too susceptible to the political passions that threaten to sweep rational discussion away at any moment. In contrast to impassioned demagoguery, the Federalist Papers advocate the necessity of "temperate and cool" deliberation of the natural aristocracy over the "angry and malignant passions" of the mob (97, 88). In Federalist No. 2, John Jay describes the heated debates and political impasses that occurred in the 1787 Constitutional Convention through the ideological lens of Federalist eloquence: "In the mild season of peace, with minds unoccupied by other subjects. [the delegates] passed many months in cool, uninterrupted, and daily consultation; and finally, without having been awed by power, or influenced by any passions except love for their country, they presented and recommended to the people the plan produced by their joint and very unanimous councils" (92). Jay presents rational deliberation as a necessary part of a larger republican vision concerning who was qualified to write laws and legislate affairs of state.9

9 These Federalist assumptions about rational discourse echo Aristotelian rhetorical theory, which divides public language into two types, dialectic and rhetoric. Each of these types of language constitutes different levels of communication and each assumes different audiences and levels of truth. Dialectic was not only an epistemological method of inquiry but also a form of deliberation based on specific (and political) assumptions about human nature: only rational individuals could successfully discover and convey meaning to each other. Rhetoric, on the other hand, encompassed a more unstable domain of communication, relying on appeals the passions and interests of the crowd who were, by political nature, irrational. Thus, the importance of the ethical and pathetic appeals in rhetoric.
A Federalist letter in the September 24, 1787, *New York Daily Advertiser* urged readers to "Let [the Constitution] be stiled the reign of reason, the triumph of discretion, virtue and public spirit" (Bailyn, *Debate* 13). For the socially conservative Federalists, "cool" reason, disinterestedness, and a devotion to the public good defined the ideal statesman-orator. Indeed, the first three words of the Constitution, "We the People," represent the consensus model of government and speech that Federalists espoused during the Constitutional ratification debates. This consensus model functioned to erase the tensions and conflicted "rhetorical political" issues that surfaced during the debates. In the project of national self-fashioning, Federalist eloquence was a model of deliberative consensus that eliminated any spaces where other social interests might voice opposition. A central trope of Federalist political literature is the use of rhetorical strategies such as appealing to "self-evident truths" to fix socio-political meaning in an uncertain, divided, and diverse world. In the words of literary historian Robert Ferguson, Federalist eloquence "attempts to forge artificial unities amidst a contentious, far-flung populace" (351-53).

Because they were outside the traditional networks of colonial power and publicity, Antifederalists challenged this Federalist ideal of eloquence and social order by declaring these qualifications null. Invoking the Whig discourses of

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10 In his article "Finding the Revolution," Ferguson examines, among other issues, the relationship of literacy, authorship, and identity in the leaders of the Revolution: "No generation, whether in reading or in writing, has looked more carefully to the printed word as the basis for its identity, and this reliance is all the more remarkable in a society still on the border between oral and print forms of literary and intellectual transmission" (350).
individualism and liberty. "Cato" urged New Yorkers to "Think, speak, act, and assert your own opinions and rights." The Antifederalist "Centinel" similarly entreated Philadelphians to consider the Constitution "uninfluenced by the authority of names" (53). Here, "Cato" and "Centinel" both agree that the public ethos of Federalist orators counted for too much in America. James Madison, himself a Federalist in his early years, recognized by 1787 that even "individuals of extended views and national pride . . . will never be followed by the multitude"—a major departure from the republican tradition (Vices 355). Once the traditional qualifications of wealth, status, and education were called into question, the republican virtues of disinterest and devotion to the public good were also challenged as qualifications for public life. In this way, the civic eloquence of the Federalists was increasingly challenged by the Antifederalist ideal of the representative who was responsive to local interests. According to this construction, effective representatives were those who could advocate and respond to the interests of the community. Consequently, the people were exhorted to put their own interests first, which further undermined the republican emphasis on disinterest and sacrificing private interest to the public good.

In the political discourse of the 1790s, self-interest was replacing disinterest and public good as the standard of action in public life. "Agrippa" stated the Antifederalist position clearly: "It is vain to tell us that we ought to overlook local interests. It is only by protecting local concerns that the interests of the whole is preserved" (Bailyn. Debate 73). Thus, the Antifederalists advance another public
ethos—another model of the orator perfectus—to contest the cultural social capital attached to the Federalist orator. This new and increasingly "democratic" political identity advanced by the Antifederalists was not defeated when the Federalist Constitution was ratified; rather, its influence on how many constituents viewed the role of the representative increased during the 1790s and early 1800s. The democratic representative voiced the interests of his constituents; he quite literally spoke their language, used their colloquialisms, and retained their manners. Most importantly, the democratic representative was not only to represent constituents' interests, but he was to be from the constituents and voice their interests. Of course, these two models were not so easy to separate in practice, but as ideals they had a powerful influence on early national views of representation and they functioned as norms from which to mount a critique of the other party. Thus, two versions of the orator perfectus—two ideals of public ethos and political identity—emerge in the debates over the Constitution, particularly, as we shall see, in the debates over the nature of representation and the proper qualifications of a representative.

To ensure stability, Federalists advocated a government based on virtual representation: the belief that representatives may act independently of the wishes of their constituents, who are easily swayed by their passions and interests. In Federalist No. 10, Madison argues that a republic based on virtual representation would "refine and enlarge the public views by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens" (126). Such a notion of representation would ensure that
"the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves" (126). This proved to be a powerful ideal, influencing ideas about what types of education, ethos, and public voice qualified citizens for public life. For many Federalists, representatives were to be educated men of character and, in true republican fashion, able to place the public good above self-interest. In *Modern Chivalry*, Captain Farrago had argued that to "warp a web" should not qualify one "to make laws for a commonwealth" (Brackenridge 37). Similarly, many Federalists were concerned that the "common" man was not qualified for public life, that he was not disinterested enough to place the public over the private, and that he was not classically-educated. In short, the "common" man was not eloquent according to republican civic standards. Once middling class individuals began to hold public office, the Federalist response was predictable. As early as 1777 an editor complained that "When a man who is only fit to patch a shoe attempts to patch a state, fancies himself a Solon or a Lycurgus . . . he cannot fail to meet with contempt" (Goddard 7).

Antifederalists, on the other hand, argued for a more direct form of representational government, believing that constituents should have a direct say in the framing of laws. This theory of "real" representation held that government was accountable to the people, and it sought to bind the actions of representatives to their
constituents by detailed written instructions, residence requirements, and term limits. Antifederalists argued that all qualified citizens had a direct stake in government, and their definition of an entitled citizen was not as restrictive as that of the Federalists's. The elected official was literally a mouthpiece to voice the collective opinion and interests of the constituents. In the New York ratifying convention, Melancton Smith asserted that "the idea that naturally suggests itself to our minds, when we speak of representatives, is, that they resemble those that they represent. They should be a true picture of the people, possess a knowledge of their circumstances and their wants, sympathize in all their distresses, and be dispossessed to seek their true interests" (Elliot I 247). Attacking the Federalist ideal of virtual representation, Smith asks if the proposed Constitution "wears the complexion of a democratic branch" or if it appeared "the mere shadow of representation" (249)? He and other Antifederalists resoundingly answered the latter.

Real representation emerged to compete with the traditional model of virtual representation, which rested heavily on the public ethos of the statesman. During autumn 1787, a series of Antifederalist letters by "Cato" in the New York Journal attacked Federalist ideas about representation and character. Concerned that New

11 The idea of real representation, what political historian Isaac Kramnick has called the "mirror theory of representation," can be traced back both to the strong democratic biases of New World protestantism and to the political reforms with which English Whig writers hoped to correct the abuses of the British parliament such as bribes and the "rotten borough" system.

12 Smith probably borrowed this figure from James Burgh, who asked in Political Disquisitions (1775) "Can the house of commons be called even the shadow of a representation of the property of the people?" (I 406).
Yorkers might be influenced by the public ethos of such prominent Federalists as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. "Cato" urged readers to "attach yourselves to measures, not men" (Bailyn, *Debate* 33). The slogan signals an important shift in ideas about social order. During the latter eighteenth century, America was still largely agrarian, having only recently declared its independence from Britain. Americans still thought of themselves regionally, as citizens of states rather than as citizens of a nation. Traditional patterns of social organization remained strong. According to social historian Harry Stout, the "hierarchical worldview" held by colonial Americans "presupposed a society of face-to-face personal relationships in which people identified themselves with reference to those around them and acted according to their rank in the community" (525). In this agrarian social structure, the public ethos of community leaders, be they landed gentry or protestant ministers, was very persuasive. "To ignore the personal and deferential relationships of a minister," observes Stout, "would be to threaten the organic, hierarchical principles upon which both family and social order rested" (526). The leaders of this established social order were persuasive in rhetorical situations: their words carried a great deal of public authority by virtue of their character, which, in turn, rested on status, property, and education. By arguing for real representation from republican civic principles, Antifederalists were at the same time challenging the public authority of many Federalist leaders.

The question of what conferred authority on public speech was by no means unique to Americans during the 1780s and 90s. Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian
had each contemplated the sources of public authority, and the effects of this authority on persuasion through public speech. Revolutionary Americans, in turn, drew on this rhetorical political tradition when they approached the question of public ethos and qualification. Federalists held that the qualifications of elected officials were central to their public and moral authority. In their attempts to sell the Constitution to other delegates and the nation at large, the authors of the *Federalist Papers* asserted that, given the size of the country and the representative nature of the proposed system, elections would produce a government of the wisest and most able men. John Jay argued in *Federalist* No. 3 that the size and prestige of the federal government would attract the best and most talented from the states:

> When once an efficient national government is established, the best men in the country will not only consent to serve, but also will generally be appointed to manage it: for, although town or country, or other contracted influence, may place men in state assemblies, or senates, or courts of justice, or executive departments, yet more general and extensive reputation for talents and other qualifications will be necessary to recommend men to offices under the national government. (95)

For Jay, the national government would be composed of men with "more general and extensive reputation" than the local politicians of state governments. Answering Antifederalist claims that all social interests should be represented in government, Hamilton contends in *Federalist* No. 35 that "under any arrangement that leaves the votes of the people free," the representative body "will be the composed of
landholders, merchants, and men of the learned professions" (234). This quotation is as significant for who it excludes as for who it includes. The new republic would be composed of a natural aristocracy who, because of their superior talents, could best represent the interests of those below them.

Whereas the traditional political culture of colonial America assumed that political leaders would come from the wealthiest classes, the egalitarian rhetoric that circulated in the public sphere during the Revolution called these qualifications for public life into question. "It is better to trust a plain man," the crowd answered Farrago's Federalist arguments, "than one of your high flyers" (Brackenridge 38). An effective statesman does not need wealth, status, or a classical education to represent the interests of the people. These qualifications, in fact, alienated the statesman from the interests of his constituents. Antifederalists attacked the traditional and elitist political culture of the Federalists, singling out the qualifications that Federalists were perceived to possess. But this attack put Antifederalists in an ironic position, one related to the Federalist paradox of granting sovereignty to all in theory but few in practice. Some Antifederalists complained that, because they were not large property owners and college educated, they had no public voice. While they sought to undermine the traditional qualifications that made a statesman eloquent, at the same time, they were acutely aware that their lack of property and education excluded them from public life.

Antifederalist literature contains many references to the Federalist's rhetorical sophistication and sophistic. One author deplored "those Cicero'es as they think
themselves and others of Superior rank" (qtd. in Rutland 98). In the Massachusetts ratifying convention, Amos Singletary complained about the elitism of the Federalist framers of the Constitution in terms that underscore the social dimensions of eloquence:

Does not this Constitution . . . take away all we have. all our property?

Does it not lay on us all taxes, duties, imports, and excises? And what more have we to give? These lawyers, and men of learning and moneyed men, that talk so finely, and gloss of matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves; they expect to be managers of this Constitution, and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and then they will swallow up all us little folks like the great Leviathan." (Elliot. II, 102)

While advancing new ideals of the public speech and the orator perfectus, the Antifederalists were acutely aware of their own lack of property, learning, and eloquence. The republican civic tradition of eloquence and politics was still dominant during the period. When engaged in public debate, Antifederalists perceived themselves as susceptible to the eloquent Federalists, who could "talk so finely, and gloss of matters so smoothly." The Antifederalists won a political battle or two—for example, they eventually managed to have a written Bill of Rights included in the Constitution. But, as the historian Charles Sellers notes, they lost the war to a "Constitutional coup" brought off by a coalition of commercial and landed elites (32). Political legitimation through franchise was still another decade
away for the male mechanic and agrarian interests of America. For women and
slaves, it was more than a hundred years away.

A decade after the Constitutional ratification debates began to reveal the
social conflicts attached to different definitions of eloquence, another national crisis
produced a series of public debates that again underscored competing ideas about
what type of voice the people should have in a representative government. As
before, these debates addressed issues that lay at the heart of politics and rhetoric:
Does eloquence "yield the guidance of a nation to the dominion of the voice." as
John Quincy Adams and other Federalists contended? Is there one standard of
elocuence in a republic? During the 1790s, American socio-political tensions had
largely coalesced around two opposing interests: the agrarian and mechanic interests
represented by the Republicans and the commercial and industrial interests
represented by the Federalists. Whereas the Antifederalists had been unable to
mount enough political opposition to defeat the Federalist Constitution, the
Republicans gained enough political support throughout the 1790s to seriously
challenge the Federalists. This second series of public debates begins during the
summer of 1798 with the pro-war posturing of President John Adams and his
beleaguered Federalist administration. Two years before, Adams had defeated his
ideological rival Thomas Jefferson in the presidential election by the narrowest of
margins (only three electoral votes), and he had since been hindered at every turn by
the Jeffersonian Republicans (henceforth just Republicans), who constituted a slight
majority in the Congress. But the Administration's public favor began to climb in
April of 1798, thanks to a sudden deterioration of Franco-American relations.

Indeed, Adams and America were close to war with France.\textsuperscript{13}

The United States' attitude toward France had always been contradictory and complex. France had been a traditional enemy of Britain and its colonies, and the French had fought against British colonialists on several occasions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, France sided with the colonists in their struggle for independence against the British, contributing money, material, and officers to the war effort. They became the first nation to recognize the newly created United States after the Revolutionary War. But if some Americans felt a fraternal bond with the French people, others were soon horrified with the bloody excesses of the French Revolution of 1789. For socially conservative Federalists, the French Revolution symbolized the inevitable conclusion of too much democracy and liberty. If democratic societies and newspapers could incite bloody revolution in France, why not America? By the mid 1790s, political party affiliation was a good indicator about how one felt concerning France. Federalists mistrusted the French Directory, eying with suspicion France's imperial aspirations on the Continent and French supporters—"Jacobins"—in the United States. Republicans, on the other hand, sympathized with the egalitarian and democratic ideals of France, considering it America's first friend and ally. But in the spring and summer of 1798, France was acting more the enemy than the ally, stopping American ships and confiscating

cargo. In their own partisan newspapers, Federalists accused the Republicans of being Jacobin sympathizers and, in general, managed to whip the country into an anti-French war frenzy. The Federalist President John Adams, riding the tide of anti-French sentiment, was popular for the first time.

Capitalizing on the nationalist passions they helped to stir up, the Federalists used the war crisis to enact four domestic laws, collectively known as the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, that curtailed liberties of immigrants, and freedom of speech and the press. One law, the Naturalization Act, raised the term of probationary residence for immigrants from five to fourteen years. Another law, the Sedition Act, was aimed at opposition newspaper printers and proscribed heavy fines and/or imprisonment for writing, speaking, or publishing anything false or malicious (libels) against the government. Federalist attacks on Republican newspaper printers and editors reveal the nationalist and conspiratorial tone of the period. "What a cast of characters." exclaimed one Federalist newspaper about Republican editors. "A farrago of pure, genuine jacobinial democratical spirits" (qtd. in Miller 94). Federalist legislators saw in the French crisis an opportunity to remove the Republican opposition by silencing Republican presses. Moreover, they hoped to weaken the Republican power base in newly arrived immigrant populations, who found little in the aristocratic social order espoused by the Federalists to attract their political allegiance. Thus, the Alien and Sedition Acts register deeper tensions in American politics and society, being only incidently connected with Anti-French sentiment.
Because it revolves around the notion of who gets to voice their opinions in the public sphere, whether through public speech or publishing printed material, the Sedition Act is another significant intersection of politics and rhetoric. Historian Richard Buel points out that in the controversy over the Sedition Act of 1798, "the basic ideological issues that had separated the Federalists and the Republicans for a decade again became plain" (243). In other words, the debates over the Sedition Act reintroduced those ideological issues that the Federalists and Antifederalists had argued about in the late 1780s. Basically, the Sedition Act was an attempt to control public opinion—a concept that the Federalists conceded in theory but were afraid to permit in practice. After all, republican theory held that, in a true republic, public opinion would be uniform, guided by a concern with the common good, and voiced by those most qualified to judge in public matters. In ancient Athens, demagogues in the forum signalled the possibility of faction. In eighteenth-century America, the first sign of faction and political decay were, at least in the Federalists’ eyes, libels in the press. The Sedition Act was specifically designed to silence the opposition of periodicals such as Benjamin Blanche’s pro-Jeffersonian *American Aurora*, which kept pressure on the Federalist administration with a steady stream of public (and personal) criticism. Thus, the Federalists were attempting to preserve an ideal of public discourse and the proper type of statesman, supported by traditional systems of political deference, paternalism, and classical education.

Arguments over the constitutionality of the Sedition Act illustrate that what was ultimately at stake were conceptions of public truth and the *res publica*. 

131
Fashioned by privilege, property, and classical education, the Federalists subscribed to an ideal of one public truth, capable of being discovered only by rational and independent men. Any competing public voices were false, at best merely opinion and at worst slanderous and harmful to the public order. One Federalist, Judge Addison of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, maintained that "truth has but one side, and listening to error or falsehood is indeed a strange way to discover truth." Furthermore, he wrote that "all truths are not useful or proper for publication: therefore all truths are not to be written, printed or published." 14 Another Federalist, Samuel Dana, asked "How . . . could the rights of the people require a liberty to utter falsehood? How could it be right to utter wrong?" (qtd. in Buel 252). Summarizing the need for the Sedition law to counter the subversive effects of opinion, the Federalist James Bayard argued that

This Government . . . depends for its existence upon the good will of the people. That good will is maintained by their good opinion. But, how is that good opinion to be preserved, if wicked and unprincipled men, men of inordinate and desperate ambition, are allowed to state facts to the people which are not true, which they know at the time to be false, and which are stated with the criminal intention of bringing the Government into disrepute among the people? This was falsely and deceitfully stealing public opinion: it was a felony of the worst and most dangerous nature. (254)

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14 Addison's quote is found in Greenleaf's New Daily Advertiser. Feb. 21. 1799.
As it had been in the Constitutional debates, rationality and public discourse are aligned, and those voices outside of this alignment are not politically legitimate. The distinction between public truth and falsehood is absolute, and falsehood is seen as a dangerous device that could ruin the republic in the hands of unscrupulous demagogues. For Bayard, public truth is self-evident, and public opinion naturally tends to support this truth. Even "wicked and unprincipled men" know the difference between true and false public opinion. Finally, Bayard uses the Federalist rhetorical strategy of raising the specter of demagogy to combat the Republican opposition by invoking fears of political anarchy.

Republicans, on the other hand, held that the common welfare of the republic rested on the presence and free circulation of many public voices and opinions. Of course, this contractual position provided them with an alternative model of the individual and the state to legitimize their own political opposition and from which to critique the Federalist party.15 Discursively honed in the debates over the Sedition Acts, the Republican position was based on an emergent ideal of public speech. According to historian Isaac Kramnick, for republicans "opinions and conscience were sacred forms of individual property, as crucial to one's sense of self as material possessions were" (Godless 103). In a representative government marked by multiple opinions, there could never be a single standard of public truth capable of being determined by single individuals. Nor could there be an ideal of

15 Before the eighteenth-century, there were few historical precedents in the West for a legitimate political opposition. In monarchies, all sovereignty flowed from the crown. Republics, as we have seen, subsumed the interests of political opposition (factions) to the public good.
eloquence that voices only one public truth. Such arbitrary power, characteristic of
monarchs and despots, was dangerous and destructive to the liberties of the common
people who, by definition, were the source of political authority. For example, in
political and religious inquiry, Jefferson believed that only reason, persuasion, and
free inquiry, not arbitrary governmental coercion, could discover and advance public
truth. While Republicans still believed that some form of public truth consonant
with the *vox populi* would prevail in the end, the fact that they included the *vox
populi* at all was a significant departure from the ideal of the Federalist statesman-
orator speaking for the interests of those below him in the social order. Republicans
saw the free circulation of opinion as the means of preserving the liberties of the
people. To curtail opinion was to restrict liberty. Albert Gallatin, a Republican
leader in Congress, recognized in the Sedition law the dangers of attempting to
regulate not only fact but also political opinion. For an example he pointed to
arguments about whether the United States should establish a navy. While President
Adams had recommended the establishment of the navy, might not "persons writing

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16 This liberalist ideal of self-determining individuals freely communicating in a public
sphere has been very influential on the subsequent writing of American history. In his essay
"What is Enlightenment? Some American Answers." literary historian Robert Ferguson
points out that the problem with the liberalist stance is the tendency of historians to equate
the philosophy of the Enlightenment with political practice. These liberalist histories take
Republican arguments for the "the primacy of reason, the reliability of human
understanding, the value of individual freedom, trust in method, faith in education. [and]
belief in progress" at face value, without interrogating the ideological dimensions of these
Enlightenment tenets (368). The result is a narrative of inevitable emancipation that effaces
the social tensions present in American history. For a very different perspective on the
Enlightenment, compare liberalist historicism with the European Frankfort School (and its
intellectual successors, Foucault and Habermas), which locates in the Enlightenment the
origins of institutional means of repression through "the reign of instrumental reason" and
"the domination of scientific technologies" (369).
and speaking against this system, which they ought to do, if they believe the system
inimical to the United States . . . be charged with bringing the Congress and
President into contempt?" (qtd. in Buel 251-52). For Gallatain, all citizens were
entitled to hold and voice public opinions.

Republicans maintained that representative governments are founded on the
"good sense" of the people. In other words, they posited a different sensus
communis for the new American republic than that of the Federalists. The public
speech of both citizens and representatives would operate differently in the
Republican polis than it would in the Federalist republic. It would be evaluated as
"persuasive" or "effective" according to different criteria. While the assumption
that the "good sense" of the people would decide the truth of the matter is itself a
product of ideology, it did locate public truth in a larger section of the population
than Federalists had allowed. Thus, ideals of political discourse were changing to
encompass newly politicized segments of the male population. What was the harm,
asked Republicans, if erroneous opinions circulated in the public sphere? "In vain
might [a republic] be assailed by calumny or invaded by faction." argued one
Republican. "criticism would only tend to exhibit more conspicuously its virtues,
and calumny by being reverberated, to lessen the force and influence of its enemies"
(255). A main theme of Jefferson's 1801 "First Inaugural Address" was the role of
public opinion in deliberative discourse: "If there be any among us who would wish
to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed
as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where
reason is left free to combat it" (493). Similarly, Thomas Cooper argued that opinions should be allowed to circulate, even those opposed to the general good, because "the mass of talents, of knowledge, of and of respectability will, in every country, from interest as well as principle, be on the side of good order and morality. There can be few who, from ignorance or design, will be tempted publicly to support opinions inimical to the general will" (257). Thus, the liberal circulation of public opinion is a self-regulating mechanism, constrained by good sense and the general will. But the fact that it regulates itself at all is a significant departure from the Federalist model of public speech, which allows only those truths consonant with Federalist political principles to be voiced by eloquent Ciceronian orators.  

Contentious debates over political representation, the character of the representative, and the role of opinion in public affairs, while first articulated in the mutually constituting discourses of rhetoric and politics over two hundred years ago, are still at the heart of American politics today. On the night of the 1996 presidential election, the NBC television network conducted an exit poll of voters. This poll revealed that over sixty percent of those who voted for Bob Dole based their decision on his "character," while over sixty percent of those voted for Bill 

17 Here Jefferson and Cooper echo the contractual logic of Scottish Enlightenment political economists such as Adam Smith, who maintained the absolute inviolability of self and property rights as necessary preconditions for a free market economy. But Smith's economic model, like the Republican model of public deliberation, would be guided by an "invisible hand." Similarly, Jefferson and other Republicans believed that the value of truth was determined in the marketplace of public opinion and led by the "invisible hand" of reason and the general will. For more on this point see Wood, "The Democratization of Mind in the American Revolution" (82-84).  

136
Clinton did so because they felt that he could best represent their "interests." Two types of representation, two contemporary ideals of the orator perfectus. While many Americans may no doubt consider this distinction to be false in actual practice, the significant fact is that, through media representations, one candidate was able to effectively manipulate a powerful myth of American political identity and persuade voters that he was the most qualified candidate. As this example shows, the ideals of virtual and real representation are still central to the political lives of Americans.

For Madison and many others during the period, the tensions produced by the simultaneously contractual and communitarian impulses in the economy, society, and politics were synthesized into uneasy compromises, resulting in complex and often conflicting views about the nature of representative government and the qualifications of the representative. Perhaps the most famous of these uneasy compromises between contractual and communitarian tensions was proposed by Madison, himself a deeply conflicted individual, in the 1780s and 90s. In Federalist No. 10, Madison argues that "there are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes, the other, by controlling its effects" (123). Classical republican theory, by positing a homogenous population devoted to the common good, pursued the first method by seeking to remove the causes of faction. But Madison, perhaps the most politically astute man of his generation, increasingly realized that removing the causes of faction was both destructive to liberty and, given the "fallible" nature of individuals, impossible (123). Of course, his famous
solution to this problem was to propose a neutral governmental structure that would act as an umpire and balance the competing interests--or factions--of society. "Since the causes of faction cannot be removed," he argued, then government must seek "the means of controlling its effects" (125). Conflicting voices and interests would balance one another. Thus, Madisonian liberalism constructs a self-regulating mechanism or a governmental machine that pits potentially destructive factions against each other. In the next chapter, I will examine another mechanistic response to the problem of how to channel and control a vox populi that was politicized by the Whig discourse of liberty and solidified into a legitimate opposition in the 1790s. Like Madisonian liberalism, this mechanistic response sought to control the effects of faction. Unlike Madisonian liberalism, the goal of this response was not to balance competing social and political interests but to use institutions to reconstitute citizens into self-disciplining subjects who would subsume their own interests to those of the state. And, as we shall see, the author of this system would find in discourses of rhetoric--especially in the associationism and faculty psychology of Scottish "Common Sense" rhetoric and philosophy--the rationales and models on which to base his system.
In 1786, the Philadelphia doctor and Patriot Benjamin Rush wrote, "I consider it possible to convert men into republican machines. This must be done, if we expect them to perform their parts properly, in the great machine of the government of the state" (Education 10). By imagining not only the state but also the individual as a machine, Rush helped to introduce a new ideal of citizenship and government into American political discourse. Just what is Benjamin Rush's "republican machine"? To what extent is this mechanistic metaphor a departure from other previous models of citizenship and government in early America? What social, political, and cultural assumptions does it reflect? And what role does language play in Rush's mechanistic metaphor of the relationship between the individual and the state? For Rush, the "republican machine" is a response to the same social and political anxieties that the Federalists and Republicans felt about how to regulate the "passions" of a free people. Federalists, Antifederalists, and Republicans had each looked to the rhetorical political ideals of eloquence and the
orator perfectus conveyed in civic humanist discourse in order to fashion public and political identities for themselves. Rush was also influenced by civic humanism, but his response to the changes occurring in the politics and culture differs from that of the leaders of the revolutionary generation. Or, to be more precise, while his Rush shared with Federalists the goal of tempering and controlling the political passions of the people, his means were different. Indeed, his Enlightenment training as a scientist and his exposure to Scottish "Common Sense" realism introduced him to a new system by which the political passions of the people could be managed.

In the last chapter, I illustrated how the social and political divisions beneath the rhetoric of consensus that characterizes the Federalist Papers and the Constitution reveal a crisis of authority in post-Revolutionary America that, in many ways, revolved around competing ideals of public speech, the sensus communis, and the orator perfectus. Rush's "republican machine"—and his entire system of moral and social reform—is a similar reaction to what Federalists perceived to be a crisis of authority in ideologies and institutions. In the wake of the social and ideological transformations occurring in the Revolutionary period, Rush advances an ideal of citizenship and government that would ground order and authority in the "self-evident" truths of Christianity, republicanism, and Enlightenment science. And, as the Federalists and Antifederalists had done in their debates over the Constitution, Rush appropriates rationales and ideals from different discourses of rhetoric. But Rush's vision of government and the individual is more comprehensive in scope than either the Federalists' or Antifederalists' had been. Indeed, Rush envisioned nothing
less than an entire restructuring of society. In response to the problem of how to
give citizens political voices in theory but to limit them in practice, he rationalizes
discourses of rhetoric into categories of classification and, ultimately, social control.
The "republican machine" is an important component of this project, and references
to this ideal and to the uses of language circulate throughout Rush's writings on
education, medicine, science, morality, and social reform. Accordingly, I examine
these writings to recover the contexts in which he thought about language and
authority.

By examining the writings of Benjamin Rush as a register of deeper
transformations in attitudes towards language, this chapter is as much an argument
for a particular historiographical perspective and a new definition of rhetoric as it is
for a body of historical content. A study of Benjamin Rush and republican machines
seems to be far removed from the history of neoclassical rhetoric in eighteenth-
century America. But this sense of dissociation is largely due to how historians of
rhetoric have traditionally defined their field of study. As we saw in chapter one,
historians do know a good deal about the discourses of rhetoric that were circulating
simultaneously in eighteenth-century America. But more often than not, historians
tend to isolate and trace only one or two of the dominant rhetorics in eighteenth-
century Anglo-American world.¹ The problem with this approach is that historians

¹ I argued in chapter one that this tendency to isolate rhetorics from context marks much
of the historiography of rhetoric over the past few decades. Until recently, historians of
rhetoric have typically focused on the ways that rhetoric, as a system of theory and precept,
is located in a continuous line of texts stretching from Aristotle to Kenneth Burke. Although
these histories vary in focus, a primary assumption is that a few key texts are the locus of
historical continuity and meaning.
run the risk of eliding the cultural uses of rhetoric, the ways that rhetorical ideas are present in seemingly non-rhetorical texts and vice versa. They overlook the complex ways that individuals encountered, invented, and utilized coexisting—and often competing—assumptions about language to fashion identities at specific historical moments. Moreover, the ideological frames through which individuals and communities understand discourses of rhetoric remain secondary to the primary texts that convey these discourses of rhetoric. In this chapter, Benjamin Rush is not so much a biographical subject as a witness to and register of the transformations occurring in a host of related fields. Thus, his evangelical beliefs, his scientific training in Edinburgh, his enthusiasm for chemistry, his participation in the Constitutional ratification debates, his work with the mentally ill, and his aversion to public punishment all register his attitudes towards language and authority in the new American republic.²

The formation of individuals’ rhetorical competencies—the ways that agents learn to discourse competently and to negotiate social reality and the subject positions they inhabit—has largely fallen outside the scope of traditional histories of rhetoric precisely because asking how discourses of rhetoric function for individuals in specific communities presupposes a different set of assumptions than those on which the history of rhetoric as a formal academic discipline traditionally rest. As a cultural discourse, a rhetoric can only “make sense” through the interpretive frames

² In this perspective I have been influenced by Jay Fliegelman’s study of Thomas Jefferson within what he describes as the “lost world” of “eighteenth-century theories and practices of rhetoric . . . that prescribed the codes and character of public speaking in England and America” (1).
that history provides the individual (and, I should add, the historian). This is another way of saying something that most historians of rhetoric—who are sensitive to the rhetoric of history—already know: that individual rhetorical competencies and enactments are always contingent on the historical moment. In addition, reception plays a crucial role in the formation of rhetorical competencies. Rhetorical discourses must be encountered and enacted by subjects, who belong to multiple communities, in order to mean anything. The history of rhetoric is only beginning to examine the various ways that discourses of rhetoric conjoin, converge, collide, echo, and resist each other. Acknowledging the postmodern critique of the rational subject, itself a product of the Enlightenment, this chapter attempts a cultural case study in the history of rhetoric—a sociology of rhetoric, in effect, that "characterizes" how one individual encountered and received rhetorics at specific cultural moments.

Benjamin Rush characterizes many of the interactions and uses of rhetoric in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America. Like most of the revolutionary leadership, he studied neoclassical and stylistic rhetorics at a colonial college (in his case, the College of New Jersey). Because he was not from the gentry class, he was acutely aware of the performative and social uses of rhetoric, particularly the rhetorics of belles lettres and elocution that were becoming increasingly popular in latter eighteenth-century America. He saw how gentility and civility offered opportunities for social advancement, and like many in the emergent middling classes he recognized that the modes and manners of one's speech were important.
markers of social status. In his everyday life he was exposed to powerful examples of religious and political oratory at a time when the figure of the orator, whether the evangelical preacher or the statesman, carried a great deal of social authority. In all of these respects, he was very much a product of his environment. What separates him from many of his generation is that, because of his scientific training and because of his radical republican vision for the United States, Rush developed a formal interest in the nature and uses of language. Rush’s essays and lectures reveal a preoccupation with the power of rhetoric, which he understood as the uses of language in general. In true Enlightenment fashion, he rejects the traditional triadic classification of rhetoric into deliberative, judicial, and epideictic in favor of a comprehensive and philosophically-based system of communication. Thus, in the writings of Rush we begin to see how the rationales for a "New Rhetoric" articulated in texts such as Thomas Reid’s *An Inquiry Into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) and George Campbell’s *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) could be applied to social and political problems. Moreover, his scientific understanding of the effects of language on the body, conveyed to a generation of young doctors and scientists in his popular medical lectures, helped to lay a foundation for a science of elocution in the nineteenth century. In short, Rush is interested in the effects of language on the mind and the role of institutions in controlling language. He fashions a social identity based on the Ciceronian ideal of the *vita activa*, but filtered through his political, social, and religious experiences. The question is, why and how did he do so?
Rush is one of those secondary figures in history who are usually remembered for their associations with greater individuals. Yet the number of his accomplishments indicates not only his industry but the degree to which he managed to impose his nationalist vision on the new republic. Benjamin Rush was born in 1745, in Byberry, Pennsylvania, a small, Quaker farming community outside of Philadelphia. He attended Princeton (then the College of New Jersey), where he earned his degree in 1760. After a five-year medical apprenticeship, he travelled to Edinburgh to study chemistry for two years. Returning to Philadelphia in 1769, he was quickly swept up in revolutionary politics of the 1770s. It was Rush who, excited by the thought of national independence, urged Thomas Paine to write Common Sense. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the first Surgeon General of the Army. He held the Professorship of Chemistry at the College of Pennsylvania, the first Chair of its kind in America, and as a medical teacher and practitioner his work with the transmission of diseases and mental illness is still recognized as important today.³ He wrote many influential essays on moral and social reform in the 1780s and 90s. He worked for the abolition of slavery, the humane treatment of prisoners and the mentally ill, and he helped establish the moral rationales for an American temperance movement that would flourish in the

³ Ironically, he is best remembered in the history of medicine as a staunch advocate of leeching and blood-letting, recommending as much as 100 ounces be removed in severe cases.
nineteenth and early twentieth century. If historians of rhetoric know Benjamin Rush at all, it is primarily from footnotes, but he plays a significant, if minor, role in the history eighteenth-century rhetoric. By his own account, while studying medicine in Scotland in 1767, Rush persuaded a reluctant Mrs. Witherspoon to withdraw her objections and allow her husband, John Witherspoon, to accept the Presidency of the College of New Jersey, where he would later deliver his Lectures on Eloquence (Autobiography 50). More importantly, Benjamin Rush was the father of James Rush, whose Philosophy of the Human Voice, published in 1827, established an important scientific basis for both elocution and speech pathology in the nineteenth century. The intellectual debt that James owed his father, particularly James’s interest in the physical aspects and effects of the voice on the listener, is

4 To the extent that it is possible to gage an individual’s influence by the circulation and popularity of his or her published writings, then Rush was one of the most influential individuals of his age. Throughout his life, Rush was one of the most prolific and well-published writer of the revolutionary generation. He generated a huge amount of material, some of which stayed in print well into the nineteenth century. Because he was a prominent among Philadelphia’s revolutionary leaders, Rush was able to get his essays into print very easily. Indeed, much of Rush’s social prominence probably had a great deal to do with his constant presence in the press. For example, he contributed at least nine articles on social issues such as abolition, temperance, and free schools to the Columbian Magazine, and he contributed as many on medical issues to the popular American Museum. The Bibliography of American Imprints to 1901, published in 1991 by the American Antiquarian Society, lists an astonishing 115 editions of at least 50 separate essays, pamphlets, tracts, course of lectures, orations, and eulogies by Rush, many of which were carried in periodicals first. His influential tract An Inquiry Into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind went through seventeen editions between 1805 and 1823, becoming a foundational work for the nineteenth-century American temperance movement. Rush’s medical theories and practices were also very influential during the period. Not only did he train a generation of doctors as a popular teacher at the University of Pennsylvania, but his medical and scientific essays and lectures were used as textbooks in other colleges as well. Finally, Rush, like many of the revolutionary leadership, was an obsessive letter-writer, and his regular correspondence with such revolutionary luminaries as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson fills two large volumes.
another important way that Benjamin Rush influenced the direction of nineteenth-century rhetoric.

But for all his social activism, Rush was not a radical democrat like Thomas Paine. While often hailed as a voice for liberty by his twentieth-century biographers, his moral and social reforms all revolve around the Federalist question of how to channel and control the political passions of the people, specifically, those newly-politicized social interests that had hitherto been excluded from the political process. Like many groups across the political spectrum in post-Revolutionary America, Rush was influenced by both the communitarian (republican) and the contractual (Whig) theories of government that the revolutionaries had used to justify their cause in the 1770s. Moreover, his evangelical education had exposed Rush to millennial ideas about America’s role as the new Zion in Christian history. As the events of the 1770s and 80s unfolded, Rush, like many Federalists, increasingly reacted against what he perceived to be democratic anarchy on the part of the people, but he also saw in the revolution a sign of Christ’s coming and an opportunity to hasten the process. He subsequently advanced a program of social and moral reform aimed at containing the democratic (and what he perceived were atheistic) tendencies of newly-politicized segments of the population.

As a whole, Rush’s reforms are based on submission to religious and political authority, a conviction rooted in his Calvinist religion and his Federalist political sympathies. As early as 1780, Rush was convinced that the success or failure of the American Revolution rested on the ability of government to
(re)constitute and regulate citizens. In order to fill the post-revolutionary absence of arbitrary authority exercised by monarchies. Rush’s writings construct a comprehensive system for transforming free individuals whose claims to political entitlement rested on a contractual theory of government into governable subjects whose actions would be internally directed by previously external forms of authority. In Rush’s ideal vision of the individual and the state, subjects would become mechanisms regulated by the internalized truths of republicanism and the Christianity. Thus, his vision was an attempt to refashion the republican sensus communis that the Federalists had so strongly endorsed in the 1770s and 1780s. I want to argue that Rush’s system was a complex product of three cultural influences: his primary and college education during the Great Awakening, his encounters with Enlightenment rationalism in as a student in Scotland, and his direct encounters with democratic radicalism in 1770s Philadelphia. The next three sections examine how each of these three contexts influenced Rush’s understanding of language, authority, and citizenship.

Benjamin Rush was influenced at an early age by Great Awakening theology and preaching. Perry Miller, the historian of colonial religious life, has argued persuasively that political and social thought cannot be understood outside of religious modes of thought in early America. Bearing this thesis out, Rush’s experiences with republicanism and Enlightenment science are always contained within his evangelical world-view that he learned from his Great Awakening teachers. The Great Awakening was a major religious, social, and political
phenomenon that occurred in the 1730s and 40s. Theologically, the Great
Awakening represented a break with the traditional Presbyterian orthodoxy over
matters of church dogma. It was manifest in a wave of Calvinist religious
enthusiasm, led by evangelical preachers (the "New Lights"), that swept through
congregations and caught the complacent Presbyterian establishment (the "Old
Lights") unaware. Instead of the rational, learned, and orderly sermons of the
orthodox clergy (that were based on the Ramist system of rhetoric), Great
Awakening preachers used evangelicism and revivalism to convert large numbers of
people. In many ways, Great Awakening preaching constituted a new mode of
rhetorical address that was responding to (and creating) a new rhetorical situation.
This is certainly how Old and New Light ministers at the time perceived the events
and issues surrounding the Great Awakening. Whereas orthodox ministers
emphasized the authority of reason, classical languages, Ramist dialectical order,
and learned exegesis in their forms of rhetorical address. the revivalists emphasized
revelation, oratory, emotional response, and unmediated access to the Word of God.
For New Light preachers, conversion was a sudden and intense experience.
Through commanding words, strong emotional appeals, and dramatic gestures, the
preacher brought the flock to the point of conversion. Emphasizing the evangelical
power of the Word, the revivalist Samuel Stoddard once stated that "the Word is as
a hammer and we should use it to break the Rocky Hearts of men" (qtd. in Cowing
43). In 1739 and 1740, the immensely popular preaching tours of the English
revivalist George Whitefield, who Rush called one of the "largest and brightest
orbs" in the eighteenth-century church, consolidated the evangelical movement into a Great Awakening of religion (*Autobiography* 56). The quarrel over theology and the proper modes of rhetorical address occasioned by Whitefield's tours resulted in the Great Schism of the Synod of Philadelphia in 1739, an event that formalized the New Light opposition, gave credence to the aims of the Awakening, and, most significantly for Rush, influenced the nature and aims of education in colonial America.

Three characteristics of the Great Awakening are particularly important as background to Rush's understanding of language, citizenship, and authority: its medium and mode of rhetorical address, its millennial dimensions, and its socio-political significance. In contrast to the learned Sunday audiences who sat in the fashionable congregations of Boston, Philadelphia, and other urban centers, the revivalists addressed the common rhetorical *mentalité* of the pre-revolutionary, agrarian colonists. The revivalist Samuel Finley once stated that he spoke and wrote not for "the learn'd but the Common People" (vi). Through itinerant preaching, Great Awakening revivalists utilized the power of the spoken word in a heavily oral culture. In the eyes of the educated establishment, the revival audiences seemed to be an ignorant and unruly crowd. One Anglican minister noted that among Great Awakening converts in the Carolina back-country "few or no Books are able to be found . . . for these People despise Knowledge, and instead of honouring a Learned Person, or anyone of Wit or Knowledge, be it in the Arts. Sciences, or Languages, they despise and Ill treat them" (qtd. in Hooker 52). Itinerant preaching,
spontaneous oral address, colloquial diction, and an aversion to an overly-formal biblical hermeneutics all define the rhetorical address the Great Awakening preachers. Benjamin Franklin noted that the rhetorical power of revivalist preaching was due to its effective delivery: "stationary" preachers merely read their sermons, but "itinerant Preachers" were able to practice their delivery and gestures, noting their effects night after night, and respond accordingly to the conditions of the performance (105). Rush, like many Anglo-Americans, was also greatly impressed by the power of the revivalist's oratory. According to Rush, Whitefield was the most "eloquent" preacher of the eighteenth century, exhibiting "every thing in his voice, countenance and action in preaching that can be conceived necessary to constitute perfect oratory" (Autobiography 57). Whitefield and other revivalists imbued Rush with the idea that moral regeneration (and social change) was possible, and that language was a powerful catalyst in this process.

Eighteenth-century elocutionists point to the successes of revivalists like John Wesley and George Whitefield as a justification for their own systems of delivery. Whitefield's preaching made quite an impression on the eighteenth-century educated world. In his Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, James Boswell notes that Whitefield "had a great effect on the passions" (20). Samuel Johnson, a staunch Anglican and Tory, counters Boswell's opinion in typical fashion: "He had the ordinary advantages of education, but he chose to pursue that oratory that was for the mob" (20). David Garrick, the famed actor of the eighteenth-century English stage, once noted that Whitefield could convulse an audience merely by pronouncing the word "mesopotamia," and the success of Whitefield's revival tours in America suggests that his eloquence was effective with less exotic words as well (Cowing 59). In his Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin records his impressions of Whitefield's spontaneous preaching in terms that anticipate the elocutionary movement: "every Accent, every Emphasis, every Modulation of Voice, was so perfectly well turn'd and well plac'd, that without being interested in the Subject, one could not help being pleas'd with the Discourse, a Pleasure of much the same kind with that receiv'd from an excellent Piece of Musick" (105). Whitefield's oratory persuades Franklin to empty his pockets and contribute money to Whitefield, even though Franklin was initially "resolved he should get nothing" (103). Franklin estimated that one revival in Philadelphia drew as many as 30,000 people.

151
Historians of the period often point to the "democratic" character of the Great Awakening in contrast to the traditional or "monarchical" order and authority presupposed by Anglican Church and, to a lesser extent, New England Puritanism. (Wood *Radicalism* 17-19). To an extent, the tension between types of public address adopted by the New Light evangelicals and by the Old Light ministers parallels that between the Federalist orator and the Antifederalist representative that we surveyed in chapter three. Similar to the ideal of the Federalist orator, the Old Light minister was understood to decide on important matters for the religious community; the minister was the arbitrating authority who decided in matters of religious dogma and, often, in town politics as well. Furthermore, social station and education invested the Old Light minister's ethos and eloquence with a great deal of power. In contrast, the New Light evangelical, like the Antifederalist "man of the people," tried to speak the language of the audiences, and they often used familiar religious themes, subjects from rural life, colloquialisms, and dialect in their sermons. Rather than preach polite sermons or dry scriptural exegesis, they directly addressed revival audiences and, in doing so, broke down many of the social barriers that bolstered the authority of the traditional town preacher.

The sheer popularity and successes of the Great Awakening suggested to New Light preachers that their labors were divinely ordained. Based on this assumption, they reasoned that Christ's Second Coming and His thousand-year reign of peace could not be far away. Of course, the idea that the colonies were exceptional, that they were a divinely-ordained "City on the Hill," went back to the
early Puritans. But in the early 1700s there was still a widespread feeling that the colonists were God’s Chosen People, and that He would erect his Kingdom in America. The idea of the Christian Revolution of the Saints that would herald a new Zion was adopted by New Light evangelists (14). As the New Light ministry became increasingly involved in revolutionary politics, they began to emphasize national independence as a prelude to the Second Coming. This complex of millennial religion and political ideas would provide Benjamin Rush, along with a generation of ministers and statesmen, a convenient platform on which to build an ideology of nationalism during and after the Revolutionary Crisis. Indeed, as historian Donald D’Elia argues, Rush "was to conceive of the greatest event of his life, the American Revolution, as fulfilling in his dream of the Christian Republic the millennial expectation of the new Zion" (14).

There are also unmistakable social and political reasons for the successes of the New Light preachers. Revival audiences were largely from the rural lower classes. They were often disaffected with the Old Light orthodoxy, and looking for an alternative to traditional modes of authority. According to Charles Woodmason, a well-educated Anglican minister, the revivalists were nothing but "roving Teachers that stir up the minds of the People against the Establish’d Church, and her Ministers--and make the Situation of any Gentleman extremely uneasy, vexatious, and disagreeable" (qtd. in Hooker 42). Woodmason registers Great Awakening revivalism as a form of social agitation, a challenge to the social hegemony of the genteel class. This blurring of religion, social unrest, and politics is not surprising
in a society where government and church mutually reinforced social structure and
authority. By claiming authority through divine revelation rather than through a
complex hermeneutic of scriptural interpretation, adherents of New Light
presbyterianism declared for themselves and their followers a form of group
religious entitlement—a corporate right to profess a certain creed—that was amenable
to Whig arguments for political liberty (Cowing 201-215). When Rush eulogized
his New Light teacher Gilbert Tennent in 1764, he celebrated his teacher’s political
principles as much as his learning and pedagogy. "The Liberties and Constitution of
his Country," wrote Rush, "he ever held in highest Veneration; and always
endeavored to promote a vigorous defense of them, when the Invasions of the
Enemies of Britain made it necessary" (Eulogy x).

The Great Awakening’s influence on Rush’s education was immediate and
profound. In 1754, Rush began his education under the tutelage of Gilbert Tennent

\* In his article "Religion, Communication, and the Ideological Origins of the American
Revolution," Harry Stout demonstrates the social importance of rhetoric during the Great
Awakening. In addition, he presents a useful model for a social history of rhetoric. Stout
argues that the egalitarian and emotional rhetoric of the revivals provided both the language
and the model speech situation in which "republican letters could be conveyed to an
unlettered audience," warranting his assertion with the assumption that "any revolution in
world-view requires a new rhetoric" (521). In seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century
New England, argues Stout, Puritan (pre-evangelical) rhetorical situations were defined by
the strong social authority figure of the minister; traditional (pre-revolutionary) notions of
social order and subordination; and an intimate, face-to-face community where speaker and
audience are continually reminded of their personal space and identity (526). Through this
arrangement, patterns of social interaction and patterns of communication mutually reinforce
one another. The Great Awakening preachers, however, "assaulted the old preaching style"
of the orthodox ministry (527). George Whitefield's evangelical speaking tours defined "an
innovative style of communications that reconfigured the social context in which public
address took place" (520). The size and the heterogeneity of the revival audiences were
unprecedented in colonial America, and this new speech situation was eventually transferred
from religious to political contexts.

154
and Samuel Finley (Rush's uncle) at the West Nottingham Academy. Tennent and Finley, two leading New Light evangelists, had both labored beside Whitefield to spread the Word of God in New England and the Middle Colonies. In the mid 1740s, Tennent and Finley founded the West Nottingham Academy and the College of New Jersey to train a new generation of evangelical ministers and professional gentlemen. As a student of his uncle at Nottingham, Rush eagerly attended to the religious-political example set by his teachers. Through the strong influence of his uncle, Rush became convinced of "the most striking and intelligible evidences of the truth of the Christian Religion" (Autobiography 31). Moreover, Rush began to receive a formal rhetorical education. Finley taught Latin and Greek (prerequisites to college study), but he also emphasized "the English language, and taught the reading, writing, and speaking of it with great care and success" (31). He "frequently exercised his pupils in delivering and receiving letters." extending "his attention to the forms, to the composition, folding, and direction of letters" (31). Finally, in what was an unconventional practice for the day, Finley emphasized "conversation" as a "mode of instruction" (30). Reflecting on this practice in his Autobiography. Rush surmises that "Conversation . . . is education" and contends that it is an essential social prerequisite (30).

Rush was well prepared for his college admissions exam, on which he performed so well that he was admitted to the College of New Jersey as an advanced junior in the spring of 1758. In August of that year, the board of trustees elected the New Light minister Samuel Davies as the fourth president of the College of New
Jersey. For Rush, the timing of Davies's election was fortuitous. Davies had a "reputation for classical literature, philosophy, and oratory." and he immediately noticed in Rush "some talents for poetry, composition, and public speaking, to each of which he was very partial" (36-37). Furthermore, Rush credits Davies over four decades later for inspiring in him a "love of knowledge," instilled through the practice of keeping a "Liber Selectorum," or commonplace book. Through this practice, Rush recorded

such passages in the Classicks as struck me most forcibly in reading them. By recording these passages, I was led afterwards to record facts and opinions. To this I owe perhaps in part the frequent use I have made of pen and ink . . . This method of reading I know is condemned by some people, and memorandum books have been called by them the destruction of memories, but I have not observed this to be the case in myself. . .

Recording facts has the usual effects of repetition. Instead of producing an oblivion of them, it imprints them more deeply on memory. (36)

Rush notes in his Autobiography that Davies "introduced several new subjects of instruction into the College." but he mostly writes about his rhetorical education and the importance of keeping a commonplace book. The focus on the rhetorical practice of keeping a commonplace book is significant for Rush. As I will later show, the last two sentences of this passage reveal the rationale that Rush used to justify his entire system of moral and social reform. By targeting the body with repeated sensations of pleasure and pain, Rush's reforms will seek to produce proper
thoughts and actions. It is interesting to note here how, among a host of other means, the commonplace book becomes for Rush a utilitarian instrument for channelling and controlling thoughts and passions. Not only rhetorical theory but also specific rhetorical practices contribute to and participate in the construction of Rush's system of reforms.

Together, these different modes of rhetorical instruction at Nottingham and New Jersey represent the different demands that society was placing on curricular rhetoric in the mid-eighteenth century. As a prospective college student (and a probable minister), Rush was required to learn the classical languages by reading texts such as the Gospels and Cicero's *de Oratore*. No less could be expected from an educated eighteenth-century gentleman. But, as Rush notes, the art of letter writing was also important, as was the art of conversation, in order to function in a polite and increasingly commercial society. Through these three rhetorical arts, according to Rush, Finley "inculcated at all times a regard to the common forms of good breeding" (31, my emphasis). Many historians of eighteenth-century education focus on the introduction of mathematics and the natural sciences into the college curriculum. By contrast, Rush focuses on his rhetorical education at Nottingham and New Jersey, almost to the exclusion of other subjects. That Rush, a renowned doctor and teacher of chemistry, largely ignores his scientific education suggests that the rhetorical arts--particularly the new arts of conversation, composition, and public

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7 For an example, see Francis Broderick's article "Pulpit, Physics, and Politics: The Curriculum of the College of New Jersey, 1746-1794."
speaking in English—loomed large in his memory. Why? I think that this question can best be answered by recovering the didactic purpose of his 1800 Autobiography: to instruct his children in the principles of republicanism and Christianity (and to write himself into the events of the American Revolution). It is also something of a social self-improvement manual. Rush felt that rhetoric, particularly those arts of rhetoric associated with "good breeding," were particularly important to his children, who, as I will show in my next chapter, had to construct different identities and negotiate a substantially different socio-cultural world than that of their father.

The culmination of Rush's experiences with the ideals of the Great Awakening, and the rhetorical event that most deeply impressed him about the duties of a Christian citizen, came from President Samuel Davies's valedictory sermon to the senior class in September 1760. Like Finley and Tennent, Samuel Davies was a powerful and charismatic New Light preacher. The sermon, Religion and Publick Spirit, was subsequently reprinted several times in the 1760s. In it Davies summarizes many of the themes that he had tried to instill in his students, and, in its blurring of evangelical religion and republican political sentiments, it exposed Rush to a new ideal of Christian citizenship and to the evangelical idea that not just individuals but also nations must be morally regenerated. Davies begins with the proposition that "great and good characters are often formed by imitation" (3). Great generals acquire martial skill by imitating "the Alexanders and Caesars of former Ages," while those aspiring to be great orators should "always keep in View.
a Homer, a Plato, a Demosthenes or a Cicero” (3). But famous as these men were, they were pagans and their eloquence is not suited to present times. What Christian models of self-fashioning were available to Rush and the other seniors who sat in Nassau Hall? "How," asked Davies "shall the more amiable, tho' less glaring and renowned Character of the good, the useful, and the publick-spirited Man. be formed?" (3). Notice that here Davies articulates a direct relation between the civic humanist orator perfectus, signified in his list of great orator, and the "new Christian man" that he is defining. The events of mid-century America called for an ideal of the Christian citizen-orator, founded on the republican and civic humanist model. Davies’s solution is to offer his students the biblical David as a model to imitate, but a David that has been republicanized for the mid-eighteenth century. Noting that David unites the two essential qualities of "religion and publick spirit." Davies proceeds to give an address on the importance of the republican spirit to the Christian citizen.

Above all, Davies exhorts the students to "imbibe and cherish a publick spirit. Serve your Generation. Live not for yourselves, but the Publick" (7). Thus, Davies’s Christianity is basically republican, and vice versa. The idea that evangelical religion and republican politics are inseparable profoundly influenced Rush. Throughout his sermon, Davies christianized the civic humanist ideal of the vita activa, which he calls the "Principles of Action" and defines as the "great Foundation of true Religion and social Virtue" (12). Without the "Principles of Action," individuals "can never arrive at the finished character of Good and Great
Men" (12). I traced in chapter two how the idea that individuals can only realize their full potential (nature) through public service is an important component on the mutually constitutive traditions of rhetoric and politics in the West. Davies adds an evangelical and millennial dimension to this ideal by telling his students that "a new Heart must be given you, and a new Spirit put within you," before they can serve the public and forge a "new creation" (12). By serving their generation, the Elect will reveal themselves, and only the Elect can effect a real Revolution, whether it be religious, social, or political. Finally, Davies's point that human nature is not fully realized until an individual lives his or her life according to the self-evident truths of the bible and republicanism reinforced in Rush the idea that authority resides outside both the individual and discourse. Rush will rigorously defend authoritative institutions such as church and government based on the assumption, at the core of both republicanism and evangelical christianity, that individuals are animated by the universal and self-evident truths on which these institutions are founded. "A Christian," Rush often stated, "cannot fail of being useful to the republic, for his religion teacheth him that no man 'liveth to himself'" (Plan 11).

It would be easy to note that Rush read Cicero and that his classmates and teachers recognized in him a talent for composition and speaking. But this historical gesture would miss the various discourses that framed his understanding of rhetoric, authority, and citizenship. In the example of his teachers, in his experiences with the psychological and social effects of evangelical oratory, and in his understanding of the role of "publick spirit" in the mid 1700s, Rush encountered a complex of
rhetorical rationales, ideals, and practices that cannot be separated from their religious, social, and political contexts. When he began to envision what type of citizen would be appropriate for the new republic in the 1780s, he naturally turned to his Great Awakening education for models. Experiences with evangelical oratory taught him the dramatic power of language to change the hearts and minds of not only individuals but whole audiences. But two elements were still missing from the mechanistic vision of society that Rush had constructed by 1790: a theory or, in the language of the period, "system," that would explain the effects of language on the body and mind, and a liminal crisis that would focus his ideas about language and authority on the problem of how to regulate the political passions of a free people.

After his graduation in September of 1760, Rush faced a choice of professions. Because of his good reputation as a public speaker, his friends and even President Davies recommended that he pursue law (Autobiography 36). But following the wishes of his old teacher and uncle, Samuel Finley, he decided to pursue medicine. In his Valedictory Address, President Davies had told Rush's class that medicine was a public profession (along with ministry and the law) that "was of some use to Mankind" (6). Rush subsequently spent five years as a medical apprentice to Dr. John Redman of Philadelphia. On Redman's recommendation, Rush sailed for Edinburgh in 1766 to study chemistry and medicine (a decision that was prompted by Rush's desire to fill the newly-proposed Chair of Chemistry at the College of Pennsylvania). In the latter eighteenth century, the University of
Edinburgh had a reputation as the premier medical school in the Western world. Rush studied under its internationally famous teachers, William Cullen and Joseph Black, who were also members of a wider philosophical and literary circle that included Adam Smith, David Hume, and Hugh Blair. From Cullen's lectures on the "Institutes of Medicine," Rush learned the necessity of "system" for the discovering, collecting, and organizing facts (D'Elia 22). Cullen's contribution to scientific methodology was his assumption that if empirical observation was not guided by a system, then the results of observation and experimentation were counter-productive. Facts in themselves did not contribute to scientific progress. Rather, the explanations for the facts provided the groundwork on which to advance scientific knowledge. Cullen continually warned his students that his system was not merely "a deduction of reasoning" (23). The scientist should always remain skeptical of systems: "I admit, therefore, and I plead, therefore, for the utility of system. but it is with a constant distrust of it as such, and that distrust, too, is always the greater in proportion as the system is more general" (22).

Rush, however, could not understand the skeptical and empirical qualities of Cullen's lectures, a failure largely due to his Great Awakening education. Rush had been taught to value both revelation and reason, but when the two came into conflict—as they did so much in the Enlightenment thought of the eighteenth century—revelation, or a fundamental belief in "the striking and intelligible evidences of the

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I owe much of my information in this section about the influence of William Cullen, Joseph Black, and David Hartley on Rush's thought to Donald D'Elia's excellent study, *Benjamin Rush: Philosopher of the American Revolution*. 162
truth of the Christian Religion." proved the more important (Autobiography 31).

Donald D'Elia nicely summarizes Rush's inability to understand and process the fundamentally different discourse of Enlightenment knowledge and truth that he encountered:

[Cullen and Black's] empiricism was really unintelligible to Rush at Edinburgh and later. Aside from the chemistry and practical medicine, Rush somehow derived from their instruction a doctrine of strict rationalism. The systems of Cullen in medicine answered all of Rush's questions as did the system of religion which the young evangelist had acquired from his other masters, Tennent, Finley, and Davies. . . . [Rush] was an a priori thinker, unlike Cullen and Black, who were trying to free themselves from the narrow rationalistic systems of the past. Rush could not be a good observer. he could not be a real empiricist, because his attitude towards the world was deeply theological. (23)

What Rush did come away with was an analogical and rationalistic tendency to look for primary causes, self-evident truths, and a system that would explain all areas of thought and action. In this respect, he was influenced by the positivist inclination of Enlightenment science: the belief that the state of human knowledge is progressively moving towards an absolute and complete understanding of nature and science. Both unable and unwilling to grasp the subtleties of his teachers' thought, Rush interprets their skepticism and cautious empiricism as a form of "strict rationalism."
Increasingly, he looked for and began to see one encompassing system that comprehended scientific theories of the body, evangelical religion, republicanism.

The specific "system" that provided the basis for Rush's broad social and moral program was "chemical philosophy." Besides a basic familiarity with the properties of elements, Rush derived from the lectures of Cullen and Black a scientific and quantifying mode of thought based on the actions of mixing, combining, and proportioning different elements (D’Elia 27). At the time, chemistry classified elements into two basic types—simple and complex—and progress in the field equalled recording the results of various combinations of elements. This metaphorical understanding of the interaction of elements (and ideas), simplistic as it was, became for Rush a paradigm with which he attempted to understand, classify, and control nature. Nor was this understanding limited to physical nature, since it also applied to the moral and social natures of individuals. In a letter to a friend in 1767, Rush wrote that chemistry "is not only a science of importance in itself, but serves as a key to a thousand other sources of knowledge" (Butterfield I 40). Rush readily equated this basic structure of chemistry with a Lockean account of the mind, which held that the process of cognition involved the formation of simple ideas and the combination of simple into complex ideas. Rush even saw in the principles of chemistry a key for domestic efficiency and order. In 1787, he delivered a series of lectures to the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia on the application of chemistry to cooking.
Another teacher who contributed to Rush's rationalistic mentality was John Gregory, a member of the Aberdeen circle that included Thomas Reid and George Campbell. Gregory introduced Rush to Scottish Common Sense philosophy, particularly the doctrine of mental faculties and the distinction between primary and secondary causes. From his Great Awakening teachers, Rush had learned that God was the primary cause in the universe. But this belief in primary causes was increasingly challenged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by a scientific (and secular) understanding of physical causation. By separating causation into primary (divine) and secondary (physical) causes, Rush was able to "synthesize his Great Awakening view of God as the primary cause of the physical world with the Enlightenment view of secondary, natural causes" (D'Elia 28). At heart, Rush's rationalist understanding of the world is as much a reaction to the skepticism of the Enlightenment as it is a product of his encounters with it. Whenever science or philosophy began to threaten his inherently theological understanding, he shied away from the system in order to preserve his beliefs. In addition, the moderate Presbyterianism of many of his teachers, not to mention the notorious atheism of Hume, caused the evangelical Rush to resist their systems. Even though he admired Cullen as a teacher of "system," Rush refused to pursue Cullen's ideas to

9 For a good discussion of the tensions between the moderate Edinburgh literati ministers and the conservative "popular" branch of the Scottish presbyterian Church, see Thomas Miller's "Introduction" to The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon. Witherspoon was a conservative, and the leader of the "popular" party, while Hugh Blair was a leader of the moderates. Rush wrote in his Autobiography that while attending the High Church in Edinburgh, he preferred the zealous and evangelical afternoon sermons of the Rev. Robert Walker over the polite and reasoned morning sermons of Hugh Blair (47).
their logical conclusions. For Rush, Cullen did not have the authority of a Great Awakening "prophet" like Finley or Davies. "If there is one thing wanting in Dr. Cullen to constitute his character a complete one," wrote Rush in his "Scottish Journal," it was "a regard to religion" (66).

Fortunately, Rush was to find a "system" that based a scientific understanding of the mind and the physical world on divine revelation in David Hartley's *Observations on Man*, a work originally published in 1749. "From this Book," wrote Rush, "I derived my system of physiology" (*Autobiography* 52). The importance of this work is summarized by Rush, who, in an 1811 letter to his friend Thomas Jefferson, eagerly asked "have you found leisure to look into Dr. Hartley's *Observations upon the Frame, Duties, and Expectations of Man* since your retirement to Monticello? I envy the age in which that book will be relished and believed, for it has unfortunately appeared a century or two before the world is prepared for it . . . Its illustrious author has established an indissoluble union between physiology, metaphysicks, and Christianity" (Butterfield II 1074-1075).

Rush first read Hartley's *Observations on Man* at Edinburgh in 1767. In its "indissoluble union between physiology, metaphysicks, and Christianity," Rush found a rational system able to comprehend Enlightenment science, republicanism, and divine revelation, a totalizing quality lacking in the more narrowly scientific systems of Cullen and Black. "The great object of Dr. Hartley's work." Rush wrote in an unpublished lecture entitled "On the Application of Metaphysicks to Medicine." is to demonstrate that "the exercises of the mind depend upon certain
vibrations communicated to the brain through the medium of the nerves, and that all abstraction of thought is produced by certain associations of these vibrations. The actions of the senses, pleasure, and pain, the waking and sleeping states, are all explained by these principles in the most simple and satisfactory manner" (qtd. in D’Elia “Psychology” 110).

Thus, Hartley laid out for Rush a system combining environmentalism, the association of ideas, faculty psychology, and Christianity. Following Hartley, Rush based his *Three Lectures upon Animal Life* on the assumption that all bodily action and all mental action were the effect of external stimulation. Matter in itself possessed no "self-moving power" (7). Not only every physical sensation and muscular motion, but also every idea and internal feeling, is the effect of external stimuli. In this way, Rush accounted for secondary (physical) causes as direct, mechanical stimulation from the environment on the body and, via the nerves, the intellectual and the moral faculties of the mind. There were many different types of physical causes: "certain drinks," hunger, diseases, idleness, excessive sleep, geography, pleasure, pain, eloquence, and silence are all forms of physical stimuli that operate on the faculties (*Physical Causes* 193-197). I will examine the social uses of eloquence and silence later. Here it is important to note the Rush’s evangelical understanding of the power of language was now being filtered through an encompassing scientific system. Language was an important "physical cause": it mechanically stimulated the mental faculties, producing both simple and complex thoughts. Hartley’s system also allowed Rush to preserve religion in the physical
world because, ultimately, all stimuli could be traced back to the Prime Mover of the universe. As an evangelical Christian, Rush was enthusiastic about this dimension of Hartley's system. In his lecture "On the Pleasures of the Senses," Rush metaphorically describes the relation of primary and secondary causes: "In a word, our bodies may be compared to the violin: the senses are its strings; every thing beautiful and sublime in nature and art is its bow; the Creator is the hand that moves it; and pleasure, nearly constant pleasure, their necessary effect" (424-425).

To Rush's rationalistic understanding, however, the descriptive power of Hartley's system was not confined to physiology and psychology. "It has like Herschel's telescope," explained Rush in 1794, "opened new discoveries to our senses and greatly extended our knowledge of the moral and theological as well as the mental and physical worlds" (110-111). In his days as a student at Edinburgh in the 1760s and a young doctor in Philadelphia in the early 70s. Rush had not yet developed his evangelicism and emerging republicanism into a comprehensive and rationalistic system of political, social, and moral reform. This would result from Rush's experiences with the Revolutionary crisis in the latter 1770s. However, by 1776, Rush was beginning to piece together a framework that integrated religion, science, and politics. Almost twenty years later he wrote that "I have often been struck with the similarity of the controversies upon the origins of moral obligation, of [political] power, and of animal life, and of the similarity of their issue in a simple elementary truth, obvious to the most humble capacities" (Animal Life 47). Underneath all of these systems lay one great system of the causes and effects of
vibrations, associations, and faculties. In my first three chapters, I outlined the profound crisis in political and social authority occasioned by the Revolutionary War. The effects of this crisis on Rush, whose entire world-view rested on the necessity of political, social, and religious authority, were intense. Based on the environmentalist logic of his system, his thought increasingly turned to the power of institutions to produce certain physical effects, thereby hastening his utopian vision of a Christian republic.

This chapter is guided by the assumption that the ways in which individuals encounter and understand discourses of rhetoric are thoroughly conditioned by their social, political, and cultural contexts. With this principle in mind, I would argue that the American Revolution was the central event of Benjamin Rush's life, profoundly influencing his understanding of language, authority, and identity. Basically, the events surrounding the Revolution supplied Rush with a focus, a purpose, and a plan: to help bring about not just a political revolution but a religious and moral revolution in the attitudes and beliefs of the colonists. For Rush, the American Revolution was a necessary prelude to the creation of a Christian Republic. Had he lived in Charleston or on the New England frontier, perhaps his thinking about science, religion, and politics would have taken another turn. However, this is counter-factual history, interesting to speculate on but difficult to substantiate. What we do have is Rush's writings during the period that record his impressions and contributions to the events of the 1770s. They allow the historian to position Rush within specific communities of discourse and action. Finally, they
reveal that Rush's thoughts on language and authority cannot be separated from the fact that he resided in Philadelphia, the commercial, cultural, and, after 1774, the political capital of the colonies.

We saw in chapter one how the American Revolution signified not only the legal separation of the colonies from the British Empire but also, and much more importantly, profound internal transformations in economic modes of being, social structure, political authority, and national self-consciousness. There are many beginnings to the American Revolution, not the least of which are the events occurring in the urban areas of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in the mid-eighteenth century. As historian Gary Nash has shown, in these "urban crucibles" were formed many of the attitudes and beliefs that would lead to the Revolution. Historian Eric Foner notes that, in Philadelphia, the decade before 1776 "were years of chronic economic dislocation" due to the expansion of a capitalist market economy, a transformation that would contribute to an incipient class consciousness by benefitting some, depriving others, and creating resentment, fear, and resistance in both (50). Political infighting between the Royal and Proprietary parties bitterly divided Philadelphia's various social interests. Previously disenfranchised interests such as male mechanics, artisans, and the western Pennsylvania farmers were increasingly brought into the political process when these parties appealed to them for political support and promised political patronage (59). Whereas the social and political circumstances of most mechanics and artisans "made any kind of independent political identity virtually impossible" before the mid 1760s, in the
The following decade these groups in Philadelphia "awakened to political consciousness and articulated a fiercely egalitarian ideology" (62).

The implications here for a social history of rhetoric are suggestive. As Foner makes clear, this "fiercely egalitarian ideology" of artisans and mechanics was rhetorically expressed in both spoken and written media and symbolic action: it included spontaneous popular protests, occasional riots, rallies, handbills, militia meetings, newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, and speech-making (59). Many of these genre were new to the eighteenth century, or at least they were being used for public expression in new ways that were designed to circumvent the traditional print and oral networks of communication that defined power in colonial society. Taken as a whole, these new forms of rhetorical address relied on direct audience appeals and a widespread politicization of the citizenry that the hierarchical structure of colonial society sought to preclude because these appeals brought too many people into the political process. Thus, by circumventing and / or subverting traditional colonial networks of communication and power, new rhetorical genres and print media are themselves implicated in revolutionary area politics and the socio-cultural changes that were occurring.

Rush was at the geographical center of many of these socio-political changes. During the revolutionary crisis, Pennsylvania went further than any other state in its rejection of authority and its democratic restructuring of government. As a citizen of Philadelphia, Rush witnessed these changes in society and politics. In the fall of 1776, a faction of "Patriots," advocating social and economic egalitarianism, formed
a coalition of middling and lower class support and passed the radically democratic Pennsylvania constitution. Based on the Patriot's belief that government should be formed of people from the "producing classes," the Pennsylvania constitution called for a unicameral rather than a bicameral house, which would keep legislative power closer to the people, and a weak dual executive office, which would prevent the consolidation of too much power in hands of a single individual. It extended political franchise to all tax-paying white males and it abolished indentured servitude, a practice that the laboring mechanics and artisans of Philadelphia had reason to hate. A rhetoric of class antagonism is clearly evident in the debates over the 1776 constitution: opponents of the constitution attacked its supporters as "coffee-house demagogues" and "political upstarts," while the supporters of constitution condemned "all the rich great men and the wise men, the doctors and the lawyers." who felt no "common interest with the body of the people" (qtd. in Foner 135).

By the mid 1770s, Rush was moving up the social ladder in Philadelphia society. He had built a successful medical practice, and as one of the only Edinburgh-trained doctors in the city, he had attracted many of its leading citizens. In addition, he was trying to position himself as a candidate for a Chair of Chemistry at the College of Pennsylvania. When the political divisions of Philadelphians coalesced around the supporters and the opponents of the Pennsylvania constitution, Rush was forced to take sides in order to preserve his
social reputation, and he aligned himself accordingly. Although he did not wholly condemn the republican ideals of the Pennsylvania Patriots, Rush became increasingly shocked at what he perceived to be democratic excesses—the demagoguery—instilled in the people by the Whig rhetoric of liberty. Rush had initially encouraged Thomas Paine to write *Common Sense*, but he recoiled at the reception of the pamphlet once it came out and he became a leading detractor of the radical Pennsylvania constitution. Not surprisingly, at this time Rush also began to moralize against what he perceived to be lower-class vices. In pamphlet after pamphlet over the next decade, he proclaimed against drunkenness, extravagance, fairs, militia parades, horse-racing, gaming, swearing, cock-fighting, quarrelling, and general uncleanliness. Rush’s emergent political elitism went hand-in-hand with this process of social distancing and policing.

The new Pennsylvania constitution. Rush wrote in 1777 in a series of newspaper articles entitled "Observations on the Government of Pennsylvania," was "a tyranny. The moment we submit to it we become slaves" (*Selected* 60). The rhetoric of the supporters of the constitution had emphasized social equality and democratic egalitarianism as a precondition for republican government. Rush, however, like most Federalists in his day, believed that inequality was the natural state of society and that certain social interests, particularly the commercial interests.

As Foner notes, Rush’s change of sympathies was as much social as it was political. His political repositioning reflected "a change in his social position and personal associations" in that by 1776 "Rush was no longer an outsider in Philadelphia society" (136). Born without property or social distinction, Rush was driven by a desire for social respectability, and his identity reveals much of what would become "middle class" in the nineteenth century.
would lead because of their "superior degrees of industry and capacity" (59). Of course, this assumption served to legitimate and consolidate the power of those interests who were already in control. Rush condemned the Pennsylvania Constitution as a "government for poor men": it "is wholly repugnant to the principles of action in man, and has a direct tendency to check the progress of genius and virtue in human nature. It supposes perfect equality, and an equal distribution of property, wisdom, and virtues among the inhabitants of the state" (55). If left unchecked, under the present constitution the "passions of the State" would produce "the most miserable spot upon the surface of the globe" (78). Rush turns to the discourse of chemistry for an answer to the dilemma of how to constitute a free government based on liberty but at the same time channels and controls the passions of the people: "a few simple principles enter into the composition of all free governments. These principles are perfect security of property, liberty or life; but these principles admit of extensive combinations . . . all governments are safe and free in proportion as they are compounded in a certain degree" (60). His chemical vision of society was basically the one that Federalists wrote into the Constitution of the United States: a strong centralized government with an elaborate system of checks and balances meant to temper the "passions" of the people.

Notice here Rush's use of "principles of action in man," a phrase that Samuel Davies had used in his Religion and Publick Spirit to signify the civic humanist idea of the vita activa. By saying that social levelling will prevent the natural ordering of society into dominant and subservient classes, Rush uses the civic humanist ideal to legitimate a vision of political order and to justify his growing political elitism.
Rush came to see the American Revolution as an event unleashing passions that had to be controlled if the republic was to survive and fulfill its republican-christian destiny as a redeemer nation. He began to consider the political separation from England as the first step in a much more comprehensive social and moral revolution. In May of 1786, Rush wrote that "most of the distresses of our country... have arisen from a belief that the American Revolution is over. [But] we have only finished the first act of the great drama" (Butterfield I 388). In order to fulfill its utopian destiny, America first had to control its democratic impulses. In an essay revealingly titled "An Account of the Influence of the Military and Political Events of the American Revolution on the Human Body," Rush reasoned that the hopes the colonists had attached to the Revolution of 1776 failed because "the minds of the citizens of the United States were wholly unprepared for their new situation. The excess of the passion of liberty, inflamed by the successful issue of the war, produced, in many people, opinions and conduct which could not be removed by reason nor restrained by government" (Selected 333). Assuming that "the political events of the revolution produced different effects upon the human body, through the medium of the mind," Rush contends that those disenfranchised groups who argued for a voice in the political process suffered from a type of madness: the "extensive influence" which the Whig rhetoric of liberty "had on the understandings, passions, and morals of many citizens of the United States, constituted a form of insanity" which he called "anarchia" (333). Thus, he characterizes the political and social problems of America as a medical deviation from an ideological norm. Obedience
to government and religious authority is warranted by the discursive framework of science as a physiological (i.e. natural) condition. The prescriptive power of this framework also becomes increasingly clear to Rush: once the social and political environment could controlled, then the people could be reconstituted to act in accordance with the self-evident truths of Christianity and republicanism.

Highlighting as it does the failure of both "reason" and "government" to control political passions and oppositional voices, Rush's definition of "anarchia" indicates the social fear, held by many of the leading Federalists, that the people might take too much liberty for themselves. On this assumption, Rush began to lay the groundwork for the next stage of the American Revolution, which his Great Awakening beliefs and scientific positivism told him must come if the republic were to survive. In order for the new republic to achieve its protestant-republican destiny as the new Zion, Rush believed it was imperative to rebuild government and social institutions, and to (re)form citizens into "republican machines" that would act with "regularity and in unison with government." Because he knew that, according to classical political theory, the eventual fate of republics was democratic anarchy, he turned not only to government but also religion, education, and other social institutions to remove the causes of "anarchia" and to produce both free and manageable, productive citizens. Demagogy, or the abuse of political speech, had resulted in the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776, and the constitution was, in turn, a "mob" instrument that bred further demagogy. But as a "physical cause," speech could be an important part of the solution as well—if it could be regulated. As Rush
indicates in his definition of "anarchia." this regulation would be two-fold: through "reason," or carefully delineated truth, and through social institutions.

In 1786, Rush wrote to Dr. Richard Price in England that "We have changed our forms of government, but it remains yet to effect a revolution in our principles, opinions, and manners so as to accommodate them to the forms of government we have adopted" (B. R. to Price, May 25, 1786). Rush explored how these "principles, opinions, and manners" could be changed in his essay "The Influence of Physical Causes Upon the Moral Faculty." Here he explained how the faculties are moved by physical stimuli such as climate, diet, hunger, and pain. In addition, the faculties are responsive to "eloquence," which "possesses the power of changing brutes into men" and "produc[ing] in every man who hears . . . a love of virtue" (Selected 199-200). For Rush, eloquence has a direct physical effect on the mind of the listener. It is similar to pain and climate in its environmental effects. Other mechanical means of producing thought and action connected with the uses of language are solitude and silence. Scottish rhetoricians such as George Campbell believed that effective language accurately reproduced ideas in the minds of the audience. Given Hume's epistemological critique of theories of human understanding, discourse theorists like Reid and Campbell were tentative about exactly how language affects the faculties. Rush took associationism and faculty psychology a step further and argued that language operates directly on the mental faculties of the listeners.
Read in the light of eighteenth-century discourse theory. Rush's system is simplistic and crudely mechanical; but this simplicity gives it a metaphorical potential that easily incorporates a host of uses for various physical causes. If all external stimuli produced certain effects on the mental faculties, then knowledge would progress when the causes and effects could be observed and classified. Based on this mechanistic view of language and knowledge, the reformation of society was now simply a matter of classifying types of knowledge and reforming the institutions that influence subjects. Rush's (and Hartley's) mechanistic and associationist thoughts on language are, in many ways, an extension of the Scottish Common Sense philosophy of Thomas Reid and Thomas Hutcheson, which attempted to refute the idealism of Berkeley and the skepticism of Hume by grounding knowledge in the belief that the mind perceives not merely the ideas or images of external objects but the external objects themselves. Scottish realism holds that the mind intuitively knows through direct perception--what the Scottish philosophers termed "sympathy"--of the object. Based on the philosophical and physiological musings of Hartley, Rush's mechanism goes this perceiving mind one further by positing a direct, physical, causal link between external stimuli and ideas in the mind. Thus, Rush is able to envision the reformation and regeneration of society with the same philosophical rationales that inform the "New Rhetoric" of George Campbell and Hugh Blair.

Concerned as they are with the role of knowledge, education, and institutions. Rush's assumptions about language reflect broader transformations
occurring in the discourses of rhetoric at the time. Along with many of his Federalist contemporaries, he nominally held the republican civic assumption that eloquence is essential to the maintenance of liberty in a republic. Moreover, his Great Awakening beliefs instilled in him the idea that effective oratory, if used for proper evangelical purposes, could effect social change and moral regeneration. As we have seen, these were assumptions about eloquence and oratory that most eighteenth-century Americans held to some extent. But the fear of "anarchia," the threat of irrational and oppositional voices in the public sphere, led Rush to severely restrict the rhetorical deliberation that supposedly defined representative governments. Indeed, the fear of lower-class demagogues inciting the passions of the people against political and social authority terrified Rush, and his system of socio-political reformation can be read as an attempt to contain demagogy and political passion. Rush bases this denial of the political uses of speech on mechanistic theories of thought and language. One area where he transforms civic humanist ideals into a mechanistic and scientific program for reform occurs in his writings on education.

His essay "Of the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," written in 1784, is an uneasy attempt to incorporate classical commonplaces about rhetoric such as the central role of eloquence into a nationalist and rational system of education. On the one hand, Rush ostensibly promotes the republican assumption that eloquence and free speech are essential to the preservation of liberty. "It is well known," he writes, "how great a part [eloquence] constituted of the Roman education. It is the
first accomplishment in a republic, and often sets the whole machine of government in motion" (10). Here he articulates an assumption that runs through the political writings of classical antiquity. But significantly, Rush's republicanism is couched in the post-Hobbesian metaphor of government as machine. On this model, agency is removed from the speaker and relegated to the institutions that would define who could speak, when, and where. For Rush, the goal of education is to produce, "one general, and uniform system of education, . . . render[ing] the mass of people more homogenous, and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government" (5). In this system, citizens were to be eloquent, but not for the avowed civic humanist purpose of voicing opinions in public and political arenas. In fact, for most citizens, Rush's system of education strips civic humanist rhetoric of its avowedly civic function. Rhetorical education would now restrict language training to a level of social competency that would enable individuals to conduct everyday business and maneuver socially, but it would not produce the ideal Ciceronian orator that eighteenth-century Americans such as John Adams so passionately admired. Neither would it produce the plain-speaking democrat who appealed to the interests of the people. For Rush, properly educated citizens, or "republican machines," would not question authority. They would be naturally receptive and pliable to the truths of the Gospel and the government. In his words, they would "promote the duration of republican forms of government far beyond the terms limited for them by history" (8). Concerned as he is with eliminating the democratic public spaces where multiple or oppositional opinions might be voiced,
Rush's republican celebration of eloquence turns out to be a hollow gesture to an ancient ideal and not an acknowledgment of the civic humanist ideal of eloquence. In Rush's program, education is a metonymic expression of his mechanistic understanding of thought and language. He invested so much in the effects of education precisely because it could implement in practice his rationalist theory of how physical causes affect the moral and intellectual faculties.

But Rush does not restrict his thoughts about the uses of language only to education. When his practice as a medical doctor expanded in the 1780s, Rush increasingly began to analyze not only medical phenomena but also social behavior into a scientific typology in his lectures and essays. In this typology, he translated many of his assumptions about who could speak publicly into scientific categories and criteria. Based on the connection between physical stimuli such as language and the faculties, Rush is able to reconstitute social authority through language in two important ways. First, his system allows him to classify groups according to their ability or inability to speak. Second, through the active manipulation of speech—that is, through controlling who talks, when, and the content of what is said—Rush argues that government can create "republican machines" that respond both to instituted and internalized forms of authority. From the rhetorical theories of Adam Smith and Hugh Blair, both of whom he met in Edinburgh, from the dinner table of his teacher Samuel Finley, and from his own drive for professional respectability, Rush learned that conversation, understood not just as the ability to communicate but the ability to speak with manners and politeness, was a measure of civility and social
success. Of course, the idea that speech is a precondition for human society has a long history in Western discourses of rhetoric and politics. Adapting this civic humanist assumption, Scottish Enlightenment rhetoricians associated the ability to converse and write politely with the more advanced and refined stages of civilization.

Rush incorporates these two traditions of civic humanist rhetoric and Scottish civil rhetoric into both his scientific and reform writings, and authorizes them with science. For example, Rush develops his thoughts about the physical functions of language on the body and mind in his medical Lectures on Animal Life, published in 1799. These lectures, delivered in the 1790s when he held a joint appointment to the Chairs of Chemistry and Medicine at the College of Pennsylvania, were extremely popular and well-attended. In his position as teacher, Rush’s mechanistic theories of language and the body reached a generation of medical doctors. He begins his lectures by paraphrasing Cullen’s primary assumption that "The human body is not an automaton, or self-moving machine; but is kept alive, and in motion by the constant action of stimuli on it" (Selected 136-137). Notice that Rush is not denying the mechanistic function of the body: rather, he denies self-motivation, thus ascribing all motivation to external physical causes (or some external form of authority). Rush republicanizes and Christianizes the body; he makes it an instrument for external forms of political and religious authority. Also, this construction reproduces the synecdochic relationship between the individual and the state. Rush continually reminded his readers and students that all citizens in a
republic are public property, not liberal "automatons." One of the most important of the stimuli on the body is sound, which, along with the three other primary stimuli of light, heat, and air, "has an extensive influence upon human life" (138). Rush proceeds to translate sound into human language, specifically eloquence and polite language. He contends that the ability to converse in society is a necessary condition for humanity. It is, in short, a scientific criteria of classification.

Based on this assumption, he constructs classifications of "Same" and "Other" according to a social or ethnic group's ability to speak, to converse, and to be eloquent. In his "An Account of the Vices Peculiar to the Indian of North America" and other writings that address the condition of the Native American, Rush translates the binary "Same" and "Other" into "Civilized" and "Savage."

Attacking Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Jefferson for idealizing the taciturn nature of Native Americans as a mark of innate wisdom, he argues that silence is a physiological sign of mental dullness. "I believe taciturnity," wrote Rush, "in nine cases out of ten . . . is the effect of stupidity" (153). He continues his Enlightenment and scientific critique of the mental faculties of Native Americans in his Lectures on Animal Life: "In the Indians of the northern latitudes of America, there is often a defect of the stimulus of . . . the understanding and passions. Their vacant countenances, and their long and disgusting taciturnity, are the effects of the want of action in their brains from a deficiency of ideas" (164). While receiving the analytic burden of his scientific (mis)measurements, Native Americans are not the only individuals who are supposedly inadequate because of a want of civil language.

183
In "On the Means of Acquiring Knowledge," he writes that "a silent man seldom possesses a clear and active mind" (349). And in his Lectures on Animal Life he states that "persons who are destitute of hearing and seeing, possess life in a more languid state than other people; and hence arise the dulness, and want of spirits" (Selected 140). For Rush, there is a natural association between "ideas" and the ability to communicate ideas through the "pen, or tongue" (153). On this association, the ability to converse becomes a criteria of classification: a scientific way to maintain distinctions between the civilized and the other, and between the normal and the deviant.

In addition to using the ability to speak as a means of classification, Rush proposed a series of reforms based on the ability of institutions to control what is being said, when, and how. Many of his writings on morality and social issues focus on how speech can be controlled and channeled for socially useful purposes. In an essay entitled "An Enquiry into the Public Punishments Upon Criminals, and Upon Society," the moral, social, and scientific come together in a coherent system of punishment that incorporates assumptions about speech into a regime of reformation. Rush begins by arguing that public punishments such as chaining prisoners to wheelbarrows ought to be replaced by private forms of discipline, not because the former are cruel and inhuman, but because the state is not able to control the meaning of the spectacle. Based on Cullen's and Hartley's systems of association. Rush proposes a private regime of discipline to be administered out of the public eye that would (re)form the moral faculty by carefully controlling the
specific stimuli that affect it. "The punishments," he writes, "should consist of bodily pain, labor, watchfulness, solitude, and silence." Among other physical "causes," prisoners are to be controlled through the manipulation of language. They are to be assigned times to converse, with the majority of the day to be spent in silence. The architecture of the prison would ensure silence by isolating the prisoner from conversation with others. Furthermore, Rush writes that these "remedies should be accompanied by regular instruction in the principles and content of religion" (90). Truth itself becomes an internalized mode of authority in Rush's project of reform. Thus, prisoners are reformed not only through the means, but also the matter, of speech.

In Rush's writings we see how assumptions about the nature and uses of language, many of which were received through discourses of rhetoric, are employed in cultural context. We see how assumptions about language are grounded in host of eighteenth-century discourses, including Great Awakening evangelicism, political republicanism, Enlightenment rationalism. Rush's project of political and social reconstitution is, like the projects of the Federalists, Antifederalists, and Republicans, one of national self-fashioning. But it is also a project of individual self-fashioning in that it uses national institutions to target the bodies of individual citizens. In many ways, Rush's protestant-republican vision is as much a product of the Great Awakening as it is of the Enlightenment. To construct this patch-work vision, he employed the rationales of different discourses of rhetoric. Indeed, once
we expand our definition of rhetoric to encompass a concern with the nature and uses of language, then rhetoric moves to the center of Rush's project of reformation.

By positing speech and communication as a basis for understanding and classifying human nature, Rush reproduces the theoretical move that the Scottish rhetoricians make when they used Common Sense philosophy to transform rhetoric into the study of communication based on universal and rationale principles. Rather than the neoclassical study of specific modes and uses of persuasive speech, the Scottish Enlightenment system of rhetoric defined in texts such as George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* was scientific and encompassing. For Campbell, there was a definite relationship between rhetoric and human nature, and he announces that the purpose of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is,

> on the one hand, to exhibit ... a tolerable sketch of the human mind: and, aided by the lights by which the Poet and the Orator so amply furnish, to disclose its secret movements, tracing its principle channels of perception and action, as near as possible, to their source: and, on the other hand, from the science of human nature, to ascertain with greater precision, the radical principles of that art, whose object it is, by the use of language, to operate on the soul of the hearer ... (Ixv)

Imbued not only with this philosophical system of rhetoric but also, and more importantly, with the scientific assumptions on which this system of rhetoric is based, Rush rationalizes and subsumes both civic humanist and Enlightenment civil rhetorics into a quasi-scientific discourse of classification. Ultimately, rhetoric was
for Rush, as it was for Campbell and Blair, a universal mode of communication that encompassed all forms ("genres") and all subject matter ("topoi"). This universality of rhetoric was the source of its descriptive power. Now, communication was a means of understanding and classifying the "secret movements" of the mind—a powerful tool for someone with Rush's scientific interests.

While assuming the modern ethos of the rational scientist and observer of natural phenomena, Rush reinscribes many eighteenth-century socio-cultural hierarchies in his project of reformation. He uses language as a means of both classification and control, and he offers a vision of society that attempts to institute the republican ideal of eliminating oppositional voices and differences while retaining the revolutionary ideals of liberty and individual rights. In response to the dilemma of how to grant the people the right to participate in government in theory but to limit that right in practice, Rush goes one step further than republicanism. Or, perhaps it is more accurate to say that he rationalizes and scientizes republicanism into a science of government and human nature. Rush's vision is, in some ways, similar to James Madison's liberal ideal of a government acting as a "neutral umpire" to balance the claims of various social interests, but Rush was much too invested in the controlling power of external authority to envision a fully self-regulating machine of either government or the individual. His machines of the individual and the state are each regulated by external forms of authority.
specifically, the power of the Federal government and the animating and self-evident truth of God.\textsuperscript{12}

In his own drive for social respectability, Rush became increasingly aware of the cultural capital that belletristic rhetoric carried in the social sphere. The next and final chapter examines two competing uses of the new belletristic rhetoric of taste during the period: by the middle classes who saw in taste a strategy of social enhancement and by conservative Federalists who saw in the critical rationales of taste a way to homogenize and tame the middling class’s drive for social status. With the dissolution of the ideology of republican disinterest and the old social order, Federalist literary reviewers would seek to foster the dictates of taste and aesthetic appreciation—in short, to inculcate manners and social decorum—in the middling classes who were finding in belles lettres a means to construct new cultural identities.

\textsuperscript{12} Focused as it is on the metaphors of mechanism, regulation, and control, Rush’s project of reform will provide a model for nineteenth-century industrialists, who see in the discipline of factory labor a means of social and moral reform as well.
CHAPTER 5

THE POLITICS OF CULTURE: 
THE USES OF TASTE AND BELLES LETTRES IN THE NEW AMERICAN 
REPUBLIC

In his article, "The Democratization of Mind in the American Revolution," Gordon Wood describes the "elite rhetorical world" that characterized the rhetorical acts—the speeches and writings—of the revolutionary leadership. The relationship between author and reader was an important component of this rhetorical world. "We know," writes Wood, that the revolutionary leaders "conceived of their readership as restricted and aristocratic, as being made up of men essentially like themselves . . . They saw themselves and their readers as mutual participants in an intellectual fraternity, 'the republic of letters'" (68). To the leaders of the revolution, the idea of an elite republican government and an elite republic of letters went hand in hand. In their attempts of persuade the country to adopt the Constitution. Federalist speeches and writings were based on the "largely unspoken assumption that if only the educated and enlightened, if only gentlemen, could be convinced, then the rest would follow naturally" (67). But, as I examined in my third chapter, this belief in an elite political and literary republic came under
increasing attack in the quarter century after America's declaration of independence. First from the Antifederalists and later from the Jeffersonian Republicans. Five years after the Federalists' political defeat to the Jeffersonians in the 1800 elections, the arch-conservative Fisher Ames wrote that the American republic was "sliding into the mire of democracy which pollutes the morals of the citizens before it swallows up their liberties. Our vanity is the parent of our errors, and these, now grown vices, will be the artificers of our fate" (II 566). No lover of democracy or "colloquial politics," Ames saw in the social and ideological changes occurring in the 1790s and early 1800s a betrayal of the republican principles on which the Constitution rested. The "sages at the great [Constitutional] Constitution." Ames contends, "intended our government should be a republick, which differs more widely from a democracy than a democracy from a despotism" (566). For Ames and many other Federalists, the distinction between a republic and democracy was absolute, and they clung to the ideal of the "elite rhetorical world" in the face of the political and cultural transformations occurring during the period.

Through the metaphors of republic and democracy, the Federalists imagined the cultural changes occurring during the period in overtly political terms. From their perspective, the stable republic of letters was degenerating into an anarchic democracy of letters. To the Federalists, the upsurge of interest in belles lettres and taste by those they considered socially inferior were important components in this perspective. Historian of rhetoric Sharon Crowley has suggested that, for Samuel Newman and later nineteenth-century rhetoricians, taste operated as a "policing
mechanism" to discriminate and exclude the lower classes from political and cultural status, but she confines her speculations to the mid and latter nineteenth century ("Biting" 18). I would argue that the origins of the "policing mechanism" uses of rhetoric in America lie with early nineteenth-century Federalists who, defeated by the Jeffersonian Republicans in the presidential election of 1800, retreated from public life, turned to the public marketplace of print, and founded literary and political journals. The proliferation and popularization of belles lettres and taste were seen by the conservative Federalists as a threat to national and cultural order. But Federalists also found in the premises of taste a strategy of social containment: using the critical principles that supported belletristic rhetoric, they attempted to redefine the scene of social control away from politics, an arena from which they had been recently ousted, to culture by channelling and controlling the emergent literary expressions of the middle classes through the institution of literary review.

However, the rhetorics of belles lettres and taste had other social functions during the period besides being a "policing mechanism" for social and political conservatives. Indeed, these discourses of rhetoric were important agents in the transformation of the rhetorical and literary sensibilities of the new nation. In many manifestations of middling class culture, including the development and the uses of new literary genres and changes in the ways that individuals read texts, the role of belles lettres and taste was becoming increasingly central. Most importantly, belletristic rhetoric helped middling class individuals piece together a "vernacular gentility" in order to compete for social status in an emergent capitalist and liberal
society. In other words, taste could be used as a socially-enabling strategy. Middling class Americans, particularly those who were based in regions with dynamic expanding economies and opportunities for social mobility, recognized in taste a strategy for social and cultural improvement. They employed taste as a way of gaining cultural recognition and status. In rhetorics such as Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783) and Samuel Newman's *A Practical System of Rhetoric* (1827), middling class consumers found in taste a commodity, an ability capable of being purchased, taught, and learned. These belles lettres rhetorics would instruct these socially-mobile and increasingly autonomous individuals to refine, in the words of Blair, their "public ear" and construct new social identities for the liberal and capitalist nineteenth-century America. In this way, the Scottish rhetoric of taste and belles lettres was appropriated in the middle class project of socio-cultural self-fashioning. To better understand the functions of rhetoric during the period, this chapter traces the two "contexts of use" described above: the uses of belles lettres rhetoric by the middle classes who were conscious of status and refinement and by conservative Federalists who had a vested interest in maintaining a conservative social order in America. Changes occurring in the cultural life of America during the period were complex, and they had an important influence on American thoughts about national identity. When would America establish a national literature that would reflect its political independence? Would America have a republic or a democracy of letters? Would this national literature imitate foreign models or would it reflect the manners and styles of America?
Finally, given the diverse connotations of both "belles lettres" and "taste" in the colonial and post-Revolutionary periods, many of which have been lost in contemporary usage, it is important to attempt to define what Americans meant when they spoke about these terms. A convenient place to look for such definitions is Blair’s Lectures, which performed the important service of delineating an accessible rhetoric of belles lettres that was conveyed in educational institutions for almost a century. In his lecture on "Taste," Blair defined his subject as "the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of art and nature" (37). In this definition, Blair synthesizes two decades of thought on the nature and uses of taste by figures such as Edmund Burke and Alexander Gerard. For Blair, taste is an internal faculty possessed by all individuals, and "the exercise of taste is, in its native tendency, moral and purifying" (36). Similarly, he understands belles lettres as the conflation of rhetoric and poetics, two fields that share a "common interest in taste, style, criticism, and sublimity, [and] seek to instruct the student to become an effective practitioner and judge in written and oral communication" (Golden and Corbett 8). Belles lettres encompasses a host of fields and literary genres, including "the polite arts, poetry, drama, art, history, biography, philology, and so on" (8). Yet belles lettres is more than a number of definable arts and literary genres, and taste is more than an innate faculty or set of critical premises. Neither can be abstracted from their cultural contexts. In his recently published book Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British North America (1997), historian David Shields has brilliantly recovered the cultural functions of belles lettres and taste in colonial America by
asking the question "what did British American belles lettres do?" He argues that belles lettres should be understood not as a set of literary genres but as a discursive practice located in the performative "polite" sphere of the salons, coffeehouses, social clubs, tea tables, and dances:

[Belles lettres] invoked an array of discursive institutions enabling societies to form. It contributed to the life of these groups by celebrating the common appetites, defining and encouraging the pleasures, furthering play, and promoting the free conversation that bound persons in community. And it idealized the values of friendliness, liberty, gentility, mannerliness, wit, and politeness that served as philosophical warrants for the conduct of these private societies in the ideological contests that agitated Anglo-American culture. . . . The persistent vitality of the club, the salon, and the college as cultural institutions well into the nineteenth century owed much to discursive practices descended from those first enacted in British American belles lettres. (xxviii)

Itself an abstraction and formalization of this influential discursive practice, Blair's Lectures encoded the rationales and principles of the civil sphere of politeness and manners that functioned in the provincial capitals of both Scotland and America.1 Multiple beginnings and perspectives exist for the historian examining the role of belles lettres and taste during the period. The next three

1 On the acute sense of provincialism that the British colonialists experienced and on the civil and polite role of belles lettres, see Thomas Miller's recently published book, The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces (227-252).
sections focus on the new uses of rhetoric and new audiences that Blair imagines in
his Lectures, the post-revolutionary associations among rhetoric, civility, commerce,
and literary nationalism in America, and the role of periodicals in disseminating the
rhetorics of belles lettres and taste to an emergent American middle class. The last
section of this chapter examines the conservative Federalist response to these
appropriations of belletristic rhetoric. Each perspective casts light on the question of
why the belletristic rationales and models conveyed in Blair’s Lectures and other
rhetorics were so popular, and each perspective illustrates how the reception of
belletristic rhetoric was intricately connected with the establishment of an American
middle class culture.

Blair’s Lectures played an important role in the middle class’s search for a
“polite” and refined cultural identity. Historians know that Blair’s Lectures on
Rhetoric and Belles Lettres was a popular text in latter eighteenth- and nineteenth-
century America. Historian of rhetoric James Berlin calls the Lectures “the most
popular treatment of rhetoric until after the Civil War” (25). First published in
London in 1783, Blair’s Lectures took less than a year to cross the Atlantic. Robert
Aitken, a Philadelphia printer and bookseller, produced the first American edition of
the Lectures in 1784. The subsequent circulation and influence of Blair’s Lectures
in the United States was enormous. Archival research reveals that, between 1783
and 1813, over fifty percent of American libraries, both public and private,
contained a copy of Blair’s Lectures (May and Lundburg 263-271). Other than
religious and devotional texts, the Lectures’ popularity was rivalled only by
Enlightenment works such as Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, and Charles Rollin’s *Ancient History*. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Harvard, Yale, Brown, Amherst, and Columbia all used Blair’s *Lectures* as a standard rhetoric textbook. By 1830, the *Lectures* had gone through at least seventy editions in the United States, and this number includes only those complete or abridged editions listed in the American Antiquarian Society’s recently published *Bibliography of American Imprints to 1901* (1991).

Several historians have speculated about the reasons for Blair’s "immediate and striking popularity" (May and Lundberg 269). In their 1956 article, "The Extrinsic Sources of Blair’s Popularity," James Golden and Douglas Ehninger ask "how the widespread and continued popularity of Blair’s *Lectures* [are] to be explained" (17). There are, they contend, two reasons. First, Blair’s reputation as a preacher and an arbiter of literary taste was already well-established in Great Britain by the 1780s due to the success of his published *Sermons* and his standing in Edinburgh literary circles. Second, changes in education created a favorable context for the success of Blair’s *Lectures* (17). For example, the substitution of English for Latin and Greek, the rapid increase in the number of colleges, the proliferation of

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2 The actual number of editions is probably higher but also more difficult to assess. There are undoubtedly some limited printings that are unaccounted for. As William Charvat notes, many abridged editions of Blair "were printed in small towns, probably for the use of local schools" (31). These towns included Albany, Brookfield, Wilmington, Exeter, Haverhill, Portland, Concord, and Brattleboro. Moreover, as I will examine below, selections from Blair’s *Lectures*, particularly his "Critical Examination of Style" chapters, were often printed in early American monthly and quarterly periodicals. The abridgements, small press editions, and wide circulation of periodical selections make the *Lectures’*s influence even more difficult to assess.
public libraries, and the opening of educational opportunities for women "gave Blair an advantage over his predecessors" (30). As subsequent scholarship has demonstrated, all of this is certainly true, but Golden and Ehninger leave the reader with some important questions. One unresolved issue with Golden and Ehninger's research is that the reader is never quite sure what site of reception the authors are talking about. Was Blair read and used the same in England, Scotland, and America? Furthermore, while Golden and Ehninger demonstrate that changes in education had an impact on the Lecture's popularity, important questions remain concerning the relationship of these educational changes to larger socio-cultural transformations occurring in Great Britain and America. How were these changes in educational opportunities and reading practices related to a thriving print culture? In addition, how were all of these changes related to the expansion of a middle class that was distinct in its values, attitudes, and modes of economic subsistence? These are, of course, complex issues, and a comprehensive examination is yet to be written. Given the scope of this project my goal in this chapter is more modest—to situate the reception of Blair's Lectures in two important contexts during the period: the rise of literary nationalism and the role of periodicals in the construction of an

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3 "Print Culture" is an admittedly vague phrase that historians use to attempt to capture the complex developments in the literary scene of America such as the growth of a free market economy, the proliferation of the amount of print material and the number of literary genres, the development of modern notions of authorship and distinct readerships, and the establishment of national and international copyright. The literature on "print culture" issues such as reading practices, definitions of literacy, and book circulation in eighteenth-century Britain and America is extensive. For an excellent introduction to early American "print culture," see David Hall's excellent article "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1650-1800."
American middle class culture. Hopefully, this positioning of Blair and belletrism will contribute to a more complete understanding of the cultural functions of belletristic rhetoric in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Historians of eighteenth-century print culture have debated the extent to which new genres of print such as novels, periodicals, and newspapers "created" new and distinct readerships. The same question, I think, can be profitably asked of rhetorics, particularly texts such as Blair's *Lectures* that went through many editions and presumably had a wide appeal. Whether Blair is merely describing his audiences, or whether by describing these audiences he is at the same time constructing them, is a complicated question. To what extent did Blair's *Lectures* participate in the construction of a capitalistic, liberal, and refined middle class culture, whether in Scotland or America? The answer to this question lies partially in defining who Blair's reading publics were. In the "Introduction" to his *Lectures*, Blair himself suggests who his imagined readers might have been:

Of those who peruse the following Lectures, some by the profession to which they addict themselves, or in consequence of their prevailing inclination, may have the view of being employed in composition, or in public speaking. Others, without any prospect of this kind, may wish only to improve their taste with respect to writing and discourse, and to acquire

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1 For an example, see Kathryn Shevelow's *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodicals*. 198
principles which will enable them to judge for themselves in that part of
literature called the Belles Lettres. (32)

Assuming, with apologies to Walter Ong, that the writer's audience is not always entirely a fiction, that it sometimes bears a correspondence to the social experiences and realities that inform a writer, Blair delineates two distinct audiences in this passage. The first is a male professional class who are regularly employed in "public speaking," namely, lawyers, clergy, and politicians. Traditionally, each of these professions assumed a broad-based humanistic and liberal education, with training in oratory and the classical languages at its core. This training prepared professionals to operate in the public sphere. Lawyers, clergy, and politicians were "public" individuals in the sense that they "represented" various social interests before in the public forums of the state— the courts, the senate, and the churches. The professional class spoke for the interests of the community, and in doing so, they helped to define the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of the sensus communis. Thus, in both training and function, each profession relied heavily on the ideal of the orator perfectus. Because they brokered political, social, and cultural power, their public authority was significant. Consequently, they usually (but not always) came from the upper classes of society. These professionals were trained in the universities, and they have long been an important focus of rhetorical education in the West. In fact, the purpose of a majority of the texts that comprise the "Rhetorical Tradition" is the training of a legal, political, and clerical class. In the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, neoclassical rhetorics from Thomas
Wilson’s *The Arte of Rhétorique* (1553) to John Ward’s *A System of Oratory* (1759) were used primarily to train lawyers and politicians how, in the words of Wilson, “to speake fully of all those questions, whiche by lawe and mannes ordinaunce are enacted, and appoynted for the use and profite of man” (Bizzell 589). By invoking this audience Blair is acknowledging that one potential readership for his *Lectures* are those professionals who occupy the traditional positions of power in government and society.\(^5\)

However, it is the other audience that Blair addresses, "those who may wish only to improve their taste with respect to writing and discourse," that signals an important transformation in the nature and social uses of rhetoric. In his *Lectures*, Blair articulated a new rationale for rhetoric that arose to meet the social, intellectual, and ideological demands of the eighteenth-century Edinburgh literati and mercantile classes. Whereas neoclassical traditions of eloquence focused on the public, persuasive, and contingent nature of rhetoric, and whereas its purpose was to train a professional class of orators in judicial and deliberative rhetoric, Blair held that the art of rhetoric was also a "speculative science" that leads us as private individuals to "the knowledge of ourselves" (33-34). This definition addressed a new audience for rhetoric, namely, those *private* citizens who were interested in

\(^5\) It is interesting to note that Blair includes a knowledge of "composition," or written discourse, as a prerequisite skill for professionals. This reflects the increasing reliance on printed material that had been occurring since the late 1500s. As the amount of print materials increased in eighteenth-century Scotland (and America), and as the professional classes became increasingly dependent on print, rhetoric began to adapt to these needs. On the other hand, an increasing reliance of printed material alone does not sufficiently explain the emergence of a "new" Scottish rhetoric.
acquiring "the taste and manners of the present age" (33). The concept of the private citizen is important in Blair's definition of rhetoric because it evidences his attempt to formalize a rhetorical theory and practice that retains the sensus communis inherent in a communitarian vision of society, but one that also incorporates the contractual and liberal theories of the individual and society that were circulating in the mid 1700s in Scotland. Influenced by this contractual liberalism, belletristic rhetoric posited an audience of individuals who were capable of intellectual and moral self-improvement. Rhetoric was, in the words of Blair's intellectual predecessor George Campbell, an important component in the "science of the human mind" that, if "properly conducted, leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves" (lxxiv).

Blair's (and Campbell's) grounding of belles lettres and taste in Common Sense absolutes such as faculty psychology, associationism, and notions of the sublime is an attempt to theorize rhetoric as a universal theory of communication that would, he hoped, explain the vexing relationship between language, thought, and action. But this concern was not strictly philosophical; rather, it was motivated as much by the changes occurring in the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world as it was by the Enlightenment spirit of inquiry. His notion of the private citizen is a result of the incorporation of contractual theories of government, society, and the individual. In the commercial and liberal society that Scottish Enlightenment

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* Nan Johnson examines how rhetoric expanded to meet the needs of a "private" audience in nineteenth-century America in her article "The Popularization of Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric: Elocution and the Private Learner."

201
thinkers imagined, individuals were free to develop their personalities through the refinement of manners and acquisition of luxury goods. Individuals no longer relied as much on the extensive social and psychological networks of support that defined the individual as an inseparable member of the community. Consequently, the public sphere was also a highly performative arena in which the external markings of refinement—from fashion and company to manners of speech and action—constituted the individual's identity. Blair's audience was the bourgeois or "middling class" readers who wanted to develop their aesthetic and critical abilities as a way to compete for status in cultural and political life—emulating their social superior while distancing themselves from the lower classes. Taste was a strategy for improvement and for maneuvering in this new performative social sphere.

Unlike the traditionally professional orators trained by neoclassical rhetoric, this new public was not as interested in the professional forums of "eloquence" as it was in written "composition" and learning how to analyze the style of others (33). This new emphasis on rhetoric as a self-fashioning art of taste and criticism targeted those private citizens who competed for status and distinction in the newly emerging

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7 Chapters two and three both examined how, given that classical republican theory held the autonomy of the political personality to be the basis of socio-political stability, the division of this personality resulting from the division of labor would transform the social order. This problem produced considerable anxiety among the Scottish thinkers, whose eventual response to this problem was to argue that the introduction of commerce and the arts implied historical progress, which, in turn, implied a progress in human nature. Reversing the republican civic assumption that self-interest introduced faction and precipitated the decay of government, Smith and others argued that self-interest had a positive influence on the commonwealth. Of course, this reversal served the classic purpose of ideology: to rationalize the conspicuous acquisition of goods and the growth of a capitalist society occurring the British colonies. Summarizing this transformation, Pocock argues that "manners" became a form of politics during this period.
marketplaces of commodities, print, styles, and ideas. Blair believed that in the
cultural life of latter eighteenth-century Britain, "imposture [could] never hold its
ground long," but his rhetoric offered readers what he himself sought to contain—a
strategy for social and cultural mobility. Particularly in America, the emergent
middle classes eagerly responded to a rhetoric of taste and criticism that courted "the
lastling approbation of the discerning" (31). Again, belletristic rhetoric operated in a
performative social sphere. Taste was so important to Blair's American readers
precisely because it was no longer the sole possession of the genteel ranks of
society. Now, taste could be bought and taught, a valuable asset for many upwardly
mobile individuals. Indeed, Blair's resonance with middle classes of liberal America
largely accounts for his enormous popularity.

Cultural historians such as Richard Bushman and Joseph Ellis stress the
importance of the dissemination of "ornamental" instruction and a polite culture of
manners, fashion, and belles lettres from the city to the county and from the upper
to the middle classes as a key element in the transformations occurring in post-
Revolutionary America. New types of instruction were an important vehicle for
socio-cultural change. Compared to Europe, literacy levels in America had always
been high, but during the latter eighteenth-century, more Americans were reading
(both men and women), and they were reading a wider range of materials. In
republican and protestant America, there was an almost universal agreement that the
ability to read and write by all the citizens was essential to the maintenance of
liberty. "In a republican government." Montesquieu had famously written. "the
whole power of education is required." But the issue of what type of education that
Americans should receive was a hotly contested topic which raised important
questions for the new nation: How much education was sufficient for American
citizens to preserve their liberties? What types of instruction would republican
citizens need? Would women's education differ from men's education? Finally, what was the role of the arts in the new republic?

Almost everyone could agree that the mechanical and natural sciences were
important to a young and industrious nation. However, the spread of the arts and
belles lettres down the social scale and into the countryside raised a host of
conflicting issues. Informed by powerful ideas of American exceptionalism, many
Americans believed that the United States was destined for greatness in the arts and
sciences and that a national literature would necessarily follow national
independence. What would be the character of this national literature? Puritanism
and republicanism both mistrusted the culture and literature of belles lettres because
of its focus on entertainment without a didactic purpose, suspecting that foreign
manners, fashions, and reading material such as sentimental fiction might introduce
foreign vices. "Ornamental" or "polite" instruction carried feminine associations
that many protestant-republicans thought would emasculate and enervate the
masculine and republican ideals on which republics were supposed founded (thus, the conservative reaction to the growing popularity of romances and sentimental
fiction). Voicing these concerns, one conservative Boston newspaper critic asked in
1785:
Did ever effeminacy with her languid train receive a greater welcome in society than at this day? New amusements are invented—new dissipations are introduced, to lull and enervate those minds already too much softened, poisoned and contaminated, by idle pleasures, and foolish gratifications. We are exchanging prudence, virtue, and economy, for those glaring specters of luxury, prodigality and profligacy. We are prostituting all our glory as a people; for new modes of pleasure, ruinous in their expenses, injurious to virtue, and totally detrimental to the well being of society. (qtd. in Shields 314)

On the other hand, the discourses of belles lettres and taste were accruing cultural capital during the latter eighteenth century in America. A level of civility, politeness, manners, and literary sophistication had been an important part of the eighteenth-century colonial gentry's social status and communal identity, and the middling classes increasingly sought to emulate these models of self-fashioning as the century progressed. Moreover, eighteenth-century historians, particularly Scottish historians such as David Hume and Adam Ferguson, were beginning to equate the level of a civilization with the level of its arts and literature. Many Americans simply took it as a matter of fact that a national literature would inevitably follow national independence (Ellis 29). Finally, a developing literary market would boost the commercial and industrial projections that Americans such as Alexander Hamilton were busy making for the new republic. All of these perspectives complicated the role of belles lettres in the new republic.
Royall Tyler, an aspiring American author in the 1790s, gives an interesting description of many of these issues. In 1797, Tyler published *The Algerine Captive*, a picaresque novel about American privateersmen and their quarrels with the Barbary pirates of North Africa. Speaking through his hero-narrator, who has been absent from America for seven years, Tyler notes in his "Preface" a drastic change in the cultural and literary sensibilities of the new republic. Upon his return to America, the narrator is struck by "the extreme avidity with which books of mere amusement were purchased and perused by all ranks of [Americans]" (23). When he left New England seven years before, "books of Biography, Travels, Novels, and modern Romances were confined to our sea ports; or, if known in the country, were read only in the families of the Clergymen, Physicians, and Lawyers" (22). Belles lettres, Tyler points out, was restricted both by geography and class (presumably, only educated professionals knew how to read--resist?--works of entertainment). When he returned, the narrator "found a surprising alteration in the public taste," and he attributes this "alteration" to the diffusion of books devoid of any instructional purpose: "In our inland towns of consequence, social libraries had been instituted, composed of books designed to amuse rather than instruct, and country booksellers, fostering the new born taste of the people, had filled the whole land modern Travels and Novels" (22). Did the benefits outweigh the costs, Tyler wondered? His answer is ambiguous. On the one hand, "this love of literature, however frivolous, is pleasing to the man of letters" because it suggests the emergence of some kind of literary culture and, just as importantly for a struggling
author like Tyler, a literary marketplace (23). On the other hand, the republican side of Tyler believes that this "alteration in the public taste" should be "deplored" because the books being sold and read "are not of our own manufacture" and because British novels teach the reader "to admire the levity and often the vices of the parent country" (23). But rather than ban the genres of the novel, travel, and romance, Tyler suggests another solution that would serve American national, commercial, and cultural interests: "we write our own books of amusement, and that they exhibit our own manners" (23).*

Despite the lack of an established profession of letters, interest in belles lettres increased steadily during the eighteenth century, especially in the decades following the Revolutionary War. As one historian of the period notes, belles lettres "furnished the major basis of cultural concern for post-Revolutionary America" (Ferguson 5). The number of periodicals that carried bellettristic materials multiplied, as did other popular genres such as novels, journals, travel writing, poetry, drama, and Addisonian essays of manners. Booksellers, printers, and publishers used the polite and popular literature of belles lettres to establish literary

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* While it was one of the first works by an American to be published in England, and while it was an important symbolic step towards the development of a national American literature, Tyler's sales of The Algerine Captive were modest at best. Indeed, Tyler's literary career is emblematic of the state of authorship in America before 1820. Graduating in 1776, Tyler wrote belles lettres in a variety of genres--plays, satirical essays, verse, and a novel. But, as other Federalist period authors such as Charles Brockden Brown and Joel Barlow also discovered, while the time was perhaps ripe for the beginning of a national literature, economic conditions were not yet ripe to support a profession of authorship. To bolster his meager literary compensation, Tyler, like several other literary-oriented Americans, pursued a legal career on the side--Tyler was, in fact, quite successful, eventually becoming the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Vermont.
markets in the seaport towns of Philadelphia, Boston, and New York and, as Tyler indicates, to develop markets in the countryside. In Philadelphia, Robert Bell, perhaps the first "mass-market" bookseller in America, argued for the necessity of bookstores, auctions, and exchanges so that belles lettres could be available to "every SON of ADAM, Farmer, Mechanic, or Merchant"; in other words, those "middling Class" readers "who cannot afford to keep large Collections of Books" (qtd. in Silverman 485). Even the traditional curriculum taught at many of the colonial colleges was not immune to these changes. Educators like Timothy Dwight of Yale and John Quincy Adams of Harvard wrote Addisonian essays, patriotic poems, travel accounts, and light verse. Several colleges added composition and criticism of belles lettres to their curricula (Halloran "Rhetoric" 157). In addition, some college students, unsatisfied with the traditional rhetorical education they were receiving, formed extra-curricular literary societies in which they used the rhetorical principles that they learned from Blair's Lectures to criticize each other's literary compositions (Potter 70). Together, these little occurrences suggest that a desire to write, speak, and judge, not just publicly and persuasively but also in a refined and polite manner, was becoming a social necessity for the middle as well as the upper classes. The rhetoric of taste and belles lettres (and the elocutionary rhetoric of Sheridan), easily accessible in texts such as Blair's Lectures, taught many Americans how to write and speak in a polite and refined style—and how to recognize such a style when they encountered it. Furthermore, it fit in with the democratic emphasis
on culture that arose as the social influence of the colonial gentry gave way to a larger middle class "civil" sphere of discourse and action.

This interest in fashion, manners, and the polite arts in general and the literature of belles lettres specifically was intricately connected to emergent notions of American nationalism and exceptionalism that came to the public's attention—indeed, was held before the public by those wanting to justify the Revolution—during the 1760s and 70s. The nationalistic dilemma this created in the minds of many Americans was acute. As provincials, the colonial gentry had looked towards the metropolitan centers of London and Paris for models of gentility and politeness. However, to justify political separation from England the leaders of the Revolution orchestrated an effective anti-British propaganda campaign that censured British "luxuries" such as tea and china. This anti-British sentiment extended to London manners, fashions, and literature as well. Furthermore, this sentiment outlived the Revolution and continued to be used by those who wanted to break all cultural ties with England. In his 1797 essay, "Remarks on the Manners, Government, and Debt of the United States," Noah Webster complained about the dangerous influence of foreign fashion and amusements: "The present ambition of American is. to introduce as fast as possible, the fashionable amusements of the European courts. Considering the former dependence of America on England, her descent, her connexion and present intercourse. this ambition cannot surprise us" (85).

Historian Joseph Ellis notes how the "unwieldy and implausible combination" of "providence, the millennium, freedom, commerce, and culture" that occurred in
the latter eighteenth century were "fused" together to form a national identity and vision of destiny for the newly-independent republic (10). Not only did many Americans in the period believe that the United States was destined for political greatness, but they also believed that it would become the new "seat" of the Muses. This prediction, explains Ellis, was based on the idea of *translatio studii*: the belief that civilization was moving from east to west and that America was destined to become the home of the arts and sciences (5). In 1726, the Anglican divine George Berkeley gave an eloquent and popular expression to this idea in his "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America":

There shall be sung another golden age,
The rise of empire and of arts,
The good and great inspiring epic rage,
The wisest heads and noblest hearts.

Not such as Europe breeds in her decay;
Such as she bred when fresh and young,
When heavenly flame did animate her clay.
By future poets shall be sung.

Westward the course of empire takes its sway;
The first four acts already past.
A fifth shall close the drama with the day;
Time's noblest offspring is the last.

Berkeley's poem was widely printed in the colonial press in the 1760s and 70s, and its popularity was based on "the upsurge of interest in America's cultural prospects that surfaced in the years immediately preceding the constitutional crisis with England" (7). The idea that the arts and sciences were inevitably moving west fit in nicely with the geographical telos of republicanism: many Americans believed that republicanism was migrating westward from Greece, to Rome, the Italian City-
States, Holland, England, and, eventually, America. In addition, the inevitability of a national greatness inherent in the idea of *translatio studii* easily conformed to protestant ideas about America’s millennial role in Christian history. In works such as John Trumbull’s *An Essay on the Use and Advantages of the Fine Arts*, delivered to the graduating class of Yale in 1770, and Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Philip Freneau’s *A Poem on the Rising Glory of America*, delivered as a commencement address at Princeton in 1771, a generation of revolutionary Americans who were understandably hesitant to break ties with the mother country could find psychological reassurance in these glorious predictions, indeed, the inevitability, of American political and cultural greatness (9). They could also take reassurance in the idea that a national literature would soon develop in the United States.

For Brackenridge and Freneau, as it was for Trumbull, the twin engines of liberty and commerce would drive American ascendancy in politics and culture:

"For commerce is the mighty reservoir / From whence all nations draw the streams of gain. / 'Tis commerce joins discover'd worlds in one." These lines from *A Poem on the Rising Glory of America* echo an important idea beginning to influence eighteenth-century thought on the role of belles lettres in the identity and national destiny of America, an idea that can be traced back to the Scottish discourses of commerce, civility, and taste that were first articulated in the writings of Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and David Hume. Lecturing on the relationship between rhetoric, commerce, and civility at the University of Glasgow in 1763, Smith emphatically stated that "'tis the introduction of commerce, or at least the opulence
that is commonly attendant of commerce, that first brings on the improvement of prose. Opulence and commerce commonly precede the improvement of arts and refinement of every sort" (132). Smith is, in effect, reversing an important republican assumption held by many Americans in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Whereas both puritanism and republicanism cast a suspicious eye towards the world pursuit of luxury and "opulence," Scottish Enlightenment thinkers recast the role of the acquisition of goods, particularly luxury items, in an increasingly capitalist and liberal society. Conspicuous consumption of goods and a free market economy are now presented as civilizing agents, and the arts as a measure of a nation's civility. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Adam Smith redefines the place of rhetoric in such a society. While poetry is "cultivated in the most rude and barbarous nations," the improvement of prose only occurs in civilized and commercial nations (131). Prose is "naturally the language of business"; it is "the style in which all the common affairs of life, all business and agreements, are made" (132). One of the students present at Smith's lecture was Hugh Blair, who was subsequently to write in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* that "language, style, and composition . . . mark the progress of society" (30).

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9 J. G. A. Pocock terms these two paradigms "virtue" and "commerce," arguing that many of the paradoxes inherent in eighteenth-century Anglo-American politics and society are the result of ongoing tensions between contractual, liberal notions of political economy ("commerce") and communitarian, republican notions of political economy ("virtue"). For a helpful summary, see his article "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century."
The reception of the discourses of commerce and civility in the eighteenth-century American colonies served to rationalize changes in the material and social lives of many colonists. These discourses presented the colonists, particularly the commercially-active urban classes, with a new socio-cultural paradigm through which to constitute a middling class consciousness and identity. Of course, there was resistance to the changes wrought by the introduction of commerce. On several occasions, the lower classes rioted to protest the often sudden fluctuations of prices on staple items such as bread (Foner 146-158). But by and large, commerce was readily incorporated into a complex of social and ideological structures that included emergent systems of democracy, capitalism, liberalism, and individualism—all of which the middling class used to construct a class identity. The trappings of refinement were an important part of this identity. Luxury items such as silver knives and forks, teacups and saucers, drapes, picture frames, and carpets, once reserved exclusively for the gentry class, became more widely available as paper money and booming trans-Atlantic markets turned the middle classes into a burgeoning culture of proto-capitalist consumers. Social boundaries fixed by traditional criteria such as wealth and family status weakened as a new class of merchants, artisans, and investors began to make money and connections in the new market economy of the eighteenth century. Between 1790 and 1850 the middling classes developed, in the words of Richard Bushman, a "vernacular gentility" that sought to emulate the refined gentility of the gentry class. "In keeping with the spirit of republican equality," argues Bushman. "people who lived their lives in a
private sphere took possession of gentility . . . . These middling people practiced many forms of polite behavior, from carrying handkerchiefs to carpeting their floors. Like others who absorbed gentility, they thought of life as a performance” (208).

Within this context of an emergent middling class culture of civility and politeness, an important avenue for the introduction of the rhetoric of taste and belles lettres was the monthly and quarterly periodical. The number of periodicals increased dramatically during the 1780s and 90s in the United States. While expectations were high for the periodical as a business and cultural venture, the economic obstacles involved in publishing created a host of difficulties for periodical editors and publishers. As the high number of magazine failures before 1800 shows, publishing was not a lucrative business. Printing was capital intensive, credit was unsure, and eighteenth-century America had not yet developed the networks of transportation and distribution that would provide the infrastructure for the market revolution in the nineteenth century. Another constant problem for early periodicals was finding enough original material to print. Editors and publishers could not pay much for original material, and there was as of yet no established literary marketplace capable of supporting a profession of authorship. Publishers and editors such as Isaiah Thomas, Mathew Carey, and others continually attempted

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Historians interested in rhetoric during the period, including myself, owe a large scholarly debt to the archival work of James Farrell and Joseph Noone, whose recently published article “Rhetoric, Eloquence, and Oratory in Eighteenth-Century American Periodicals: An Annotated Bibliography” provides a convenient—but not comprehensive—index to which periodicals printed or reprinted material on rhetoric.
to solicit original contributions from friends and subscribers. In addition, they excerpted and reprinted a great deal of previously published material. In this way, American periodicals were modelled on leading British magazines such as the popular London-based *Gentleman's Magazine* or Blackwood’s *Edinburgh Magazine*, and they continued the British tradition of the "miscellany" by incorporating a wide variety of subjects and material in a single publication.

In America, publishers and editors had to perform the difficult task of creating in the periodical a "democratic" genre that would appeal to the widest possible audiences while at the same time meeting the expectations and needs of a specific group of readers. In addition, most American publishers were concerned with providing "useful" (a common adjective in periodical titles) material. George Washington once stated to the Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey that he endorsed the dissemination of knowledge in magazines as beneficial to republicanism: "I consider such easy vehicles of knowledge more happily calculated than any other, to preserve the liberty, stimulate the industry and meliorate the morals of an enlightened and free People" (qtd. in Silverman 487). In short, editors and publishers presented the periodical as the ideal genre for a democratic and industrious nation. "Periodicals," notes the premier historian of the genre, "must be kept close to the people" (Mott 2). Charles Brockden Brown, in the "Preface" to his *The American Review and Literary Journal for the Year 1801*, reasons that when, now that our population is increased, our national independence secured, and our governments established, and we are relieved of the
necessities of colonists and emigrants, there is reason to expect more
attention to polite literature and science. Nothing, it is thought, will tend
more to excite this attention and to render the pursuits of knowledge more
compatible with those of business than those periodical publications which
impart information in small portions; by which, men engaged in active
occupations may gradually acquire a degree of intellectual cultivation and
improvement without any infringement of the time allotted to their customary
and necessary concerns. (33)

The periodical, argues Brown, is the ideal genre of the bustling and commercially-
minded middle classes. It substitutes "information in small portions" for a
traditional and prolonged college education, while at the same time imparting in the
reader "a degree of intellectual cultivation and improvement" that a college
education renders. Furthermore, the periodical is the ideal "literary repository" to
cultivate an American tradition of belles lettres that "will at length generate and
continue a race of artists and authors, purely indigenous, and who may vie with
those of Europe" (34). In the new national republic, the means of moral and
intellectual improvement would be available to all who could read, and "polite
letters" would be an important component of this civilizing process.

Periodicals in the eighteenth century were "repositories" of whatever the
editor deemed entertaining and instructive—and whatever readers deemed interesting
enough to keep reading. Thus, they provide an important window on what types of
material that carried cultural capital. For example, the Massachusetts Magazine.
which was published by Isaiah Thomas between 1789 and 1796, was subtitled a *Monthly Museum of Knowledge and Rational Entertainment, Containing Poetry, Musick, Biography, History, Physick, Geography, Morality, Criticism, Philosophy, Mathematicks, Agriculture, Architecture, Chemistry, Novels, Tales, Romances, Translations, News, Marriages and Deaths, Meteorological Observations, Etc., Etc.* (qtd. in Mott 6). Modern readers are perhaps struck by the variety of material that was placed side-by-side in early periodicals, but it must be remembered that eighteenth-century readers lived before the emergence of notions of expertise and specialization. They assumed that both the arts and sciences were intellectually and morally improving, and this assumption was an important frame through which readers encountered belles lettres. For example, in the first issue of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, an anonymous letter reveals one expectation that readers had of belles lettres and taste: "I am one of those who have sincerely wished for a Magazine published in this Commonwealth. Such a publication . . . would answer many valuable purposes . . . It would give birth to the literary emulation and effort . . . It would improve the taste, language and manners of the age" (I: 7-8). In order to contribute to the development of a national literature and improve the "taste, language and manners" of its readers, the *Massachusetts Magazine* carried a good deal of "original American compositions" in prose and poetry, the latter of which, notes one historian, were often "sentimental and didactic" in character (Chielens 245). It also carried several articles on eloquence, taste, and elocution that taught its middling class readers how to speak and write. This essays on rhetoric included

Another successful magazine editor of the period was the Philadelphia resident Mathew Carey. Carey, an immigrant who had worked as a journalist in Ireland, started and edited two of the most influential periodicals in the new republic. He began the first, *The Columbian Magazine*, in 1786. The *Columbian* was published between September, 1786 and December, 1792, but Carey served as editor for only the first three months. However, his initial influence was great, and the *Columbian* served as a model for many other periodicals during the period (Mott 94-99).\(^{12}\) In his opening "Preface," Carey declared that "the great purpose of *The Columbian Magazine* has been to communicate essays of entertainment, without sacrificing decency to wit, and to disseminate the works of science, without sacrificing intrinsic utility to a critical consideration of style and composition" (qtd. in Chielens 112). It carried a wide variety of material, from essays on politics and mechanics to biography, essays on manners, and poetry. The *Columbian* and other periodicals regularly published excepts and essays on the rules of style and delivery

\(^{11}\) Perkin's "Oration on Eloquence" was latter reprinted in Caleb Bingham's popular rhetorical speaker *The Columbian Orator* in 1797.

\(^{12}\) In March 1790, the new editor of the *Columbian*, William Young, changed the title to *The Universal Asylum, and Columbian Magazine*. 

218
to provide for a stylist guidelines for solicited and unsolicited material and as a means to educate readers about the critical principles they should bring to polite reading and writing in general. In its November-December 1792 edition, the *Columbian* published the British rhetorician Henry Felton’s "Rules for Forming a Just and Eloquent Style," which taught writers that "a composition is then perfect when the matter arises out of the subject; when the thoughts are agreeable to the matter, and the expression suitable to the thoughts" (113). Such a unity of thought and style is based on "plainness and perspicuity" (113). Here the editor of the *Columbian* is using Felton who, in turn, is using the critical principles of the Scottish rhetoricians George Campbell and Hugh Blair, in order to establish a set of stylistic conventions for his readers and contributors. A year before, the *Columbian* had reprinted an essay entitled "On Elegance of Language," a rhetorical analysis of the style of a passage from Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

The *Columbian* served as a prototype for an even more successful periodical. *The American Museum, or Universal Magazine*, which Carey started in January 1787 and which ran until December 1792. Beginning with less than twenty subscribers, Carey’s first issue surpassed all expectations by selling a thousand copies—its entire printing (Mott 101). As with the *Columbian*, Carey excerpted and reprinted pieces on the arts and sciences, from agriculture and natural science to literature and architecture. In fact, Carey made no attempt to include any original material in his magazine for the first two years of publication (101). Carey’s literary intent was to introduce his readers to a wide variety of belles lettres.
literature, and particularly to original American compositions. By readily publishing original American poetry, Carey was instrumental in the success of several post-Revolutionary poets, including Philip Freneau, David Humphreys, Timothy Dwight, and John Trumbull (Chielens 22). In addition, Carey reprinted an interesting array of essays on rhetoric and satirical orations to teach Americans how to read the belles lettres that he supplied them in his pages. The critical essays that he published included Joseph Brown Ladd's "Critical Reflections on Style," which cites both Quintilian and Blair as authorities on composition, and Timothy Dwight’s "The Friend" series of essays, which include "No. I. On Writing Essays" and "No. IV. Rejecting Old Critical Standards." In addition, the July 1791 issue carried Dwight’s "Essay on Taste," which defined taste as "the faculty by which we discern propriety and beauty" and argued that an improvement in taste "will add to our national dignity and reputation" (51). Carey’s American Museum also carried several satirical orations that focus on the excesses of style and delivery. The following short text entitled "Eloquence" and written by "Anonymous" appeared in the August 1791 issue:

A Gentleman at the bar, who lately wrote a treatise on oratory, being desirous of giving his friends a proper idea of his manuscript, engaged six or eight of them to come and hear him read it. The company being seated, and the reader in the centre of the room, he began with much gravity: and having in three or for pages described the nature of eloquence, and then thus continued: "This being premised, it follows, that the great, the grand, the
first—I had almost said the only—requisite to make an orator is"—here was a short pause; and one of the company, taking advantage of it, added, in a familiar tone of voice, "A very large, and a very well powdered periwig."

The anecdote is amusing because the readers are (supposedly) familiar with the type of oratorical and stylistic excess that the author lambasts. Furthermore, its attack on lawyers and their overly-formalistic speech reveals an emerging American notion of a "democratic eloquence" that mixed the plain and high styles with the diction and cadences of colloquial speech (Cmiel 23-30). Finally, *The American Museum* carried several essays on education, including pieces by John Witherspoon, Benjamin Rush, and Benjamin Franklin's much reprinted "Idea of an English School," which argued that children should begin to learn rhetoric and belles lettres as early as the third grade. There are other selections on rhetoric not mentioned here. The point is that Carey saw in rhetoric, particularly belletristic rhetoric, a commodity that met the two criteria of successful periodical material: it was entertaining and instructive, and it was marketable.

While some periodicals carried essays on the theory of composing and delivery, most published either examples of rhetorical criticism or satirical orations that lambasted the stylistic excesses of rhetoric, particularly the claims and practices of the elocutionists. Models and practice, it seems, were valued more by the reading public than rhetorical theory (but, of course, the practice implied a specific theory of rhetoric). For example, the *Boston Magazine*, which was published
between 1783 and 1786, began excerpting Blair's *Lectures* the same year that it was first published in London. This series began in the December 1783 issue with a short excerpt entitled "On Criticism and Genius" that explained some of the theoretical rationales and definitions informing belletristic rhetoric. Significantly, the rest of the excerpts that the *Boston Magazine* published were examples of belletristic criticism. In the next issue it carried five short excerpts from Blair on the "character" of style in Swift, Harvey, Tillotson, Temple, and Addison. The following issue carried three more excerpts: "A Comparative View of French and English Divines, Respecting the Eloquence of the Pulpit. From Dr. Blair," "Character of Shaftesbury's Style From Dr. Blair's Lectures," and "Character of Bolingbroke's Style From Dr. Blair's Lectures." Over the next two years, there were three more excerpts from Blair. But the editors of the *Boston Magazine* did not limit themselves to Blair. In its 1785 March, April, and May issues, the *Boston Magazine* abridged another popular rhetoric in eighteenth-century America, John Ward's *Elements of Oratory, or Rhetoric Made Easy*.

What the presence of rhetoric in periodicals suggests, I think, is that editors recognized in these rhetorical exercises and models a valuable commodity. Rhetorical criticism helped editors meet their reader's expectations of a genre that would supply "useful" material which was intellectual and morally improving. Moreover, it suggests that editors deemed belletristic rhetoric to be a marketable commodity in which the reading public was genuinely interested. Thus, eighteenth- and early nineteenth century periodicals participate in a dialogic relationship with
their readers. They teach their readers how to read and write in a proper style; at the same time, they respond to the expectations and needs of its readers. Moreover, because periodicals reached much wider audiences than the number of students who encountered rhetorics at college, they introduced a much wider segment of the population to the current rhetorical principles and models of composition, style, and criticism based on both classical authorities such as Quintilian and Cicero and modern rhetoricians such as Hugh Blair and John Holmes. At the same time, periodicals carried original belletristic compositions that readers could rhetorically criticize and emulate. In this way, the belletristic rhetoric advocated by periodicals such as the *Columbian, American*, and *Boston Magazines* serves as an important constitutive influence in the formation of middling class rhetorical competencies.

Whereas many in the middle classes were actively involved in the creation of a new literary "democracy" of letters, conservative Federalists were alarmed at the political and cultural changes occurring in the United States. Many Federalists saw in their recent political defeat to the Jeffersonian Republicans in the elections of 1800 a sign of the disintegration of the republic that the Federalist signers of the Constitution had worked so hard to achieve. Classical political theory taught that

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13 My thoughts on the Federalists have been influenced by the work of two excellent historians, each of whom pushed beyond the received historical opinions of their time and sought to recover the intellectual world of the Federalists after 1800. Linda Kerber's work on the "articulate Federalists" has taught other historians that the Federalists were not only, or even primarily, bitter in defeat, but that they did indeed have an intellectual, moral, and social vision of the new republic worthy of study. The literary historian Lewis Simpson has rescued the literary culture of the Boston Federalists from the damning judgement of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who described his father's generation as "that early ignorant and transitional Month-of-March, in our New England culture" (qtd. in Simpson 5).
republics inevitably "slide," to use Fisher Ames' loaded verb, into democracies. It appeared to the Federalists that all of the safeguards that they had put into the Constitution—a strong, centralized government, the separation of powers, the distancing of politics from the people—to arrest the decline of the republic were, in the end, useless. "Colloquial politicks," according to an article published in the October 1807 issue of the Federalist *Monthly Anthology*, "have made with us thousands of blockheads, and crammed the heads of men of good sense with more stuff than ever a quack packed into the stomach of a sick man" (IV 542). If American politics and society continued on their present course the inevitable result would be a revolution similar to the French Revolution of 1789 that, in the eyes of the Federalists, destroyed the stable political and social fabric of France. For evidence of this disintegration in America, Federalists pointed to, among other things, the spread of the culture of politeness and civility down the social scale. They readily translated this belief in the stability of the national republic into a belief in the necessity for a stable and authoritarian republic of letters. In the view of the Federalists, the "elite rhetorical world" that characterized the republic of letters in the 1790s and early 1800s was being threatened by the increasing popularity of new belles-lettres literary genres, new modes of rhetorical address, and the rhetoric of taste. Even the insistent calls for a democratic national literature that would reflect, in the words of Royall Tyler, the "manners, customs, and habits" of the United States threatened the republic of letters. Delivering the Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard in 1807, another conservative Federalist, Reverend Theodore Dehon,
observed that "through the innovating spirit of the times the republick of letters may have its dignity and prosperity endangered by sliding inadvertently into a democracy" (IV 472).

Ousted from power, Federalists were forced to rethink their own role in American public life. If representative government denied them a role in the political institutions of the country, some thought, then they would turn to cultural institutions such as the press and found literary-political periodicals. Thus, in the wake of the disastrous 1800 elections, several Federalist periodicals were founded, including Joseph Dennie's Philadelphia-based Port Folio and the Boston-based Monthly Anthology, the latter of which I will examine in more detail below. In the pages of these periodicals, conservative Federalists appropriated notions of rhetorical education based on taste and belles lettres for their own political purposes. Indeed, Federalists had begun to realize that taste and belles lettres specifically, and the Scottish Common Sense realism on which it was based in general, could be an important means to homogenize the literary tastes and material of the emerging middle class. Furthermore, with themselves as the arbiters of literary taste, these same Federalists could restore order to the republic letters that they thought was "sliding into the mire of democracy." In the 1770s, civic eloquence, based on a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{14}}\text{For example, Samuel Knox, in his Plan for a Liberal Education (1799), argues that belles lettres and "polite learning is found by experience to be friendly to all that is amiable and laudable in social intercourse, friendly to morality. It has a secret but powerful influence in softening and meliorating the disposition. True and correct taste directly tends to restrain the extravagances of passion by regulating the nurse of that passion, a disordered imagination" (8-9). Although not a conservative Federalist, Knox's thoughts on belles lettres indicate how educational reformers were beginning to justify the role of polite literature in the curriculum.} \]
classical curriculum, was considered essential in the development of independent, disinterested, and rational citizens. By the latter 1790s, a new rhetoric of taste and politeness, once associated only with female education, was itself being justified as a means to control the passions and improve one's social distinction.

Given the size and diversity of the new republic, reasoned the Federalists, the ability of belles lettres to provide some kind of sensus communis and unify the republic was important if the United States were to continue as a stable and ordered republic. Some Federalists found in taste and belles lettres a means to "civilize" (i.e. channel and contain) the political passions of the people, nor did they have to look far for rationales that would justify this use of taste. American colleges and seminaries were bastions of Common Sense realism, and conservative Federalists were, almost to a man, formed in these orthodox institutions. Like the syllogistic disputation of Ramist rhetoric a century before, Common Sense realism served to rationalize orthodoxy and a conservative social order. According to the historian of ideas I. Woodbridge Riley, Common Sense realism was favored

by the peculiar combination of church and college. [In America] not only was the philosophy of reality convenient, compact, and teachable . . . but it was also an eminently safe philosophy, which kept undergraduates locked in so many intellectual dormitories, safe from the dark speculations of materialism or the beguiling allurements of idealism. . . Therefore, to prevent the undermining of the faith, college professors took philosophy
seriously and not speculatively, and a religious bias helped to determine the
success of realism in education. (476)

In his *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (1801). Samuel Miller wrote that
Scottish Common Sense realism "consists in the doctrine that the mind perceives not
merely the ideas or images of external objects but the external objects themselves"
(qtd. in Charvat 36). It was a system of thought intended to refute the "idealism of
Berkeley and the skepticism of Hume" by grounding knowledge and experience in
"the common sense of mankind as a tribunal paramount to all subtleties of
philosophy" (36). Two reasons that Common Sense realism was so popular in
America, according to Charvat, were "its appeal to the common sense of the average
man as opposed to the subtlety of the philosopher" and because of "its support of
religious faith through its affirmation of the reality of our intuitive convictions" (37).
Thus, Scottish realism is very much a modern reception of the rhetorical and social
ideal of the *sensus communis*, a concept to which Common Sense is etymologically
linked. As college-educated men, the literary editors and critics who wrote for these
Federalist periodicals were heavily influenced by Scottish realism. According to
Charvat, "the chief influences on the mind of the American critic were Scottish
criticism and Scottish philosophy, particularly the Common Sense realist ideal of
taste articulated in Kames and its subsequent discussion in Blair" (36).

In his *Elements of Criticism*. Henry Home, Lord Kames constructed a critical
and aesthetic theory of rhetoric on the principles of Common Sense realism. The
types of claims that he makes reveal the appeals to intuition, universalism, order.
consensus, and "common sense" that define Scottish realism. Relying on faculty psychology, Kames assumes that all individuals possess an internal faculty of taste capable of responding to pleasure and beauty. His *Elements of Criticism* is an attempt to discover a rational system of criticism based on this faculty response. As is characteristic of much Scottish Enlightenment thought, Kames begins his chapter entitled "Standard of Taste" with a sociological rather than an aesthetic observation on the inevitable divisions in the social order. Every individual possesses taste to some degree, but "nature in her scale of pleasures has been sparing of divisions: she hath wisely and benevolently filled every division with many pleasures, in order that individuals may be contented with their own lot without envying that of others" (II 362). Since "many hands must be employed to procure us the conveniences of life," Kames reasons that the degree of taste that different people possess must be different because if all individuals possessed "a taste too refined" then they would "crowd some employments, leaving others no less useful, totally neglected" (364). For Kames, the division of labor and society necessitate the division of taste. Otherwise, the refined "leisure" class, of which Kames himself was a member, would be overrun and noone would perform the manual labor of society. In short, Kames bases his concept of taste on a vision of a conservative social order: in effect, he is saying that while all individuals are sensitive to pleasure and beauty to some degree, only the leisure classes are sufficiently refined to be sensible to and judge the high art of eighteenth century civilization.
Kames then turns to a question that had vexed eighteenth-century philosophers and rhetoricians: Is there a standard of taste? "Do we not talk of a good and a bad taste, of a right and a wrong taste? . . . Are such criticisms absurd and void of common sense?" (364). To answer this question, Kames invokes the intuitive and universalist principles of Common Sense realism, arguing that "what is universal must have a foundation on nature. If we can reach that foundation, the standard of taste will no longer be a secret" (364). As the rhetoric of Common Sense realism reveals, the premises are self-evident to Kames (and should be to everyone): "With respect to the common nature of man" and "We are so constituted as to conceive this common nature" (365). In the end, Kames' answer to the question is a tautology: what is right is conformable to "the common nature of man" while the "common nature . . . is not only invariable, but also perfect or right; and consequently that individuals ought to be made conformable to it" (364). In the rhetoric of Common Sense, Kames argues that what is right conforms to a common standard while deviation from this standard makes "an impression upon us of imperfection, irregularity, or disorder" (364). The authority of the common standard, "even upon the most grovelling souls, is so vigorous as to prevail over self-partiality and to make them despise their own taste compared with the more elevated taste of others" (366). Who will get to ascertain these common standards and arbitrate whether a work conforms or deviates? Obviously, those with "more elevated taste." Here, Kames' answer provides the rationalization for a new kind of orator perfectus: the "man of letters" or literary critic who, because of superior
refinement and taste, will be able to judge if a work is conformable to the common
sense— the *sensus communis*— of the community. Unlike the contingent nature of the
*sensus communis* found in civic humanist writings from Isocrates to Vico, Common
Sense realism locates knowledge in the fixed and universal standards of nature.

In the critical principles that informed their periodicals, Federalists relied
primarily on the aesthetic and critical thought of Kames (who had a major influence
on Blair as well). There were at least thirty one American editions of Lord Kames
*Elements of Criticism*, the last one published in 1883. The names of the Scottish
rhetoricians Lord Kames and Hugh Blair "were, at one time or another, on the lips
of almost every American critic, and well they might be, for the works of these men
were almost household books in America," and the influence of these two
rhetoricians was "universal and pervasive" on the American literary scene. Some
Federalists saw in the Scottish Common Sense-based rhetoric of taste and belles
lettres a potential strategy to homogenize the attitudes and values of the population at
large. Kames had written that "a just taste in the fine arts, by sweetening and
harmonizing the temper, is a strong antidote to the turbulence of passion" (I 10).
Just as importantly, the idea of a common standard was attractive to conservative
American Federalists who, ousted from the institutions of political power, saw in
Scottish Common sense realism the justification for a new type of public figure, a
new *orator perfectus* who would preside over the literary republic of letters. They
would do this primarily through the practice of literary review, which, I would
argue, is an attempt to (re)establish a *sensus communis* very much in line with the
one that the statesman-orator and the minister commanded in seventeenth and eighteenth-century America.

One group of Federalists who used Common Sense realism to (re)establish social authority and order in the republic was the Boston-based Anthology Society. Named the Anthologists because of their editorship and publication of the *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* (1803-1811), they met weekly as a social group—the "Anthology Society"—to discuss politics and literature over dinner. The Society contained several prominent ministers, lawyers, and educators, and, because of the social and professional positions of its members, it had an influence far beyond its small number and location. In addition, the *Monthly Anthology* was a direct forerunner of the influential *North American Review*, and the first editor of the *Review*, William Tudor, Jr., was a prominent early member of the Anthology Society. The Anthologists recognized that the struggle over the proper forms of rhetorical address, style, and education was also a struggle for the social and cultural control of the new republic. They were shocked not only at their own political misfortunes but also at what they considered the genteel pretensions of the

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15 In this chapter I designate this group of Federalists as the Anthologists in order to keep them distinct from the other varieties of Federalism in early America. In her study *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America*, Linda Kerber notes that there was a variety of Federalist political responses to the social and ideological changes occurring in the 1790s and early 1800s. The Anthologists represent a larger response to what was perceived to be a crisis of order by a class of class of "articulate Federalists" who, "representing an intellectual rather than a social stratum, . . . were impressed not by the accomplishments and principles of the Jeffersonians but by the failures and contradictions. Their resentment of Jefferson was compounded not only out of jealousy for his position, but out of a genuine fear for the security and stability of the republic under his administration" (xiv).

231
middle and even the lower classes. These pretensions were evident both at the polls and in the multiplication of reading materials and print genres that the "New Rhetoric" of taste and belles lettres was enabling. The time has come "to control the revolutionary phrenzy which has pervaded the republic of letters" wrote the Anthologist John McKean in the May 1807 issue of the *Monthly Anthology* (IV 237).

One of the most prominent members of the Anthologists, Joseph Stevens Buckminster, saw in the republic of letters an analogue to the Federalist ideal of the American republic: "The commonwealth of learning is the only permanent example of pure and original democracy. In this state under the protection of truth and reason, whose authority alone is acknowledged, wars may be carried on with the utmost innocence, though not always with impunity; for here every man is a sovereign, and every man is also under the jurisdiction of every other" (*MA* III 21). In a Phi Beta Kappa oration delivered at Harvard in 1809 entitled "The Dangers and Duties of Men of Letters," Buckminster argued that the "man of letters" should serve a role very much like Cicero in the Roman republic, taking an active rather than a passive role in the cultural (and moral) formation of the new nation:

The history of letters does not at this moment suggest to me a more fortunate parallel between the effects of active and inactive learning than the well known figures of Cicero and Atticus . . . like you, they were citizens of a republick. They lived in an age of learning and of dangers, and acted upon opposite principles, when Rome was to be saved, if saved at all, by the virtuous energy of her most accomplished minds. If we look now for
Atticus, we find him in the quiet of his library, surrounded with his books; while Cicero was passing through the regular course of publick honours and services . . . . do not go and repose in the easy chair of Atticus, but refresh your virtues and your spirits with the contemplation of Cicero. (qtd. in Simpson 99-100)

Save the republic of letters and you will save the national republic, Buckminster implores his Harvard audience. By fashioning yourselves after Cicero, you can rescue the republic from "the awful history of our own times" (98).

In this way, Anthologists such as Buckminster articulated a new ideal of orator perfectus—the "man of letters"—that attempted to reinforce the cultural and political order in American society by grounding critical rationales of taste in Scottish Common Sense philosophy. The civic humanist ideal of Cicero as an orator perfectus was appropriated in the Federalist project of self-fashioning, while the entire cultural agenda of the Federalist "men of letters" was warranted by the Common Sense principles of taste conveyed in Kames and Blair. If they could not control the political institutions of the United States, Federalists rationalized, perhaps they could control its cultural life through literary institutions such as literary reviews. Thus, Federalist periodicals such as the Monthly Anthology constitute an important response to the cultural changes being wrought by the rhetoric of taste and belles lettres introduced into America in texts such as Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres.
CONCLUSION

Whether they were Federalists or Antifederalists, and whether they inhabited the "elite rhetorical world" of the colonial gentry, the emergent sphere of belles lettres and polite literature, or were located somewhere between the two, all of the participants in the events surrounding the American Revolution perceived it as a distinctively rhetorical and literary event. The leaders of the revolutionary generation, figures such as Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington who occupy our national mythos as "Founding Fathers," perceived themselves as actors in the last act of an important historical drama. Many during the period thought that the creation of the American republic on the ruins of Europe's corrupt and oppressive ancien regimes was the fulfillment of both Christian and republican history. Many other people besides those figures who would continue to live in history and on the back of American currency believed in the unique and exceptional nature of the new American republic, a psychological expectation that was necessary given the difficulty of breaking political, social, and cultural ties with their mother country. Some of these early Americans put their
experiences during the period into print. People wrote a great deal about national identity: they debated with themselves and others in coffeehouses and on the page exactly what type of a nation the new American republic should constitute. A "nation." in the minds of eighteenth-century Americans, encompassed more than a set of institutions and a system of laws. Rather, the form of a government implied a type of people and society. When Montesquieu wrote his *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), his purpose was summed up in the title: to examine how the laws, or the political constitution of a government, have a sociological effect on the people in that state. Looking for historical precedents for a new government, the leaders of the revolutionary generation turned to the discourse of republicanism, and consequently began to sell this political ideology to the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies.

Together, leaders and followers generated and published a great deal of literature in pamphlets, essays, public and private letters, newspaper articles, editorials, and journals. What does this proliferation of print have to do with

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1 There are many examples of this. Most people are familiar to some degree with the writings of the "Founding Fathers," but there are other examples as well. Women such as Elizabeth Drinker kept extensive daily diaries that record their impressions of both public events and everyday occurrences during the period. Other voices survive as well, one of the most interesting of which is William Manning’s *The Key of Liberty*. Manning, a self-educated farmer from Massachusetts, took the republican dictum that republics survive by the virtue of an educated citizenry to heart and wrote a remarkable book of political observations that called for the democratic redistribution of wealth and the unionization of the mechanic and agrarian interests against those of the commercial elite. While highly-educated authors such as John Dickinson and Crevecouer wrote in the "Letters from a Farmer" genre, Manning actually was a farmer who believed that it was every citizen’s duty to participate in the public life of the *polis*.
rhetoric? First, as other historians have so masterfully demonstrated, the American Revolution was very much a literary revolution; it was driven as much (if not more) by political propaganda and pamphlet wars as it was by muskets and cannons. The Continental Congress even proposed to pay the English playwright Richard Sheridan the enormous sum of seven thousand dollars to come to the colonies and write pro-American propaganda during the Revolution. Fortunately, another Englishman who had recently immigrated to Philadelphia, Thomas Paine, provided his services for free. My point here is that a great deal of importance was attached to writing the United States of America into existence, both in political documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the tremendous amount of what might best be described of as "public sphere" literature. The leaders of the revolution quite literally wrote the American Revolution into existence—it was an rhetorical act of persuasion.

Just as importantly, in their enthusiastic recovery of republicanism the leaders of the revolutionary generation reintroduced the civic humanist tradition of eloquence into mid-1700s America. As we saw in chapter two, republicanism and civic humanist eloquence were closely related in the West, and it is no coincidence that many of the rhetoricians included in the "Rhetorical Tradition" also wrote about politics, particularly the virtues of republics. Reading the political and public literature written during the revolutionary period, one is struck by the large number of references to rhetoric, eloquence, and orators—not to rhetoric as a formal system of theory and tropes but to representations of eloquence and the ideal orator, to
notions of a *sensus communis*, to ideas of public voice, to the rhetorical act of declaration, and to many other rationales and ideals that have defined civic humanist rhetoric in the West. As we saw in chapter three, the *Federalist Papers* contain many allusions to the desirability of Ciceronian orators and rational deliberation in a national government while they deplore the base appeals to the passions made by demagogues.

It is not an accident that an interest in civic humanist rhetoric emerged at the same time that Americans were using the political discourse of republicanism to rationalize and justify a revolution. Indeed, these two discourses of rhetoric and politics were mutually constituting for many in the revolutionary generation, and in the debates on political representation, the proper character of the statesman, and the role of public opinion in the political process it is difficult to determine where politics ends and where rhetoric begins. This is particularly true because republicanism often expressed itself through notions of voice: representatives would "voice" the interests of their constituents; public opinion was the will of the *vox populi*, or "common voice." During the revolutionary period, politics was rhetoric by other means. In particular, the civic humanist tradition of eloquence provided revolutionary Americans who were trying to imagine the ideal character of the citizen and the state, and the best relationship between the two, with a conceptual vocabulary or framework with which to approach these issues. Moreover, for the historian interested in understanding the effects and influences of rhetoric on how people thought about identity, community, and nationalism, the intersection of
rhetoric and politics in this political and public literature is a promising site to begin the investigation.

The models and examples conveyed in civic humanist rhetoric also influenced Americans' perceptions of themselves as individuals, as political parties, and as a nation at large. Thus, the role of rhetoric in the process of national self-fashioning is another important site that reveals the central role that rhetoric played during the period. Patterning themselves on the great statesmen orators of the past who they read about in the classically-based school curriculum and in the colonial press, revolutionaries created public personae designed to invoke the authority and ideologies associated with these rhetorical political ideals. This process of self-fashioning worked on an individual level and on a collective level. Indeed, as early socio-political 'interests' began to coalesce into nascent political parties, they often sought to define themselves through these models of eloquence, the orator perfectus, and the ideal sensus communis or polis. As we saw in chapter three, the Federalists and Antifederalists, and later the Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans, used representations of eloquence, the orator, and the polis to define themselves, to advance their own visions of the type of government and citizenry that should define the United States, and to vilify their political opponents.

Rhetoric was also implicated in defining the shifting boundary between public and private during the period. Dominant discourses of rhetoric imply notions of human nature and social order as well as a theory of persuasive speech. Traditional republican discourse defined a communal vision of society and a holistic notion of
human nature. According to this idea, rationality and disinterest are a product of economic, social, and political independence, and only independent and rational citizens could speak in the public and political sphere. In effect, this limited the networks of power and publicity to educated and propertied white male gentry. By nature and by social order, dependents were all those classes of individuals who were irrational and subject to the sway of the passions. Dependents were those members of the extended household—the women, children, servants, and slaves—who were legally dependent on the master of the household. Furthermore, dependents were all those classes or social interests below the gentry in eighteenth-century colonial society who deferred to the superior nature of those above them. They had no independent voice; rather, their interests were voiced by their social superiors who presumably were more qualified to judge in public matters. To a great extent, republicanism performed the classic ideological function of legitimating the operative power structures on colonial society, and the Federalist rhetoric of consensus and rational deliberation that is present in the political documents of the period functioned to mask the conflicts that were occurring.

As we have seen, there were various challenges to this ideal and various conflicts that defined the revolutionary American political scene, particularly as contractual theories of individuality and government began to accrue cultural capital in the eighteenth century. And it is the tension between communitarian and contractual notions of individuality and society that resulted in the complex and conflicted nature of politics during the period. Couched in communitarian terms.
republicanism was used to justify a hierarchical, patriarchal, deferential, and static social order; couched in contractual terms, republicanism was used to argue for political franchise and accessibility to the political process. The tension between these two impulses created one of the central problems for the Federalists of the period: how to grant political franchise (a public voice) to a large body of the population as contractual liberalism demanded but to limit this involvement in practice. To solve this dilemma, various and often competing representations of eloquence, the ideal orator, and the \textit{polis} were used by different groups who sought either access to public life or to restrict public life. In their public addresses during the Constitution ratification debates, the arguments against the Constitution made by the Antifederalists were limited by a perception that their rustic and colloquial speech was ineffective when judged against that of the eloquent Federalist orators. While the social interests represented by the Antifederalists eventually constructed a persuasive public voice and persona (the emergence of which is witnessed by the fact that the Jeffersonian Republicans eventually defeated the Federalists in the 1800 elections), women had to wait for decades before they could construct public personas and voices that could effectively challenge the patriarchal constructions of oratory and public speech which defined the American political scene.

However, civic humanist rhetoric was not the only discourse of rhetoric circulating during the period. After about 1780, the Scottish "New Rhetoric" of taste and belles lettres also had an important influence on how different groups thought about American cultural and political identity. The successful reception of
the "New Rhetoric" in America had everything to do with the changes that were occurring during the period. The civil and performative rhetoric of taste and belles lettres was an important component of the emerging middle class consciousness, and its uses can be traced in a multitude of social and cultural sites. Like civic humanist rhetoric, the rhetorics of taste and belles lettres were variously configured and employed, depending on their contexts of use. The emerging middling class in America recognized in taste and the literature of belles lettres a means with which to piece together social identities in the increasingly performative sphere that defined the polite behavior of the middle class. Taste was also used for socially conservative purposes as well. Like civic humanist rhetoric, Federalists used the rationales from the Scottish rhetorics to channel and control the political passions of the people. As we saw in chapter four, the scientific rationales that supported Scottish rhetorics were used by scientists such as Benjamin Rush to theorize new roles for communication, language, and voice in society. Thus, as more and more people claimed the liberal right to speak and act in public, rhetoricians responded by expanding the scope and definitions of rhetoric. No longer a theory of public and persuasive discourse confined to the professional classes, rhetoric was redefined as, in the word of George Campbell, "a great art of communication" that encompassed all modes and subjects.

In the minds of many latter eighteenth-century Americans, the events surrounding the Revolutionary War comprised a liminal episode of history where old institutions, ideologies, and values were being openly criticized and rejected and
new models of the individual and government were being debated. Because they are tied to such institutions, ideologies, and values, received ideas about rhetoric were also being reexamined and reconfigured. Indeed, out of this liminal episode emerged the synthesis of neoclassical, Scottish epistemological, and belletristic rhetorics that Nan Johnson examines in *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America*. Such historical episodes are fertile sites for the study of the cultural functions of different rhetorics. The "social," "rhetorical," or "ideological" turns taken in both the social sciences and the humanities over the past two decades, while disconcerting to some, have given historians of rhetoric an opportunity to redefine their object of study and to reimagine the cultural functions of rhetoric at different historical moments. Feminist historians have taken the greatest advantage of this opportunity so far, and in collections of essays such as *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, they have lead the way in rethinking what rhetoric is and how it is used. Similarly, this sense of opportunity and possibility motivates this project. Because it is informed by philosophy, because it concerns the formation of subjectivities, and because it rests on assumptions about social order and exchange, the study of rhetoric is ideally placed between ideological and intellectual history on the one hand and social history on the other. The task of the historian of rhetoric is to imagine ways to access and account for these uses of rhetoric in order to show that the ways people speak and write, and ways that people think about language, matter.
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245


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252


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