The Viability of the Rhetorical Tradition

edited by

Richard Graff
Arthur E. Walzer
Janet M. Atwill

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Introduction

Richard Graff

Does the past that has given shape to modern rhetoric studies make us more or less able to address contemporary concerns and flourish in the modern university? The question is the basis of a compelling current debate within rhetoric studies. In addressing this question, contributors to this volume have taken the concept of 'tradition' as the central problematic. In the early stages of the development of programs of advanced study devoted to rhetorical theory, history, and criticism—in the United States, predominantly in departments of English or speech communication—reference was often made to something called "the rhetorical tradition." The title was honorific, suggesting at once a long and distinguished history, a sizeable collection of texts containing serious ideas, and a sense of unity, vitality, and purpose. Understandably, then, the term *rhetorical tradition* was regularly invoked as part of efforts to authorize or legitimize a program of study to external audiences within the academy, including those with whom rhetorical studies would need to compete for resources and recognition. And for a time, such invocations were performed without reflection. The existence of the rhetorical tradition was assumed by specialists who could be confident that at least fellow scholars in the history of rhetoric had a clear sense of what it was.

There are signs that testify indirectly to the success of such appeals to the tradition. One of these was an increase in publishing forums and academic positions in rhetorical studies in the mid- to late twentieth century. The same period witnessed a corresponding growth in numbers and strength of graduate programs, especially in rhetoric and composition. This development, in turn, created new demand for resources to facilitate such study: synoptic histories of rhetoric (like those of Kennedy or Conley), anthologies of primary texts (notably, Bizzell and Herzberg's collection, but now also Brummett), and

encyclopedias of rhetorical concepts and authors such as those edited by Theresa Enos and Thomas Sloane. The term *tradition* figures prominently in many of these books, often appearing in their titles (e.g., Kennedy; Conley; Bizzell and Herzberg). Through these and other comparable sources, an increasing number of graduate students have become acquainted with the history of the discipline. More than this, they have been encouraged to see this history as constituting a tradition.

But the repeated evocations of 'the rhetorical tradition' had the perhaps unintended effect of reifying the concept. This outcome has been the cause of growing concern for scholars in both speech communication and rhetoric-composition. Several in the current generation, including many of the contributors to the present volume, have urged us to reconsider the story of rhetoric promoted in the standard historical accounts and have raised awareness of the dangers attaching to unreflexive gestures toward "the tradition." In one view, 'the rhetorical tradition' is acknowledged as a perhaps outmoded but still convenient label. It performs a grouping and unifying function; it orders the immense mass of historical materials and perspectives that may be deemed relevant to the study of rhetoric in its various contemporary guises. In this respect, rhetoric's self-conception, its self-presentation, and its intellectual autonomy have long relied on an identification with "the tradition," a situation that becomes self-perpetuating as invocations of the tradition become the basis for rhetoric's claim to "'hang . . . together' as a domain of knowledge" (Charland 119).

That even this minimum of order, unity, or coherence may be artificial—imposed rather than organic—is not cause for acute anxiety but at the same time leaves the tradition without claim to any special reverence. For example, one should thus be able to accept references to "the classical tradition" of rhetoric, while at the same time recognizing that the label actually yokes together several very distinct, often competing perspectives, each of which may be the source of its own "tradition."[1] If some have been satisfied in sustaining this rather benign double-consciousness, others have called for more serious interrogation of the relationship between rhetoric's past and present. Here too the idea of tradition has figured prominently. S. Michael Halloran's 1976 essay "Tradition and Theory in Rhetoric," for example, argued that there was a profound disconnect between classical rhetoric with its goal of "prepar[ing] others to speak in conformity with the established conventions" and modern inquiry focused on the construction of theory (239). While Halloran did not reject the possibility of a meaningful rapprochement between the classical and modern, he did provide a particularly clear summary of the inadequacy of then current conceptions of the tradition: "[I]f there is such a thing as a rhetorical tradition, it cannot be successfully defined by either the kind(s) of discourse it deals with or the precepts for discourse it offers. There is just too much disagreement in these areas among the people whose writings are supposed to articulate the tradition" (235).

If Halloran's essay unsettled the long-supposed continuity between ancient and modern rhetoric, the years following its appearance generated more caustic critique. Beginning in earnest in the late 1980s, attention turned from how to define the rhetorical tradition to consideration of the dangers of inherited definitions. The available full-scale histories and anthologies of rhetoric were together implicated in the process and politics of canon formation and, thus, opened to charges of inadequacy on several counts, exclusivity chief among them. In this view, 'the rhetorical tradition' is often employed as a synonym for a fixed set of texts, concerned with a rather limited range of discursive practices and overwhelmingly authored by white European males.[2] In the context of this debate, Hans Kellner observed that "appeals to the rhetorical tradition configure a version of that tradition in the act of calling it forth" (245)—and this particular ("canonical") conception of tradition appears to underlie much recent work in the history of rhetorical theories and practices that fall outside the received canon, notably those authored by women or by non-whites, or those having origins outside the European continent. 'The rhetorical tradition' appears regularly in titles of such works—indeed, at least as regularly as it had in the older work—but is invoked not with reverence but rather as a backdrop or, commonly, as a foil against which new scholarship can be framed.[3]

Enough has been said to suggest that even when it is not openly contested or interrogated, the concept of tradition haunts the contemporary study of rhetoric. I employ the spectral metaphor deliberately and intend it to serve as a sort of counterpoint to a slightly different image once invoked by Thomas Miller. "The rhetorical tradition," he wrote, "is a fiction that has just about outlasted its usefulness" (26). While attention is naturally drawn to the "fiction" in Miller's sentence, I would like to lay special stress on the "just about." In this spirit, readers of the current book are encouraged to read its title, *The Viability of the Rhetorical Tradition,* not as a proposition to be defended but as an opening to several problem areas addressed in the chapters that follow. The title's second "the" generates initial questions: Is there such a thing as "the" rhetorical tradition, and if so, what is it? Similarly, "viability" is an open issue—the viability of "the," or any, rhetorical tradition cannot be assumed. And so follow a number of further questions: If the rhetorical tradition is a fiction, has its usefulness finally come to an end? Might the rhetorical tradition be reconceptualized, refigured as a "better" fiction that may have considerable use in future? Might a traditionalist conception of "the" tradition still serve an important function in the current academy or outside it? Should 'the tradition' be permanently replaced with 'traditions' (plural) as Miller and others have argued? Is it preferable to conceive rhetoric's historical tradition(s) as irreducibly multiple? Is it possible to do so and still retain some minimal level of coherence deemed necessary for disciplinary recognition in the contemporary (and future) academy or for the maintenance of successful interdisciplinary alliances?

While all of the scholars in this volume take such questions seriously and critically, their answers are diverse and sometimes at odds. Because contributors were selected, in part, for the different perspectives they bring to the study of rhetoric and its tradition(s), it is hardly surprising that the chapters do not present a unified front. The chapters can, however, be grouped into two basic sorts. In part 1, five chapters address historiographical and definitional issues. Richard Graff and Michael Leff consider the various ways in which the rhetorical tradition has been shaped under the pressure of successive waves of revisionist and critical historiography in twentieth-century rhetorical studies. Beneath some subtle differences of emphasis, they note broad commonalities in the calls for new histories out of the fields of speech communication and rhetoric-composition, tracking the development of a generally "unsentimental attitude toward tradition." They contend, however, that some notion of tradition is desirable, not least for its capacity to sustain a sense of intellectual community; they then describe the history of rhetorical pedagogy and teaching practices as a tradition that resonates strongly across disciplinary divides and yet also encourages sensitivity to the particularities of specific historical moments. Where Graff and Leff emphasize a conception of tradition that aligns it with the history of teaching, Alan G. Gross's chapter argues for a view of tradition that emphasizes the development of rhetorical theory. More specifically, Gross urges rhetoricians to attend to what he calls (following W. B. Gallie) "essentially contested concepts." Following Gallie, Gross contends that such concepts provide the intellectual core of humanistic disciplines such as rhetoric. As he shows through an investigation of the concepts of 'bringing-before-the eyes,' 'vivacity,' and 'presence,' individual efforts to grapple with them can lead to theory refinement but do not presuppose or demand a single grand and continuous narrative of rhetoric's history.

Where Gross focuses on contested concepts within the realm of rhetorical theory, Leah Ceccarelli directs attention to the "ends" toward which rhetoric aims. She identifies three such ends—the aesthetic, the epistemic, and the political—and locates their sources in classical Greece. But the thrust of Ceccarelli's argument is to show that these are not merely ends for the practice of rhetoric; rather, they also provide the coordinates for the rhetorical criticism of such practice. This she demonstrates through a work of metacriticism on studies devoted to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Although she admits that a given critic (or rhetor) can rarely be characterized as holding to one single end to the exclusion of the others, her case models a fruitful way to account for competing interpretations of the same work. More than this, Ceccarelli's chapter suggests that the three ends, present and often competing from the very origins of Western rhetoric, are the source of a productive tension that continues to animate the study of rhetoric.

Neither Gross's discussion of bringing-before-the eyes, vivacity, and presence nor Ceccarelli's metacriticism on the Gettysburg Address takes us out of

the orbit described in the older histories of rhetoric and encapsulated in the standard anthologies. Their choice of objects might thus be taken, in simplistic terms, to suggest a kind of traditionalism that tends to draw one ever back to the canon. As we have already noted, the constitution of the rhetorical canon has been the locus of especially keen dispute. In his contribution, Robert N. Gaines considers the sources of disagreement and the values and priorities evinced in this dispute. Focusing on the classical period, Gaines argues that no canon-based conception of the rhetoric of Greco-Roman antiquity will ever be sufficient and is liable to impoverish historical research on the period. He then describes a conceptual alternative to the canon—a "corpus," which he contends should include not a limited number of texts about rhetoric but rather an expansive array of objects, artifacts, and representations of rhetorical theory, pedagogy, practice, and criticism.

Like others in this collection, Janet M. Atwill maintains that interrogation of rhetoric's relationship to tradition(s) leads us to reconsider the relationships among rhetorical theory, practice, and pedagogy. In her chapter, Atwill explores the viability of classical traditions of civic rhetoric by outlining versions of civic virtue in antiquity and two contemporary conceptions of civic rhetoric. She suggests that concepts of 'virtue' and 'rhetoric,' in both eras, have been shaped by especially powerful models of political order: in classical Athens, *harmonia* and *isonomia;* in contemporary rhetorical theory, civic republicanism and liberalism. The shaping force of ideology, however, is not restricted to traditions since, as she argues, academic investigations, themselves, are also shaped by political ideology, including left political critique. Put another way, scholarship is contingent on its own traditions of research conventions.

The chapters in part 1, by and large, consider tradition in rhetoric at a rather broad conceptual level. They offer different perspectives on or visions of the concept of tradition. In Atwill's consideration of the competing models of political order, for example, or in Ceccarelli's identification of the different "ends" of rhetoric, we are encouraged to view tradition as centered on points of persistent or recurring tension or contestation. But while such acts of re-view or re-vision may enable us to "see" tradition(s) more clearly or completely, they do not necessarily seek to assess tradition's role as a living force, one that simultaneously enables and constrains. Such assessment becomes central in the chapters that make up part 2. However one defines a tradition, its vitality will be measured by its capacity to address the needs of the present. The five chapters of part 2 present varying assessments of traditional rhetoric and its ability to account for contemporary discursive practice, to address contemporary pedagogical concerns, and to enable or, alternatively, disable critique.

In her contribution, Susan C. Jarratt considers the rhetorical responses to the events of September 11, asking how materials inherited from rhetoric's

past might serve us in a time of national crisis. She offers the ancient Greek practices of epideictic or funeral oratory as "resonant analogues" for the discourses of memory and mourning that followed in the wake of September 11. Although she notes the tendency of such practices to devolve into state ritual and patriotic display, Jarratt notices in the latter case a tension between a dominant nationalistic discourse and a variety of resisting rhetorics produced by a newly (re)constituted public and disseminated through virtually every available medium.

The chapters by William Hart-Davidson, James Zappen, and S. Michael Halloran and Thomas J. Kinney and Thomas P. Miller make claims bearing directly on some of the themes of part 1. Both argue that rhetoric's history of involvement in elitist institutions has, regrettably, defined it. But both insist that its long commitment to the education of citizens and to political involvement puts rhetoric and rhetoric scholars in a position to promote participatory democracy in the face of the determinative forces of technology and capitalism. Both chapters not only argue for a new conception of rhetoric but also accept the challenge of showing how this "new" rhetoric has contributed or could contribute to democratizing deliberations about new technologies. Hart-Davidson, Zappen, and Halloran and Kinney and Miller contend that if contemporary education in literacy and rhetoric is to continue to find value in traditional or canonical approaches, it must also be careful to recognize and at times correct many core assumptions attaching to rhetoric's historically dominant articulations.

In their contributions, Arthur E. Walzer and Jeanne Fahnestock argue that even canonical texts of the past still have much to teach us in the present—indeed, that they can be heard to speak very subtly to some of today's most pressing problems and interests. Walzer analyzes the circumstances and arguments of two of Isocrates' discourses, *Archidamus* and *On the Peace*, in order to assess their pedagogical status and potential relevance. Walzer discovers in Isocrates' model of education in political wisdom a purpose (to create critical citizens) and a method (that of *dissoi logoi*) that he argues can form the basis for courses in citizenship education today. Fahnestock reevaluates a specific component of traditional rhetoric, the theory of figures or schemes of style. She shows how historical-rhetorical accounts of the figures of parallelism and paronomasia shadow and in some cases prefigure insights into language currently being advanced in the field of cognitive science. Ironically, the very same figurist rhetorics that many commentators have said killed the rhetorical tradition are transformed, in Fahnestock's account, into a source of considerable vitality.

Fahnestock's comparison of the views on language within the fields of cognitive science and traditional rhetoric reintroduces the subject of disciplinary unity and division—an issue of considerable salience in rhetoric studies. As an academic discipline, rhetoric is currently housed in a number of differ-

ent university departments. If the hope that this volume holds out for rhetoric is to be realized, scholars in this sometimes seemingly amorphous field will need a mutual appreciation for the different ways in which rhetoric is understood and practiced in English composition and speech communication. In the afterword, Steven Mailloux draws on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer to reflect on how tradition defines and distinguishes rhetorical studies as an interdiscipline and on the advantages of cross-disciplinary conversation and cooperation. Because the scholars who have contributed to this volume by intention come from both communication studies and English, the editors hope that *The Viability of the Rhetorical Tradition* successfully models the type of cooperation that can assure the vitality of rhetoric well into the future.

Notes

1. This way of approaching the rhetoric of Greece and Rome is actually quite "traditional." See, for example, Friedrich Solmsen's well-known essay wherein an Aristotelian or peripatetic "tradition" is set apart from the "Isocratean tradition." A similar tendency is evidenced in George Kennedy's tripartition of classical rhetoric's "Christian and secular tradition" into distinct "strands"—the sophistic, technical, and philosophical—or in Thomas Conley's somewhat looser division of the "European tradition" of rhetoric into "four models" he discovers in classical Greece. Compare also the treatment of Duhamel, discussed by Graff and Leff in this volume.

2. From this perspective, tradition is not uncommonly described as a binding or constraining force. As Jacqueline Jones Royster has put it, Western "traditions of theory and practice" that have dominated the study of rhetoric "have tended to function with a heavy and relentlessly constraining hand" (149).

3. See, for example, the recent collections titled *The Changing Tradition: Women in the History of Rhetoric* (Sutherland and Sutcliffe) and *Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition* (Gray-Rosendale and Gruber). The editors of the former offer the following categories to group their essays on the history of women's rhetorics: "excluded from the rhetorical tradition," "alongside the rhetorical tradition," "participating in the rhetorical tradition," "emerging into the rhetorical tradition," and "engaging the rhetorical tradition." In such an arrangement, "the rhetorical tradition," while hardly viewed as a staid monolith, figures centrally as a means to classify the many diverse strands of contemporary inquiry into rhetoric's past.

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PART ONE

Definitions: Traditional and New

ONE

Revisionist Historiography and Rhetorical Tradition(s)

Richard Graff and Michael Leff

AT ONE TIME, not so long ago, people in our line of academic work used to talk about something called the "rhetorical tradition." It is unlikely that many of us could give a precise definition of the phrase, but we invoked it with unreflective confidence and assumed that our colleagues would understand what we meant. In fact, the term *rhetorical tradition* represented something more than an elegant synonym for "the history of rhetoric." It had a resonance that suggested not just what we studied but who we were in the academy. The history was our history.

Such confidence, however, is no longer possible in respect to either the meaning of the rhetorical tradition or the sentiment attached to it. Over the course of several decades, one prominent group of scholars has argued that the 'tradition' is excessively narrow and largely irrelevant to contemporary circumstances, and they have attempted to displace 'tradition' with the terms *theory* or *system*. Some of the same scholars also maintain that it is an error to think of *a* tradition and, under the banner of pluralism, insist on recognition of multiple traditions. In a more recent development, the influence of poststructuralism has led rhetoricians to note the biases and exclusions of "traditional" histories and to object to any single grand narrative for the history of rhetoric. And still others are skeptical about the desirability of the very concept of 'tradition.' Thus, Jane Sutton has written: "If we focus on the problem of representing rhetoric's history as a Tradition, we discover that unity—its theory—is created out of diversity of practice. . . . What can be seen in rhetoric's

history, consequently, is only that which is framed as The Tradition," and Sutton adds, the result is an impoverished perspective that privileges "uniformity" and "consistency" and excludes "the rare, the exception, the unique" (Sutton, "Structuring" 157–58).

These revisionist complaints are not always well considered, and the older scholarship is hardly as monolithic or stultifying as it is sometimes represented. Nevertheless, the collective weight of the revisionist effort cannot be ignored. It does capture something important about the temper of our times, does reveal serious limitations in our conventional historical scholarship, and does make a strong case for complicating and expanding our efforts. Indeed, the calls issued only a relatively short time ago for new histories of rhetoric—or new rhetorical histories—have been answered and continue to be answered at a rather surprising clip. Such work demonstrates that, at minimum, we no longer can assume that the history of rhetoric consists in a stable, neutral record open to disinterested inquiry. It is itself a rhetorical achievement—a set of practices that respond to local interests and that come to attention through the intervention of a historian.

But while many of the new perspectives brought to the study of rhetoric's history/ies have much to commend them, they also involve some hazards, and probably the most noteworthy of these is the threat to obliterate any sense of tradition. The almost infinite sprawl of rhetorical practices encourages a splintering of interests, and without a tradition against which we can measure our innovations, we may lose the minimum level of coherence necessary to sustain an academic community. Consequently, we face a dilemma. While the received view of tradition is no longer acceptable, if we lack a usable sense of tradition, we risk dispersal, dismemberment, and the loss of any semblance of a collective identity.

In this chapter, we intend to tackle this problem directly and search for a source of tradition stable enough to provide an identity for a community of rhetorical scholars but flexible enough to allow for the diversity demanded by new approaches to our subject and its history. In fact, we believe that, when rightly understood, the concept of tradition can serve as a *via media* between the seamless uniformity demanded by theory (in the modern sense of the term) and the scatter of historically situated cases. For this purpose, we will begin with a review of revisionist efforts that originated from within the "modernist" perspective and note how this development tended to displace or distort tradition. Then, we will consider some of the more prominent postmodern efforts at revisionism, and by appropriating key points of this critique, we hope to demonstrate that in a conception of the rhetorical tradition as pedagogical (i.e., as a history of teaching speaking and writing), we can locate a mobile but coherent basis for intellectual and institutional community.

The First Wave of Revisionism: Theory and System in the History of Rhetoric

In his three-volume study of rhetoric and poetic from antiquity through the renaissance, Charles Sears Baldwin established the standard pattern for twentieth-century studies of the history of rhetoric. Three main features marked this work: (1) Baldwin sharply divided rhetoric into two diametrically opposed conceptions. One of these was the sound art of Aristotle devoted to the content of what was said and designed to give effectiveness to truth. The other was the unsound art of sophistic devoted to style and designed to give effectiveness to the speaker. The history of rhetoric was a struggle between these forces. (2) The struggle served as the basis for a master narrative in which everything after Aristotle represented decline. On this view, the medieval history of rhetoric was one of constant diminution and regression, which culminated, by the thirteenth century, in a total loss of connection with the genuine classical art. To some extent, this situation was retrieved by the revival of classical learning in the Renaissance. (3) Historical research should concentrate on questions of influence, and Baldwin addressed this matter from a number of perspectives: how general conceptions of and attitudes toward rhetoric shifted from one author to the next; the influence of earlier works on the morphology and the preceptive content of later works; and the influence of rhetorical precepts on literary practice.

This pattern proved remarkably durable, but by midcentury some notable objections to it began to emerge. An early and influential critique appeared in P. Albert Duhamel's article, "The Function of Rhetoric as Effective Expression," published in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* in 1949. Like Richard McKeon before him, Duhamel decried narrowly technical studies of the history of rhetoric that focused on technical precept and influence: "There is a sufficiency of monographs," he wrote, "occupied with the determination of the influence of particular rhetoric books on selected authors, or histories supplying chronological lists of contents of successive manuals" (36). Instead, Duhamel proposed to step back from the detail and consider an "author's system taken as a whole." Viewed from this angle, every particular system of rhetoric arose from "the more basic elements of a rhetorician's philosophy," and thus rhetoric always proved "dependent upon the epistemology, psychology, and metaphysic of the system in which it occurs. The rhetorical is determined by the epistemological" (37). Furthermore, just as philosophical positions were various and irreducible to any common denominator, so also were rhetorics. Duhamel illustrated this point through a consideration of the variety of rhetorical systems indigenous just to the classical period, a period in which rhetorical systems emerged in accordance with Platonic, Aristotelian, Sophistic, and Stoic philosophies. "To say that there was a 'Classical

Rhetoric,'" he concluded, was "to compound a gratuitous tag. There were as many conceptions of rhetoric in the period usually called 'Classical' as there were philosophies, and rhetoric can be understood only within the commensurable terms of the philosophy" (48).

In one sense, Duhamel's argument elevated the status of rhetoric by setting the technical detail to the side and focusing on larger cultural and intellectual issues, and he also offered a much-needed counterstatement to the monolithic histories produced by writers who followed Baldwin's model. Nevertheless, on Duhamel's account, rhetoric was reconceived through its reduction to philosophical foundations. The older interest in preceptive lore helped maintain a connection between the history of rhetoric and the teaching of rhetoric, and it promoted concern about processes of transmission that linked this teaching within a tradition. If Baldwin and others rendered that tradition pedestrian through a commitment to simple dichotomies and compulsively detailed attention to influence, Duhamel threatened to obscure tradition by burying it beneath philosophical foundations. Rhetoric as a teaching practice commands little attention when we concentrate on the epistemological and metaphysical grounding of "rhetorical systems."

Almost fifteen years after the publication of Duhamel's essay, Otis Walter presented the first version of the philosophical approach to emerge from within the discipline then known as speech. Walter's paper, "On Views of Rhetoric: Whether Conservative or Progressive," began as a response to Wayne Thompson's effort to refurbish the traditional preceptive lore. Thompson (1963) had lamented the "dead hand of classical rhetoric" and the "traditionalism and inertia" that characterized contemporary rhetorical scholarship (1), and to solve this problem, he argued, among other things, that the classical principles ought to be tested and revised through the new methods of experimental social science. Walter agreed with Thompson's negative assessment of scholarship in the field but held that, in conceiving "the tradition of rhetoric" as "a body of hypotheses about persuasion," Thompson adhered to a position that was not just counterproductive but actually "part of the disease" (Walter 368). What was interesting about classical rhetoric, Walter asserted, was not the detail of the art—its "hypotheses about persuasion"—but its "different starting points, its myriad assumptions, its contrasting aims." These starting points represented the "foundations" of rhetoric, and significant historical scholarship depended upon the appreciation of their significance. Walter then proceeded to "look at" some of the starting points for a rhetorical system. These included the metaphysical (Protagoras and Plato), the social (Isocrates and Cicero), the epistemological (Descartes, Locke, Campbell), the educational-ethical (Quintilian), the theological (Augustine), the esthetic (Blair), the logical (Whately), and the psychological (Winans). "Great theories of rhetoric," Walter claimed, were revolutionary because they proceeded from new starting points. "Little theories," on the other hand, don't "revolutionize," they just "tinker" (373).

In addition to his negative judgment about the quality of existing scholarship, Walter also displayed a less obtrusive but perhaps more important point of agreement with Thompson. Like Thompson, Walter located the problem in terms of theory. Thompson sought to break from traditionalism by revising and securing the theoretical ground for classical precepts through abstract method; Walter attempted a theoretical cure by reducing the preceptive superstructure to philosophical foundations. From this perspective, the history of rhetoric is decisively a "theoretical" question, and the concept of tradition gets shunted to the side. In his only explicit reference to the term, Walter treats tradition as something entirely static—as the ensemble of texts devoted to rhetoric. Given the general direction of Walter's argument, we might infer that tradition could also be regarded (more theoretically) in relationship to the ensemble of different rhetorical systems and the competing starting points that they reflected. Walter, however, never expressed this view, and the starting points that he enumerated were so many and so unsystematically arranged that the only theoretically significant feature of the tradition would appear to be its constant revolutionary movement from one incommensurable foundation to another. Finally, we should note that Walter's attention was so thoroughly directed toward these foundations that the relationship between rhetorical theory and any form of grounded practice was almost totally occluded. Rhetorics were interesting as philosophical exercises in theory construction, and their preceptive content was no more than a superstructure. From this perspective, the process of handing down and modifying teaching practices could not and should not warrant serious consideration. It was simply not theoretically or philosophically important.

Both Duhamel and Walter refer to "systems of rhetoric," but neither treats the concept in depth. Douglas Ehninger, however, uses "systems" as the focal point in his revisionist approach to rhetorical historiography. For Ehninger, a system is an organized, consistent, coherent way of talking about practical discourse ("Systems" 15). As opposed to some random collection of observations and precepts, a system is an "account of the communication process that has a distinctive emphasis or focus" and is "ordered in a hierarchy of terms" and "marked by a distinguishing method" (25). Moreover, for Ehninger, a system could characterize a collective set of works of a "given place or period" and not just an individual treatise (15).

In fact, Ehninger develops his notion of systems in relation to historical periods, and in his best known formulation, he identifies three types: (1) classical rhetoric, which is essentially "grammatical" in orientation, (2) eighteenth-century rhetoric, which is essentially psychological, and (3) contemporary rhetoric (post 1930), which is essentially social.[1] Unlike Duhamel or Walter, whose categories arise directly from philosophical criteria, Ehninger turns first to rhetorical treatises and seeks to abstract from them a common essence. This procedure leaves him in closer contact with the pedagogical and

practical aspects of rhetoric, but Ehninger still effects a very severe reduction, and his criteria of coherence, consistency, and methodological distinctiveness also indicate a strong affinity with "theory" in the modern sense of the term.

Ehninger's conception of rhetorical systems allows room for the operation of tradition, since each successive system invokes a starting point that does not simply overturn and obliterate its predecessor but also encompasses "that system to pass beyond it" (27). Nevertheless, to paraphrase Floyd Anderson, this is a conception of tradition with a decidedly Whigish attitude (Anderson). That is, Ehninger's version of rhetorical history sweeps relentlessly up and forward, and earlier phases in the development are no more than incomplete or primitive versions of the later phases, and as such, they do not retain genuine theoretical value.

Expanding on Anderson's point, Carole Blair has noted that Ehninger reverses the historical valences found in "influence" studies of the type practiced by Baldwin. While Baldwin establishes the earlier classical type as the proper norm for rhetoric, Ehninger fixes the norm at the other end of history in contemporary theory. In both instances, Blair argues, the historiography is badly flawed since it biases perception of the historical record and interferes with our ability to use history as a resource for rhetorical theory.

Blair's intervention in this debate comes at an interesting moment. Her essay "Contested Histories of Rhetoric: The Politics of Preservation, Progress, and Change" (1992) represents the last major entry in the wave of revisionism that proceeds from Duhamel through Ehninger, and it is also, within the field of speech communication, one of the earliest entries in the newer, poststructuralist approach to historiography. Rejecting both influence and systems studies, Blair advocates "critical history," and as she tries to work across the line between the older scholarship and her own neo-Foucaultian project, some new and rather complicated problems emerge.

Blair is clear and unequivocal about the purpose of the historical enterprise: "[T]he primary goal of historical study of rhetorical theory" is "the continued enrichment of our understanding of rhetoric." The most important reason to study "historical rhetorics" is to "provide material capable of appropriation and accommodation" or to prompt change and even "spur radical ways of retheorizing rhetoric" (404). In other words, we investigate the past for its relevance to our present situation. This orientation at least leans in a poststructuralist direction, especially since it is associated with a call for critical reflection about how the historian's interests are implicated in the construction of history. Nevertheless, because she unreflexively accepts the term *theory* as the object of historical inquiry, Blair retains some of the fundamental assumptions of the approaches she seeks to dislodge.

Blair's conception of theory is equivocal. At times, she suggests a view that has a self-reflective, grounded, and hermeneutic quality. For example, quoting from an earlier paper co-authored with Mary Kahl, Blair describes

theory as an activity involving a conversation between past and present (403; Blair and Kahl), and toward the end of the essay, she explains that her version of critical history allows for a dialogic relationship between current theoretical interests and past texts (420, and see note 48). In these instances, we might regard theory as something that works through tradition—an activity that allows mediation between positioned subjects in the present and texts that are positioned in some past context.

At other times, however, Blair treats theory as an abstract and largely self-standing formation in much the same terms that Ehninger conceives it. For example, she complains about existing historiography because "[h]istorians ignore some rhetorical theories altogether, present some as more 'dominant' than others" (418). And she argues that instead of focusing on later appropriation of a work, we ought to concentrate on "its theoretical value or substance" (407) and that influence studies circumscribe "the unique substance of later theories" in comparison with antecedent models (409). Conceived in these terms theory is not an activity or a practice; rather it has an ontological status as something already fully existent prior to the historian's interpretation and whose substance can be discovered or ignored or categorized as one thing or another. This shift from a view of theory as grounded activity to theory as substantive object leaves Blair's project equivocal and somewhat confused. The reader is left to wonder whether she accepts the substantive view of theory in the older studies and critiques them for failing to realize their own ambitions or whether she is critiquing the very concept of theory in those studies. Ironically, as Blair wavers toward the older, more abstract view of theory, she produces a theoretically overdetermined critique of existing historiography and overlooks the potential of tradition as corrective to some of the problems that she identifies.

Blair's critique of influence studies rests upon an abstract and unqualified theoretical generalization about their nature. Such studies, she insists, embody a "politics of preservation," and more specifically, they "sacralize . . . ancient rhetorical theory by treating later rhetorics as monuments to classical rhetoric" (404). The privileging of classical antecedents, she claims, is not an incidental property of some influence studies but is an essential and innate feature of the whole enterprise. This point is a fundamental (one is tempted to say foundational) premise in Blair's argument, and its strength and persistence is indicated as much by its repetition as by the strength of its assertion: (1) "[The] tendency to eclipse the historical materials themselves is not an accident of application in influence studies; it is inherent in the model of influence itself" (406). (2) "'Influence' . . . is a marker for a preservative politics that *dictates* the maintenance or continuity of tradition. . . . This stance posits a privileged origin, a 'golden age' of rhetorical theorizing," and later works are dismissed "as monuments to classical rhetoric, not as contributors to rhetorical thought" (408; emphasis in the original). (3) "Influence studies . . . are inherently preservative."

Later rhetorics are "reduced to versions of, and thus monuments to, classical rhetoric. Any theoretical *difference* that they may have with ancient sources is sacrificed to the desire to maintain a linear, influential tradition" (409; emphasis in the original). (4) "[T]he influence study's message is that everything worthy in our understanding of rhetoric is always already present in prior doctrine. Valuable 'new' insight is unavailable for an historian can always find the 'real' source of insight in an earlier work. Or retheorizing will be condemned as a departure from 'the tradition'" (417).

Blair, then, associates rhetorical tradition with what she characterizes as the inherently preservationist bias of influence studies. From this perspective, tradition emerges as a staid monolith that at best obstructs theoretical understanding and at worst actively subverts it. But the cases that she cites support neither her sweeping claims about influence studies nor her representation of tradition as theoretically retrograde.

Consider, for example, Wilbur Samuel Howell. Howell is, just as Blair says, a major figure within the tradition of influence scholarship. But he hardly valorizes classical rhetoric or attempts to reduce other theoretical approaches to a classical model. In his magisterial *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, Howell argues that the rhetoric of the period was "derived either from Aristotle and Cicero or from attitudes associated with the rise of the new science" (696). He traces the second, or nonclassical, form of rhetoric from its origins in Bacon and Locke through the major rhetorical authors of the century—George Campbell, Adam Smith, John Witherspoon, and others. He does define this "new rhetoric" by way of contrast to classical rhetoric (a practice consistent with the emphasis on contrastive analysis that Blair builds into her critical historiography), but nowhere does Howell disguise the differences between the "new rhetoric" and the classical model. To the contrary, his attitude, like Ehninger's, is clearly progressive; Howell views the eighteenth-century deviations from classical dicta as an advance, and hence, his influence study reverses what Blair claims to be the inevitable result of influence studies—it distinguishes between old and new traditions in rhetorical theory in a way that privileges the new.[2]

A more subtle but perhaps more telling case has to do with Blair's interpretation of Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*. As evidence that the book sustains a preservationist conception of the history of rhetorical theory, Blair quotes this passage from its introduction: "This book, then, provides the first comparative study of the various forms in which medieval writers continued the preceptive tradition. Whether applied to preaching, verse-writing, letter-writing or other fields, it is clear that the basic preceptive assumption continues from Saint Augustine to the revival of classical learning in the Renaissance." Blair's commentary notwithstanding, Murphy does not assert a continuity of rhetorical theory; he argues for the continuity of a tradition, specifically the tradition of preceptive teaching, and on Murphy's account, that tradition is as much an engine of change as it is an element of stability.

We can most easily understand Murphy's position by comparing his history with the one offered in Baldwin's *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*. Baldwin truly is a preservationist and an apologist for what he interprets as *the* classical version of rhetoric theory. Thus, he establishes an Aristotelian norm at the outset of his book and proceeds to study the medieval period as one of progressive decline from that fixed and abiding standard. Murphy, by contrast, regards the changing configuration of rhetoric as a constructive adjustment to new circumstances. He characterizes medieval attitudes toward rhetoric as pragmatic, and he notes the creativity involved in shifting and reconfiguring elements of the preceptive lore from their original base in forensic oratory to new genres such as the sermon, poetic composition, and epistolography. Moreover, these alterations in classical rhetoric are enabled by tradition, since tradition preserves resources that prove useful to the practice of teaching even as the practice must adapt to changing cultural circumstances.

If, as Blair says, the most important goal of historical scholarship in rhetoric is to deepen our understanding of rhetoric itself, then Murphy's *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* contributes to this goal through at least two lessons: first, tradition is not necessarily inert and reactionary; it can facilitate change by connecting the storehouse of "theoretical" resources to new tasks; second, the teaching of rhetoric offers an important site of practice where this mediation can occur over time. In these respects, Murphy's conception of tradition seems to complement Blair's project, and her failure to identify these points of affinity suggests a bias that she inherits from the earlier school of revisionism and its modernist attitudes toward rhetorical theory as a static body of substantive principles rather than as a dynamic and evolving activity.

The Second Wave of Revisionism: Critical Historiography and Rhetorical Histories

Blair's essay, addressed primarily to rhetoricians working within the field of speech communication, registered discomfort that was being felt across disciplinary lines. Indeed, in the years immediately preceding its appearance, a number of scholars affiliated with the field of rhetoric and composition had advanced arguments consistent with Blair's concerning the shortcomings of received histories and the need for new histories written from a more self-conscious and critical perspective. Initiated at conference panels and in discussion groups devoted to the issue of historiography in rhetorical studies and developed subsequently in several publications,[3] the discussion sketched the contours of a self-consciously revisionist practice of historical inquiry. The debate provided impetus and opened intellectual space for what is now a substantial and ever-growing number of new studies treating aspects of rhetoric's past. We do not have space in this chapter to review all of the different perspectives

featured even in the early stages of the discussion but can identify some of the basic tenets as well as characteristic assumptions and motives animating the broader revisionist project within the field of composition-rhetoric.

Essays published in a 1987 special issue of *Pre/Text* presented a prolegomenon to future studies of rhetoric's history. Contributors to the issue (James Berlin, Susan Jarratt, John Schilb, Victor Vitanza) offered critique of the then-available histories as a necessary first step. The critiques focus on the received, standard, or traditional accounts that by and large fall under the category of influence studies identified by Blair (indeed, the critiques prefigure Blair's and share some of its defects). The "official" histories are found wanting for four, sometimes overlapping, reasons: (1) The authors are unreflexive in their methods and fail to recognize crucial intellectual assumptions and biases. Consequently, the histories are presented as objective accounts of fact, potentially falsifiable, but only according to the same standards of historical inquiry left unremarked by the authors themselves. The histories unfold in confident ignorance (or, worse, denial) of their own rhetoricity. (2) The received histories are exclusionary. The scope of these histories is largely restricted to works closely tied to the Western tradition of teaching and theorizing the art of effective speech and writing—to works that draw on classical Greek and Latin sources or, most narrowly, to works calling themselves "rhetorics" (see Jarratt, "Sophistic" 11). By treating only a limited set of canonical texts, the histories valorize certain authors from the (usually classical) past while failing to consider individuals or groups outside the white, male, European demographic. This bias renders incomplete even those histories with the greatest chronological sweep; they are partial in both senses of the word. (3) The standard historical accounts display a general and frequently self-proclaimed commitment to continuity. The history of rhetoric is rendered as a story of connected episodes, tracing back to a common starting point or origin in classical (often Aristotelian) ideas and texts. Whether told as a tale of continuous decline from a classical golden age, of cyclic fragmentation and reintegration (as Vickers), or cast as a narrative featuring intermittent bursts of progress (as Howell), there is an obvious intolerance of discontinuities in the plot. No space is left for unique or eccentric works. True exceptions or alternatives to classical-traditional theory or practice are, again, left out of account. (4) Another shortcoming identified in contributions to the *Pre/Text* special issue and extended in subsequent publications concerned the tendency of traditional histories to remain at the level of intellectual history. A narrow focus on the study of ideas contained in texts and on the connections between texts produced in different eras comes with a concomitant failure to engage the social, political, and economic contexts of the texts' production and reception. As James Berlin put it, "The material conditions of the creator [of the text] count for nothing at all. Rhetorical history is the story of disembodied ideas freely floating in an intellectual ether" (Berlin, "Revisionary" 139; cf. Schilb, "Differences" 31).

Accompanying the critiques were calls for the production of new histories that would correct or overcome the deficiencies of the standard histories. While varying in particulars and relative emphasis, the proposals address themselves consistently to themes of multiplicity and inclusivity, and all urge historians of rhetoric to interrogate presuppositions concerning methods of research and objects of inquiry. Drawing insights from a wide range of post-structuralist and postmodern theorists—from Hayden White and Dominic LaCapra to Michel Foucault's concept of 'genealogy' and neo-Marxian conceptions of historical reflection as dialectical engagement with the past—the revisionist position opposes itself to any grand narrative about the history of rhetoric constructed from a supposedly fixed and neutral perspective. It privileges the local instead of the universal and directs attention to sociopolitical contexts and how they influence both the theory and practice of rhetoric. The new historiography is to be, above all, *critical;* it searches for biases and exclusions, for disguised tactics of repression and marginalization, and it applies that critical sensibility to the act of writing history itself. Thus, historians ought to become self-conscious of their own placement within a historical situation and mindful of their assumptions and motives. The choice of research methods, periods, and objects of study are indeed choices and the products of argument. In sum, the practice of history writing is itself recognized as a rhetorical act (e.g., Schilb, "History"; Berlin, "Revisionary"). Moreover, the resulting historical accounts should confront contingency and change, eschew the need for continuity and the imperative to tell a seamless and unified story. The neat emplotment of one's historical narrative should be accompanied by the historian's acknowledgment of its basically provisional character.

Two sorts of studies were among the first to exemplify the critical perspective and new historiographical principles, each of which involves a reconsideration of tradition as a concept and its role in rhetorical inquiry. In one sort, a specific binary opposition provides the structural base for revising or challenging the prevailing understanding of some aspect of the history of rhetoric. Here, the effort entails rearranging the valences attached to authors, interpretations, and concepts that fall more or less within the ambit of the "received" tradition. Thus, a marginalized sophistic conception of rhetoric is revived to decenter the dominant Platonic/Aristotelian version of the art;[4] a foundationalist/philosophical model of epistemology is shown to control existing interpretations of Aristotelian rhetoric and then is corrected by reading *The Rhetoric* through a productionist epistemology (Atwill, "Instituting"; Atwill, *Rhetoric*); the patriarchal or gendered characterization of core concepts within canonical texts is exposed for what it is and then reinterpreted through a feminist lens (Enders); a classical text is read against the sociopolitical background of its period and shown to inscribe the biases of an elitist ideology at odds with contemporary cultural values and educational aims (Berlin, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric*"; Neel). In all these cases, the tradition changes dramatically as

its elements are aligned in new ways, and perhaps more important, what once appeared as a single, coherent development now becomes conflicted and complex. In these new versions, rhetoric is itself divided between Aristotelian and sophistic values, between foundational and productionist orientations, between rational, orderly surfaces and troubled depths that reproduce systems of cultural repression.

Another broad category of revisionist work involves bringing attention to what is left out of the available histories or "traditional" accounts. It too can be characterized in binary terms, as it sets up an opposition between inside and outside (as contrasted with opposition involving the hierarchical placement of what is already inside). Instead of the rereading of canonical texts, this is often work of search and recovery, accompanied by a "first" reading, of what has been lost in the historical record. And instead of exposing conflicts internal to "the" tradition, the tendency here is to speak in terms of multiple, competing traditions. The effort to write women into the history of rhetoric is probably the best known of the efforts in this direction,[5] but there are other projects of roughly the same type: there is a call to attend to the voices of the marginalized and the oppressed that the canon implicitly silences, a demand to consider rhetorics developed in non-Western cultures, an injunction to emphasize the importance of practice over theory and to expand the domain of practice relevant to rhetorical inquiry. In this work, the scope of the history of rhetoric is thus enlarged and conceived as strands that cannot fit comfortably into a single structure—a woman's tradition as opposed to a male tradition, a subaltern tradition as opposed to an elite tradition, Chinese or Indian traditions as opposed to a Western tradition, a tradition of emergent literate practices as opposed to the tradition conveyed in the standard collections of technical treatises or systematic "theories," and so on.

We have characterized these two prominent strands of research in the history of rhetoric in fairly strict binary terms in order to identify some of the ways the idea of rhetorical tradition has been (re)configured under the pressure of a growing critical sensibility. To be sure, the two categories—"rereading" and "recovery"—are not as pure as our account suggests. Moreover, it should be clear that the simplification overlooks considerable variety in the methods of inquiry involved in each type of study, from very traditional forms of archival research and textual analysis, to more inventive historical reconstruction and theory-driven interpretation or critique. However, such diversity should not obscure certain commonalities in contemporary attitudes toward tradition associated with the more recent efforts to revise, challenge, or enrich our understanding of rhetoric's history. Clearly and most fundamentally, the proponents of critical historiography in its various guises adopt an unsentimental attitude toward tradition; this attitude is reflected in a keen perception of gaps and omissions perpetuated in the process of canon formation and a healthy skepticism toward received interpretations of those items that have

long held a place in that canon. In this respect, the newer efforts subsume and go far beyond the older, modernist revisionist proposals, which by and large merely reorganized the canonical sources through identification of philosophical foundations or theoretical "starting points" and did not in any explicit way make tradition itself the subject of critique or object of suspicion.

The unsentimental attitude toward the rhetorical tradition was expressed most forcefully by Thomas Miller, who observed in 1993 that "[t]he rhetorical tradition is a fiction that has just about outlasted its usefulness" (26). On its surface, Miller's statement aptly encapsulates several of the basic convictions of the new historiography: that "the" rhetorical tradition, the one casually assumed in most of the standard histories, is not an objective entity, but a rhetorical production; that it is a story that should command no special deference, but rather must compete with any other narrative that could challenge it; and finally, that while it may have once served a purpose, the contemporary field of historical research in rhetoric no longer requires—or soon will no longer require—this (or any other) univocal rendering of rhetoric's past.

Miller goes on to argue that historians of rhetoric should shift the focus from the tradition of rhetoric to what he terms the "rhetoric of traditions." Lamenting the lack of true social histories of rhetorical praxis, he urges rhetoricians to "mov[e] beyond rereading the canonical texts of elite traditions to develop richly detailed descriptions of the shared experiences of local communities" (29). Communities develop forms of rhetorical practice that can be appreciated only when accompanied by thick description of the social contexts in which they arose and to which they responded. Suitably contextualized, the diverse forms of socially situated rhetorical practice can be characterized as traditions in their own right.

Miller's proposal echoes the critical-revisionist calls for a more serious engagement with rhetorical practice(s) than that found in standard influence studies. His call for social histories of rhetoric and thick description of local contexts represents an extension of a crucial insight left undeveloped in the "systems" approach of Ehninger, who observed that "[s]ystems of rhetoric arise out of a felt need and are shaped in part by the intellectual and social environment in which the need exists" but who failed to deliver a satisfactory account of any such environment (see Berlin, "Revisionary" 135–36). But more than this, Miller's proposal sets itself firmly against the reductionist tendencies of the older influence and systems approaches. There is no set limit to the number of local cases (or "traditions") that could command the historian's interest, and there is no compulsion to circumscribe what "counts" as rhetoric. This is so because the social history of rhetoric would not aim to abstract from the situated case some central or essential qualities that could be laid out for comparison across cases. The focus shifts from defining a rhetoric or a system of rhetoric to the interpretation of the cultural exigencies that enable or encourage multiple modes of rhetorical response.

It is in these respects that we can best understand Miller's assertion that the rhetorical tradition is a "fiction that has just about outlasted its usefulness." Clearly, by "the rhetorical tradition" Miller means to denote the group of texts that have achieved canonical status by their regular appearance in the standard histories, textbooks, and anthologies. So conceived, the tradition offers little to the social historian of rhetoric. It provides a rather slim body of evidence for any specific period being investigated—and for some periods, practically none at all. Moreover, the texts it does provide will by and large express only culturally dominant voices, being the technical discourses of an educated elite or in some cases the practical discourses of political leaders. For any period, a much larger mass of evidence will need to be located and sifted; it will need to represent a much greater range of rhetorical practice and a much more diverse set of perspectives and interests. To recover rhetorical traditions, then, historians must get beyond or overcome "the tradition."

Miller's proposal is here taken as representative of the "second wave" of serious reflection on historiography to emerge out of the field of rhetoric-composition and it presents an especially forceful statement on the question of tradition. In it, we can identify two by now familiar but seemingly incompatible ways of speaking of tradition. In one, tradition is "The Tradition" conceived as the ideas about rhetoric contained in a fixed canon of texts; from this perspective, the tradition is a blind that should be put to one side so that we can see the past more clearly. The other way of evoking tradition presumes the existence of multiple traditions, each of which has an integrity of its own and does not depend upon some larger historical metanarrative as guarantor of its significance or interest. These traditions arise out of specific historical-cultural circumstances and cannot be understood apart from their local contexts.

These are not the only ways to view tradition, however, and we would like to conclude by giving the issue further consideration. The contemporary study of rhetoric, in its various disciplinary guises, stands at an important crossroads and may soon face increasing institutional pressure to consolidate its intellectual resources. Reconsideration of the idea of tradition is not merely a defensive gesture, however, as it may provide grounds for genuine scholarly community (one of the aims of this volume as a whole). But is it possible to imagine a tradition that is both broad enough to resonate across disciplinary lines and flexible enough to allow for the diversity demanded by new approaches to our subject and its history?

Rhetorical Pedagogy as the Tradition of Rhetoric

As we have indicated, each succeeding wave of self-reflection on the writing of rhetoric's past has in some way or another placed our sense of tradition at hazard—and this is not an insignificant problem, for without a tradition, as we have said earlier, we have only a history. If this history does not constitute an inheritance for us, we are in danger of distancing ourselves so far from our subject that we may lose our motive for studying it or of splintering our interests to the point that we lose the capacity to sustain an interdisciplinary scholarly community.

As the etymology of tradition (i.e., to hand over) suggests, tradition need not be reduced to a set of abstract principles or a fixed canon of texts. Rather, as Miller and others have suggested, tradition can be conceived as practices transmitted through time. Thus, we might discover a sense of tradition consistent with contemporary interests by viewing our subject, or some important part of it, as practices that have occurred within a community. To do this, of course, we need to identify some community that has a history relevant to us, and for that purpose, we suggest looking at the teaching of rhetoric. That is, we propose to conceive the rhetorical tradition in the modest key of the history of teaching writing and speaking. Whatever else we are or do, we all teach rhetoric, so the practices of past teachers clearly constitute something we can claim as our history.

We recognize that this orientation toward pedagogy will require adjustments in our thinking and that the kind and degree of accommodation will vary largely according to the disciplinary perspective of individual scholars. As we pointed out with reference to the "first wave" of revisionist historiography, the discipline of speech communication has tended to favor approaches that organize the history of rhetoric in terms of philosophical foundations or theoretical "starting points." Consequently, the pedagogical elements of historical texts have often been deemed inconsequential or simply ignored. A similarly dismissive attitude is manifest to greater or lesser extent in most of the standard synoptic treatments of rhetoric's history from antiquity to the present. For example, James Berlin rightly observed the tendency of such histories (he cites George Kennedy and Thomas Conley) to leave the rhetorical tradition in the hands of philosophers for the late modern and contemporary periods ("Postmodernism" 179–80).

In this respect, the field of rhetoric-composition contrasts sharply with that of speech communication. There, by virtue of its professed mission and institutional placement in the contemporary academy, pedagogy has been a central point of contact for the greater part of its scholarly activities. It is not surprising, then, to find multiple recent studies on the history of writing instruction but not a single comparable study written by a speech communication scholar.[6] But while pedagogy has long been taken more seriously by scholars in composition, the history of this pedagogy has most often been viewed through the lens of contemporary educational practice. Indeed, the studies that have appeared have focused heavily on the modern, institutionalized forms of college writing instruction in English-speaking countries.

The more expansive history of writing instruction is bound tightly to the tradition of rhetoric as we conceive it. In the West, the teaching of both writing and speaking has occurred continuously, but it also displays great variety both within a given period and at different historical moments. There are irregularities in this history, including the kinds of disparities brought out in recent work on the history of writing instruction: uneven access to such education, including, often, plain exclusion; and significant variability in the aims of such instruction (for example, in what *is meant* by "effective writing and speaking," and what purposes or interests does education in it serve?). All this is to say that teaching practices are intimately connected with sociopolitical conditions and educational institutions, and thus a study of them—as the second wave of historiographical reflection reminds us—demands sensitivity to local conditions.

In part, the study of this tradition must depend upon the same texts that constituted the source for the older conception of tradition—the various treatises and handbooks on rhetorical art. But if we are to approach these texts in order to understand how they were used for teaching, we have much new work to do. As Marjorie Woods has observed, the neglect of such works can be attributed to the two sources mentioned already: a long-standing indifference to pedagogy in the older historical scholarship and the tendency of more recent scholars to observe a rather strict divide between premodern and modern rhetorical instruction. (Woods' further point, that both "traditionalists" and "revisionists" have neglected and/or misrepresented rhetorical instruction in the Middle Ages, is still pertinent today.) The appreciation of such works will undoubtedly increase once they are understood as crucial elements of the tradition. But when approached from the perspective of pedagogical history, these books must be interpreted not just as the outward sign of some philosophical position or as a self-standing theory but as evidence of what teachers actually did in their classrooms.

The handbooks and technical treatises are only one sort of evidence relevant to the study of the tradition. To get a sense of pedagogy-as-practice, other sources need to be consulted. The history of rhetoric thus becomes an extremely spacious field of inquiry. Depending on the period, there is place for archival research into institutional records, paleographical or archaeological investigation. As Robert Gaines observes, the "representations of pedagogy" are many, conceivably embracing "all evidence of the goals, practices, activities, outcomes, texts, and material circumstances of rhetorical education at all levels, by all sorts of educators, in all relevant discourse venues" (Gaines, this volume).

So conceived, the tradition of teaching would seem to resist monolithic closure. What we will find in this tradition is a history that reflects our current disciplinary scene, where diversity and dispute are the norm. We have no reason to believe that past teachers of rhetoric were less given to squabbles than we are, and we have every reason to believe that teaching practices change and adapt to meet the pressure of existing circumstances. The teaching of rhetoric is a point of continuity in Western history, but teaching practices themselves vary and change. Thus, the teaching of rhetoric as a practice offers a stable referent for a historical tradition, but it does not lock us into grand narratives or perspectives that move us outside a local context.

Finally, we need to qualify our commitment to the pedagogical tradition. We are not claiming that it is the only tradition that can or should engage our attention. For example we might want to think of rhetorical practice or of some genre of such practice as forming a tradition; or we might want to redefine tradition in theoretical terms; or again we might consider countertraditions that fall outside officially sanctioned practices and institutions. At this point in our own history, we should be willing to acknowledge not only that tradition embraces opposed and changing elements but that no one tradition will serve our purposes. Consequently, our proposal is not intended to displace or discourage alternative possibilities. But we do believe that our historiography ought to recognize some tradition or traditions and that the most direct and advantageous option is the one that arises from our common work as teachers of rhetoric.

Notes

1. These three types are discussed in his essay "On Systems of Rhetoric." In another well-known essay, Ehninger includes Renaissance rhetoric, oriented towards an aesthetics of expression, as a fourth system ("On Rhetoric").

2. Howell's valorization of Enlightenment (as opposed to classical) rhetoric should be clear to readers of any of his major writings. He is perhaps most explicit about this point at the end of his 1967 essay "John Locke and the New Rhetoric," where he concludes: "And if my discourse has led you to suppose that twentieth-century rhetoric should see itself as the offspring of the scientific energies released into the lifeblood of European culture by the speculations of Bacon, Descartes, and Locke, then I have done what I hoped to do on this occasion, and what I have striven to do throughout my recent writings on rhetoric" (333). In the Locke essay, Howell argues that two of the salutary developments in the Enlightenment were the rejection of classical influences concerning the use of commonplaces and the restriction of the domain of rhetoric to persuasion.

3. Early reports from several key participants appeared in special issues of *Pre/Text* (vol. 8.1–2, 1987) and *Rhetoric Review* (vol. 7, 1988, recording the CCCC's "Octalog"entitled "The Politics of Historiography"); see also Schilb, "History." The discussion was expanded and further advanced in collections edited by Victor Vitanza *(Writing Histories of Rhetoric)* and Theresa Enos *(Learning from the Histories of Rhetoric)*. Another collection, edited by Takis Poulakos, confronted the same themes and also included contributions from several authors from outside rhetoric-composi-

tion (Poulakos, *Rethinking the History of Rhetoric*). For further reflection on the early revisionist proposals, see Brooks and [Octalog II].

4. Susan Jarratt's work on the sophists was pivotal in the field of composition studies (Jarratt, *Rereading;* see also, e.g., Jarratt, "Toward"; Sutton, "Marginalization"), but the rereading of the Sophists in both composition and speech communication continues unabated. Hans Kellner's comments on the lure of the Sophists are still relevant: "The decorum of revisionist rhetorical historiography involves reevaulating the Sophists, those archetypes of the 'usual suspects' who are periodically rounded up to make things happen" (243).

5. Some of the important studies in this area are Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford; Glenn; Lunsford; Sutherland and Sutcliffe; and Wertheimer.

6. There have been several volumes on the history of writing instruction, many considering it in relation to the development of English studies in American and British colleges and universities (e.g., Berlin, *Writing Instruction;* Berlin, *Rhetoric;* Johnson; see also Miller, *Formation*). For a wider historical perspective on the history of writing instruction, see Murphy, *Short History*.

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