Introduction

First and foremost: what is rhetoric?[1]
(Quintilian, *Institutes* 2.15.1)

Barring failures of reasoning, conclusions flow more or less inevitably from premises. The choice of a definition of rhetoric is accordingly a decisive moment for any account of rhetoric. Aristotle immediately follows his propositions concerning the role of definitions by enjoining a definition of his own: "Let rhetoric be the capacity to discover the possible means of persuasion concerning any subject."[2] However, the number of available definitions of rhetoric embarrasses in more than one sense. On the one hand it is clear that Aristotle's account of rhetoric is itself reacting to other contemporary competing accounts. And, on the other hand, Aristotle's definition is not the last one that will be offered. For example, Quintilian chooses, "Knowing how to speak well."[3] Quintilian's definition itself comes after a long and detailed discussion of the variety of other available definitions, including Aristotle's.[4]

Post-classical thought also offers its own modifications of these ancient positions as well as some novelties. Kant yokes rhetoric and poetry when describing the arts of speech: "The rhetorical arts are oratory and poetry." He goes on to define rhetoric as "the art of carrying on a serious business of the understanding as if it were a free play of the imagination" and poetry as "the art of conducting a free play of the imagination as if it were a serious

[1] *Ante omnia: quid sit rhetorice*. The attentive will observe both that we are well into the *Institutio* itself and that Quintilian has been using this term for a while now before he elects to declare the primacy of the task of defining it.

[2] Ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν; *Rhetoric* 1355b25–26.

[3] *Rhetoricen esse bene dicendi scientiam*; *Institutes* 2.15.38. *Scientia* implies more than mere knowing, though: it entails a solid understanding of the subject. The term corresponds to and often translates the Greek word *epistēmē*.

[4] Further discussion of Quintilian's history of definitions can be found in my chapter in this volume.

business of the understanding."[5] Nietzsche, who cites and modifies Kant's portrait of rhetoric, recognizes that defining rhetoric is a fundamental move that nevertheless routinely yields difficulties:

> Generally speaking, the moderns are inaccurate in their definitions, whereas the competition over the correct definition of rhetoric goes on throughout the whole of antiquity, and specifically among philosophers and orators . . . Those who avoided giving a strict definition have at least sought to determine the orator's *telos* or *officium* [end or task]. This is the *peithein*, *dicendo persuadere* [persuade, persuade through speaking]: it was difficult to incorporate this into the *horismos* [definition] because the effect is not the essence of the thing, and furthermore, persuasion does not always take place even with the best orator.[6]

Nietzsche himself ultimately declares that "the rhetorical" is none other than "*a further development*, guided by the clear light of the understanding, of *the artistic means which are already found in language*."[7] For Nietzsche, then, language is always already rhetorical. Nietzsche's definition offers a useful point of departure for the present volume: it is post-classical, but both engaged with and influenced by the ancient accounts. The critic observes how the potential has passed into the actual. One seeks to explicate a genealogy of rhetoric.

It is possible to avoid overt engagement with later developments in the history of rhetoric, but it is hard to imagine that one can avoid taking a stand, either implicitly or explicitly, relative to the question of rhetoric when constituting a Companion to it. For what, after all, is the thing to which such a volume is addressing itself? Whose Companion is this?

I cannot answer this question of the essence of ancient rhetoric. At least I cannot answer it without doing the reader an injustice disguised as a benefaction. Let me step back, then, to explore how this difficulty is but one of many that have confronted me, and how this volume is of itself an attempt both to give a sensible form to such questions and to begin to answer them even as it regularly disputes the proposition that any simple answer could be available to us. My first difficulty: where are we to find a meta-discourse that can capture ancient rhetoric and deliver it up to us as a discrete object, a thing to be known, and known completely? Aristotle asks us to theorize, Quintilian promises us knowledge, but too many questions

[5] Kant 1951 §51.
[6] Nietzsche 1989: 5 (translation modified).
[7] Nietzsche 1989: 21 (original emphasis).

are begged if we proceed at once either to speculation or to memorizing our lessons.

So there are basic epistemological issues before us. Among them is the meaning of the very word "rhetoric" itself.[8] Scrupulous speakers of English could systematically use two discrete words when speaking about the science of speaking well and speaking well itself. The former is rhetoric, the latter is oratory.[9] One word is taken from the Greek, the other from Latin. The one term knows, the other does. However, a rigid distinction between the two terms "rhetoric" and "oratory" does not reflect standard English usage: the first entry (1.a.) for "oratory" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* ends by offering as a synonym the word "rhetoric," and the adjective "oratorical" (s.v.) is similarly glossed in its very first entry with the word "rhetorical."

A desire for rhetorical consistency when deploying the terms rhetoric and oratory is quite conducive to a number of admirable ends. The distinction will often be observed below in the name of neatly distinguishing theory ("proper") from practice ("proper"). However, such rigor potentially obscures any number of genealogical questions pertaining to the emergence of the (perhaps not entirely coherent) concept of rhetoric itself. We might attend, for example, to the debate at Rome over what, if anything, to do when it comes to translating the Greek term *rhētorikē* into Latin. Quintilian rejects *oratoria* and *oratrix* and decides merely to transliterate: *rhetorice*.[10] Quintilian divides *rhetorice*: it covers the art, the artist, and the work.[11] The first is "knowing how to speak well" (*bene dicendi scientia*), the second is "the orator" (*orator*), and the third is "good oratory" (*bona oratio*). Note in particular that the genus, *rhetorice*, becomes homonymous with one of the species into which it has been divided: the first of these, "knowing how to speak well," gives the very words of Quintilian's own gloss on the meaning of the term *rhetorice*.

[8] Connoisseurs of rhetorical theory will be able at once to categorize this dispute. This is the *stasis horikē* (Lat. *status finitionis*): "What is the proper terminology with which to describe what has happened?" See Hermogenes, *On Issues* 2.15. Compare Quintilian, *Institutes* 3.6.5 and 7.3.2–4. See also the first appendix to this volume.

[9] *OED*, 2nd edn., s.v. "Rhetoric (n.1) 1.a.": "The art of using language so as to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer in order that he may express himself with eloquence." *OED*, 2nd edn., s.v., "Oratory (n.2) 1.b.": "The exercise of eloquence; the delivery of orations or speeches; rhetorical or eloquent language."

[10] Quintilian, *Institutes* 2.14.1.

[11] Quintilian, *Institutes* 2.14.5: *igitur rhetorice (iam enim sine metu cauillationis utemur hac appellatione) sic, ut opinor, optime diuidetur ut de arte, de artifice, de opere dicamus.*

The English word "rhetoric," despite a certain investment in the theoretical in contradistinction to the practical, itself entertains some of this same breadth found in Quintilian's *rhetorice*, a word that though allegedly explanatory itself nevertheless still requires further explanation. In English as well "rhetoric" is a governing category. "Rhetoric" is likewise regularly used not just to designate the art, but also its products, especially in such disparaging contemporary idioms as "that's all just so much rhetoric."[12] In fact "rhetoric" can also be very broad indeed and thus a synonym for technique or style.[13] And, though such has yet to appear in the *OED*, the Merriam–Webster Dictionary already has "discourse" as a synonym for rhetoric.[14] And in practice a good many contemporary scholarly uses of the word rhetoric are already juxtaposing the expansive sense of rhetoric to the even more expansive understanding of the term "discourse." One has the sense that the trajectory of the English word is sending it in the direction of the protean Greek term *logos*.

Such a trend entails the unwriting of a segment of the history of rhetoric itself. In Plato's *Gorgias* Socrates is keen on outmaneuvering his interlocutor Gorgias. First, he refuses to listen to a demonstration (*epideixis*) from Gorgias concerning the art of rhetoric.[15] As epideictic is itself one of the species of oratory, one can see here the philosopher's resistance to submitting himself to a rhetoric of rhetoric. Instead philosophical dialogue (*dialekhthēnai*) will elicit a definition: we are only interested in a philosophy of rhetoric. And Socrates is quick to commit Gorgias to a limited definition. The parties agree: rhetoric is a science (*epistēmē*) whose object is language/discourse/accounts (*peri logous*), but its object is not every sort of *logos*.[16] For example, medicine covers a specific discursive field: it is the science of that subset of *logoi* that pertain to illness (*tous ge peri ta nosēmata*).[17] At issue, then, will be exactly which *logoi* rhetoric is authorized to teach. One ought to note that in order to delimit the domain of rhetoric, we have to leave open the ambiguous question of *logos*, the word for words. Philosophy, for its own purposes, has made rhetoric into something smaller than what it might otherwise have been.[18]

[12] *OED*, 2nd edn., s.v. "Rhetoric (n.1) 2.b."
[13] *OED*, 2nd edn., s.v. "Rhetoric (n.1) 2.e."
[14] "Rhetoric"; www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rhetoric (accessed May 15, 2008).
[15] See Plato, *Gorgias* 447a–c.
[16] Plato, *Gorgias* 449d9–e4.
[17] Plato, *Gorgias* 450a4.
[18] See Wardy's chapter in this volume as well as Wardy 1996 for a much more detailed account of the negative relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, which yields the that and the not-that.

An "imprecise" deployment of the term rhetoric that straddles various lexical possibilities rather than committing itself to designating always and only the science of speaking well (*hē tekhnē rhētorikē*) need not be taken as mere slovenly use, a capitulation to the uneducated morass of idiom, and a falling away from theoretical precision. Instead it is potentially an intervention in the way one will approach the question of the "proper" domain of rhetoric itself. What is the origin of this propriety, of this theoretical specificity? To deny that there is a question or to depict it as a settled question, these are themselves rhetorical tropes. Conversely one can imagine a rejoinder (*cauillatio*) to my advocacy of the expansive use: I am assuming my own conclusion. Such a vice, though, is permitted in an introduction, provided that the arguments that follow ultimately support this initial claim.

But let us go back to enumerating some of the problems of constituting a Companion to ancient rhetoric. There are a variety of practical concerns to address as well. What sense does it make to speak of ancient rhetoric? When does "antiquity" begin? When does it end? Here one could argue at some length, or, eschewing explicit determinations, merely speak as one usually speaks and silently contribute to the established consensus of the scholarly community that precedes. In any case, there are at least one thousand years of material available to any who would wish to take it up. Centuries on either side can be given or taken according to one's pleasure – and not one's erudite certainty. And, naturally, endless controversy could erupt around which authors are given how much space once the preliminary determination of period has been made. Moreover, given the relatively expansive sense of rhetorical culture within which this volume operates, while some less familiar rhetorical authors – such as the comic poet Plautus – will be heard from, nevertheless some of the canonical ones will be given less space than that to which they are accustomed. Perhaps, like the worthy ____ they will never even be mentioned.

By "ancient" English idiom also frequently designates "ancient Greek and Latin." And so we make another major assumption. It would also be useful to explore the speech traditions of the ancient Mediterranean cultures in general before settling on Athens and Rome: the peoples of Asia Minor, other early Italic civilizations, and even various "barbarian" cultures such as those of North Africa or Northern Europe might offer useful points of comparison or even some vital and often neglected elements as we compose our portrait of rhetoric, a portrait that might otherwise be satisfied to depict a specifically fifth-century BCE Greek invention. Nevertheless, as Robert Wardy argues below, it is not at all inappropriate to think of rhetoric as the invention of a specific time and place. However, to find the moment of

rhetoric's christening is not the same as to fully compass its genealogy. I am especially interested in these genealogical questions. And we ought to note in passing that inheritance law and disputed kinship produced a great deal of rhetorical theory and practice.

To continue with this theme of kinship, though: the question "What is rhetoric?" entails as a corollary knowing what it is not, what is like it, and what is dissimilar from it. One would wish to know its parents, its brothers and sisters, its cousins, its children as well as how it gets on with them. Of course, we could be very narrow and ignore the broader family tree: rhetoric would be anything that the teachers of rhetoric designated as such. The ancient rhetorical handbooks would be our guide here. There would be no shortage of explicit answers to our question if this were the path we opted to take. But such only brings us back to our first observation: there are too many handbook definitions even if we wanted to appreciate rhetoric only on those terms. And yet if we again look to ancient orations and take our lead from the practice of oratory when rethinking the question of the theory of rhetoric, we will find these orations to be obsessed with characterizing a man by his family, his friends, and his enemies. A specific issue is seldom argued, a whole life is regularly narrated. Narrow definitions are eschewed. Just about everything is fair play. One needs, one is told, to look at the big picture.

And yet this big picture is not at all a neutral image taken in harsh light by the crime-scene photographer. It is a landscape done in watercolors, a portrait drawn in charcoal, a study in oils. The media can be mixed. Perspective is always an issue. The question of context regularly falls back into a problem of text. In an ancient oration we are regularly either given plenty of context or (strategically) assumed to share certain key assumptions with the speaker. But such a context is, of course, a partisan context, a one-sided context, a context that inevitably leads us to a specific verdict. And the big picture can become very big indeed. Isocrates surveys for his fourth-century BCE audience events from the tenth century BCE and the era of the Trojan war.[19] Attacks on enemies regularly survey the whole of their lives as Aeschines does with Timarchus or Cicero with Antonius. It is possible for a speech to cover a great deal of ground even where seemingly narrow questions of law are at issue. Many speeches even consider such to be highly desirable.

[19] See Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 34–37 and *Panathenaicus* 42–48. Compare Tacitus, *Annals* 4.43, where claimants concerning a disputed shrine evoke poems, myths about the children of Heracles, and the dispensations of both Greek kings and Roman magistrates.

Lacking a clear sense of what, when, who, and how, it is hard to make an unambiguous case about rhetoric itself. And so, when I first pondered what it would mean to construct a Companion to ancient rhetoric, I smiled to recall the advice of Lucian's Professor of Rhetoric. The depraved master advises his would-be student as to the essential qualities needed if one wishes to take the easy road to rhetorical mastery: ignorance, insolence, recklessness, shamelessness.[20] It is not even immediately clear that those who undertake the hard road towards explicating rhetoric might not be evincing some of these paradoxical "virtues."

There you have it: a preliminary account of my own aporia.[21] Although oratory can speak exhaustively about anything, nobody can hope to give a comprehensive account of rhetoric.[22] Nevertheless, rhetorical handbooks are almost as old as oratory itself. Despite the difficulty of the task, there has been no shortage of those who have elected to attempt it. Presumably it is not just shamelessness that typifies these works. One might plead instead necessity. For how can one not speak of rhetoric?

As will become abundantly clear below, rhetoric continually argued for its own centrality to ancient culture. These arguments had a great deal of merit. For a substantial period, to be educated and to be trained in rhetoric were nearly identical propositions. The ancient curriculum began with elementary lessons and ended with advanced rhetorical exercises. Imagine an educational system today that presupposed that all children aspired to go to law school and prepared them for that eventuality. Some might diverge from this course; most would drop out somewhere along the way; but a precious few would become consummate barristers. The modern lawyer, though, tends to confine his or her work to the law itself. Conversely the trained speaker of yore was supposed to be skilled in court, listened to on matters of policy, and the spokesperson for the community at times of celebration or sorrow.

This is not, of course, to indicate that the orator did not have a number of important rivals. It is only to indicate that he is one of the leading players in the cultural game of antiquity and one of the ones who stand a substantial chance of "winning" any given contest. Philosophers and poets are also masters of language, and they too make a claim on our attention. They often

[20] Lucian, *Professor of Public Speaking* 15: κόμιζε τοίνυν τὸ μέγιστον μὲν τὴν ἀμαθίαν, εἶτα θράσος, ἐπὶ τούτοις δὲ τόλμαν καὶ ἀναισχυντίαν.

[21] Lysias 19.1: "This particular case puts me in quite a bind . . ." (πολλήν μοι ἀπορίαν παρέχει ὁ ἀγὼν οὑτοσί . . .).

[22] Lysias 12.1: "It does not seem hard, men of the jury, to start my accusation, but rather to stop once I get started" (Οὐκ ἄρξασθαί μοι δοκεῖ ἄπορον εἶναι, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τῆς κατηγορίας, ἀλλὰ παύσασθαι λέγοντι).

plead a case against rhetoric. The elite of birth and of wealth have their own expectations to be taken seriously irrespective of their scholarly credentials. On occasion priests are also capable of making their own pressing demands. There is the raw power of position: the king, the tyrant, and the emperor need not be eloquent in the least for the brute language of force can be all too readily understood by all.

Nevertheless, most of these competing authorities regularly avoid defining themselves against rhetorical authority. Instead they commonly opt to take it up for themselves in at least some measure. Plato uses the arts of speech even as he critiques the orators. Cicero and Seneca use their rhetorical craft to offer, they say, a superior articulation of philosophy. Euripides has listened attentively to the speakers of his day and offers us verse debates. Seneca the Elder shows us Ovid in the rhetoric schoolhouse, enjoying himself with rhetorical games that in some measure reproduce themselves in his witty verse. Herodotus strings together stories and has a sense of the profound rhetoricity of both history and culture. The most stirring passages in Livy are the orations, as are the darkest in Tacitus. Sallust was excerpted for his. The well-born sometimes take exclusive pride in station and find a threat in that upstart rhetoric and its self-siring authority, but others find in it a resource to add to their other advantages. Pericles' family was impeccable, but he is remembered as eloquent and sage, rather than well-born. Caesar had every advantage of birth, and yet his contemporaries would know him as perhaps Rome's second-best orator before they found in him a man who intended to command rather than to persuade. The elder Cato was a new man by birth, an old one by habit, a critic of novel and exotic oratory, and an avid albeit somewhat furtive student of the same. The end of monarchy marks the beginning of a community of speech and persuasion, so the story goes at both Greece and Rome. Conversely the rule of autocrats is measured both by their own speech and by the way they are spoken to. In the imperial age of Rome safe speech becomes its own sort of art.

It should be clear that when reading ancient literature it would be inadequate to set rhetoric off in its own corner, to segregate speeches from plays, for example. Drama has much that is rhetorical in it, and, conversely, oratory itself is regularly quite stagy in its relationship not just to performance but also to persona. A study of "rhetoric in Euripides" is potentially misleading if not at a minimum read in conjunction with something like "drama in Cicero." For it is not immediately clear that the one thing is really "inside" the other.[23]

[23] See especially Lycurgus' *Against Leocrates*, where a wealth of dramatic verse has been incorporated into his prose.

The major discourses of antiquity are in a constant and often agonistic dialogue. We should not be over-hasty in judging who has won the debate about debate and successfully subordinated one sort of language to another.

There are a number of introductory texts already available to readers who wish to explore ancient rhetoric. The basic orientation of such a volume can be historical and aim at outlining the evolution of rhetorical theory and oratorical practice over time. The work of George Kennedy exemplifies such an approach. Here the story of rhetoric unfolds as a relatively self-contained narrative obeying its own logic. Or, in a parallel gesture, an introduction to rhetoric can cover authors. The difficulty here is who is left off the list and whether or not some vital theme is thus omitted as well. Similarly such an approach can easily beg questions about the relationship between a life, a body of work, and a major mode of discourse. An overview of oratory can also be more structural and explore various aspects of oratory as outlined in technical discussions of the art from antiquity: deliberative oratory versus judicial oratory, word order, tropes, and so forth. Lausberg's *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric* represents the acme of this method.[24]

One should not underestimate the returns available to those who invest in appreciating ancient orations within the terms set forth by ancient rhetorical theory. It is important to appreciate the canonical structure of an ancient oration: introduction, narration, proofs, and peroration.[25] Divergences from this structure become immediate targets for further reflection: "What has provoked the shift?" Meanwhile knowing the ancient taxonomy of, for example, types of introduction itself gives ready access to useful critical questions: "This is an instance of the 'subtle' approach. Why this instead of a 'direct' introduction? To what extent and in what manner have the virtues of clarity, brevity, and plausibility been pursued or set to one side?" There are three major kinds of oration: legal speeches, deliberative political speeches, and display speeches. Cicero's First Verrine oration is technically a prosecution, but it is governed by a major opening gambit: Cicero assumes the obvious guilt of Verres and shifts over to a largely deliberative mode: "What will people think of you senators on the jury if you acquit such a man?" The speech as a whole is in fact rife with unusual technical features. The interaction between categories itself offers endless opportunities: in Lysias a simple style joined with direct narratives regularly

[24] Lausberg 1998.

[25] "The canonical structure": this notion is a (useful) fiction of the moment. See Heath, Hesk, and Steel in this volume for the debates about taxonomy and the efforts at canonizing one version over another.

yields an ethos for the speaker that can be leveraged in the course of the formal segment of the speech dedicated to proofs, especially when it comes to arguments from plausibility which ask the audience to consider the likelihood of a man such as this doing a thing like that.

This volume assumes that its readers will also be reading editions of Demosthenes, Lysias, and Cicero. It also assumes that the notes and introductory materials to such editions will include some degree of nitty-gritty technical analysis of the speech at hand. A "good" edition will note the architecture of the speech, the tropes used in the peroration will be catalogued, and so forth. Rather than reproduce such efforts, this *Companion* aims instead at offering further themes as well as further methodological issues to explore. In a similar vein there is an assumption throughout that one must move beyond the simple application of an ancient theoretical text to an ancient speech. That sort of agenda-setting on the part of a theorist should not be conceded. Nevertheless, the outlines of such theories really do need to be understood. One should keep a copy of something like the *Rhetoric to Herennius* to hand: it is exceptionally explicit, clear, and useful.[26] Cicero, while setting his own agenda for his own text, assumes that his readers already have access to the basic rule-books. He will offer something more: "I'll not rehearse some fixed curriculum drawn from the cradle of that antiquated and childish instruction of my youth ... It's not that I scorn those things that the Greek teachers of rhetoric have left behind, but these things are readily available and to hand for all. My version of them would not explicate them any more elegantly nor express them any more plainly ..."[27] The rhetoric of Cicero's own rhetorical theory is patent: he is trying to persuade us to do things otherwise. Compare, then, the very text you are presently reading. We too claim to offer something more (authoritative).

Assuredly none of the aforementioned alternate approaches to rhetoric are by any means "false," but each does correspond to a vision of what

[26] A rough and ready surrogate for a rhetorical handbook is on offer in the first appendix to this volume.

[27] In full: *repetamque non ab incunabulis nostrae ueteris puerilisque doctrinae quendam ordinem praeceptorum, sed ea, quae quondam accepi in nostrorum hominum eloquentissimorum et omni dignitate principum disputatione esse uersata; non quo illa contemnam, quae Graeci dicendi artifices et doctores reliquerunt, sed cum illa pateant in promptuque sint omnibus, neque ea interpretatione mea aut ornatius explicari aut planius exprimi possint, dabis hanc ueniam, mi frater, ut opinor, ut eorum, quibus summa dicendi laus a nostris hominibus concessa est, auctoritatem Graecis anteponam*; Cicero, *On the Orator* 1.23. Compare Plato, *Phaedrus* 266d and Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.1–3 on "other theoretical works."