The primary virtue of Mark Garrett Longaker’s *Rhetoric and the Republic: Politics, Civic Discourse, and Education in Early America* might be best rendered through paradox—the book effectively complicates that which it clarifies. With considerable sophistication and lucidity, Longaker demonstrates that the republicanism of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America, as manifested in the discourse and educational institutions of the era, constituted a complicated, contested terrain. Revising previous accounts of the period set forth by Gregory Clark, Michael Halloran, Thomas Miller, and others, he argues that recent efforts to portray early American republicanism as an Edenic age or as a model for present-day rhetorical education seriously underestimate its complex, conflicted nature. Through careful exploration of the multifaceted relationships and interactions among political discourse, economics, religion, and rhetorical education, *Rhetoric and the Republic* brings to light many of the intricate ways early American republicanism was appropriated for a wide variety of competing purposes.

Longaker’s introduction—“Now that We’re Civic”—outlines his Gramscian approach to his subject, including a heavy dose of articulation theory. In this spirit, Longaker declares, “Economic variables are an essential—if not the essential—component in any hegemonic articulation of various elements, some discursive, many not” (xvi). Chapter 1, “One Republic, Many Republicanisms,” which focuses on early American political controversies, illustrates how republicanism was appropriated by divergent economic and political interests. For example, he demonstrates how the Jonathan Dickenson vs. Thomas Paine and Alexander Hamilton vs. Thomas Jefferson debates employed republican concepts in support of very different political positions. Featuring the concept of “publicity,” which he equates with “publicness, a manner of embodying and performing good public citizenship through public argument” (2), Longaker traces the development and eventual demise of republican discourse, which is supplanted by liberalism in the Jacksonian Era.

In chapter 2, “One Republic, Many Paideiai,” Longaker focuses on early American rhetorical education. Particularly featuring Benjamin Franklin, who advocated for practical rhetorical training designed for the interests of rising Philadelphian capitalists, and John Quincy Adams, “a transitional figure” (67) whose Harvard lectures were meant to validate the social status of the sons of established New England families, Longaker successfully
demonstrates that “just as early American publicity was a site where actors articulated a common political discourse to various economic, political, religious, and cultural concerns, so early American education was also a site where individuals sutured republicanism to various and often opposing interests” (39). The chapter concludes with a discussion of one of area of relative unanimity among republican rhetorical pedagogies, namely the marginalization of “laborers, women, and non-Anglo, non-Caucasian ethnicities or races” (73).

The last three chapters of the book further scrutinize republican rhetoric education through specific discussions of the training featured by four institutions of higher education: Yale (chapter 3), King’s College/Columbia and the College of Pennsylvania/University of Pennsylvania (chapter 4), and the College of New Jersey (chapter 5). Operating under the assumption that the “work of rhetorical education is a principal site where actors force articulations, where they find agency” (81), Longaker reveals what is at stake as each college establishes pedagogies to further political, economic, and religious aims. Initially, Yale’s particular blend of Puritanism and small-town life was buttressed with a Ramist rhetorical curriculum. Later in the eighteenth century, however, the Scots rhetoric treatises of Henry Home Lord Kames and Hugh Blair, with their emphasis on belles-lettres, as well as the neoclassical texts of John Ward and John Holmes, were appropriated by the Connecticut institution. Explicating this evolution, Longaker demonstrates that “as economic developments changed Connecticut’s base, renewed struggles for hegemony were waged in cultural institutions like the rhetoric classroom” (133).

In contrast with Yale, Longaker argues, King’s College and the College of Pennsylvania were from the beginning designed to meet the needs of capitalistic, cosmopolitan cultural centers. Like their Connecticut counterpart, though, these two colleges adapted Scots belles-lettres to fit their particular needs. Reflecting on its role in these urban institutions, Longaker concludes, “Belletrism’s presence was the only constant in rhetorical pedagogy from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, though it was articulated to two very different political positions: an Anglican loyalism and a genteel, Federalist republicanism” (173). In his chapter on the College of New Jersey, Longaker reinterprets the contribution of John Witherspoon—the ostensible “great forefather of an American republican rhetorical education”—whose “republican pedigree,” it turns out, “is not so pure” (178). Like the earlier subjects of the study, Witherspoon “appropriated a common vocabulary, articulating it to economic and political interests, to the historical environment in New Jersey” (180). In fact, Longaker demonstrates how Witherspoon’s pedagogy, which “can be summarized as an attempt to mix political liberalism, laissez-faire economic policy, republican discourse, and Calvinist evangelism” (198), contributes to the transition from republicanism to the liberalism that eventually supplants it.
Tying together the series of brief, but provocative, remarks about contemporary pedagogy that appear throughout the study, Longaker’s conclusion, “We Are All Republicans,” interrogates contemporary efforts to rejuvenate republicanism, from Henry Giroux to Patrick Buchanan. “Simply championing republicanism in American higher education will not suffice,” Longaker declares, since—as in the case of early American discourse—recent calls for a return to republican values emanate from a wide spectrum of ideological positions. Instead, he recommends that rhetorical educators carefully scrutinize the components “in the continual hegemonic struggle over democratic institutions,” with particular emphasis on “economic factors and more close analysis of how cultural institutions like education mediate economic interests in real moments of conjuncture” (217).

If the primary virtue of Rhetoric and the Republic rests in its rendering of the paradox with which I began, certainly other positive qualities contribute to its luster. Longaker’s ability to keep a diverse set of variables—republicanism, economics, politics, religion, and rhetorical education—in play throughout the study is noteworthy. Also laudable, and highly appropriate for his central case, is Longaker’s rhetorical strategy of providing considerable textual evidence in support of a given position or interpretation (“on the one hand . . .”), presenting and developing an equally compelling counter position, claim, or interpretation (“. . . on the other hand”), and then moving to a carefully attenuated, complex middle ground or third position. Furthermore, one must praise his skillful readings of a wide variety of primary texts, including treatises, lectures, correspondence, and other documents concerning rhetorical training. It is delightful to encounter such surefooted, economical, yet rich analyses of the pedagogy advocated by well-known figures such as Benjamin Franklin, John Quincy Adams, and John Witherspoon alongside equally valuable treatments of less celebrated, yet influential educators such Yale’s Thomas Clapp, Samuel Johnson of King’s College, and William Smith of the College of Philadelphia. Finally, Longaker’s eleven tables of debate and thesis topics from early American institutions provide rich data for his discussion.

My reservations about Rhetoric and Republic are slight. I do wish to register a concern about Longaker’s portrayal of the eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoricians—Hugh Blair, Lord Kames, and Adam Smith—who (directly and indirectly) exercised a profound influence on early American rhetorical education. Emphasizing the centrality of French belletrism in the work of the Scots theorists (an emphasis previously explicated by scholars such as Barbara Warnick and Thomas Miller), Longaker downplays other important strands and dimensions prevalent in their work, including a sustained classicism and sophisticated treatments of ethical issues related to rhetoric. In the last decade, scholars such as Arthur Walzer, Stephen McKenna, Beth Manolescu, and Lois Agnew have offered significant revisions to
and extensions of our understanding of these figures, including a heightened understanding of the links among rhetorical theory, economics, and civic responsibility. While some of this work has been published too recently to be reflected in Rhetoric and the Republic, incorporation of some of this new scholarship, it seems to me, would have strengthened Longaker’s analysis. A related worry concerns the absence of discussion of George Campbell’s Philosophy of Rhetoric, which played a vital role in early American education during the period featured in Rhetoric and the Republic.

Beginning with a paradox grants me the liberty to close with a confession. Because I am skeptical of any history that overtly casts theoretical categories and assumptions across cultures, continents, and centuries, I inevitably placed a substantial burden of proof on Longaker, who—it seems to me—must labor to demonstrate the explanatory power of a Gramscian reading of early American rhetorical education. For the most part, I believe he meets this burden admirably. Although at times his repetition of key concepts and terms (“articulation,” “hegemony,” and “suture” quickly come to mind) dulls somewhat the edge of his analysis, Longaker nonetheless provides a powerful and convincing account of rhetoric and rhetorical education in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America that brings new understanding of the intersections of discourse, economics, politics, and religion in this complex “field of engagement” (217), both then and now. He has begun to convince this skeptic that, whether or not we historians and teachers of rhetoric are in fact all republicans, we ought at least to be all Gramscians.

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Discussions of plagiarism have taken on a provocative edge. Once plagiarism was seen as shameful, transparent, and not really worthy of analysis. Now, however, scholars envision plagiarism as a nexus of socio-economic forces, an opportunity for redemption, a point of tension in global values and practices, a site of pedagogical and aesthetic possibilities, and the product of a complex legal and cultural history. New research on plagiarism often reveals relationships and possibilities hitherto unimagined. The field progresses rapidly, and at the front edge, Bill Marsh’s Plagiarism: Alchemy