

# The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce

Matthew Bevis

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'In the course of these fifty years we have become a nation of public speakers. Everyone speaks now. We are now more than ever a debating, that is, a Parliamentary people' (The Times, 1873).

The Art of Eloquence considers how Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, and Joyce responded to this 'Parliamentary people', and examines the ways in which they and their publics conceived the relations between political speech and literary endeavour. Drawing on a wide range of sources - classical rhetoric, Hansard, newspaper reports, elocutionary manuals, treatises on crowd theory - this book argues that oratorical procedures and languages were formative influences on literary culture from Romanticism to Modernism.

Matthew Bevis focuses attention on how the four writers negotiated contending political demands in and through their work, and on how they sought to cultivate forms of literary detachment that could gain critical purchase on political arguments. Providing a close reading of the relations between printed words and public voices as well as a broader engagement with debates about the socio-political inflections of the aesthetic realm, this is a major study of how styles of writing can explore and embody forms of responsible political conduct.



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