



Edward Everett: Unionist Orator (Great American Orators)

Ronald Reid

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If Edward Everett is remembered at all today, it is as the orator who gave the other speech at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on November 19, 1863. Ironically, Everett's oration, which was given wide coverage in contemporary newspapers, was recognized as both epideictic and argumentative. Everett defended the Union cause, whereas Lincoln's speech was strictly ceremonial. A second irony that attends Everett's oratorical career is that his countrymen believed him to be one of the great orators of the time, the undisputed master of ceremonial address. In this first new study of Edward Everett's oratory, author Ronald Reid addresses the historical and oratorical paradoxes that have influenced perceptions of Everett's career. Reid reconstitutes the role of epideictic rhetoric in the United States from the end of the Revolutionary War to the eve of the Civil War and reinstates Everett in the pantheon of great American orators. He demonstrates why Everett fell into virtual obscurity and treats the reader to a penetrating analysis of the role of public persuasion in the United States during a critical period in its history. In *Edward Everett: Unionist Orator* Reid effectively restores Everett to his rightful rostrum in the unfolding national drama from the 1820s to the 1860s, providing a sweeping story of America's golden age of oratory in the process.

The book opens with a discussion of the influence of Everett's eighteenth-century heritage on his desire to save the Union at all costs. The author shows how the seeds of Everett's Unionism were starting to sprout in his literary and theological speeches and writings, and how he developed the rhetorical methods that he would use throughout his career. Next, Reid deals with Everett's oratory during his years of service, first as a congressman and then as governor of Massachusetts. Here he discusses Everett's increasing concern about the divisiveness of the partisan and sectional causes he espoused. Chapters three and four deal with Everett's modification of his earlier Unionist strategies in an effort to deal with increasing sectionalism and preserve the United States. In conclusion, Reid reviews Everett's oratory, speculating about the role of epideictic oratory in general in maintaining, or failing to maintain, social unity. Sample speeches complete the work, which include a partial text of one of Everett's congressional speeches, a 4th of July oration, his Character of Washington, and a partial text of Everett's Gettysburg address.

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