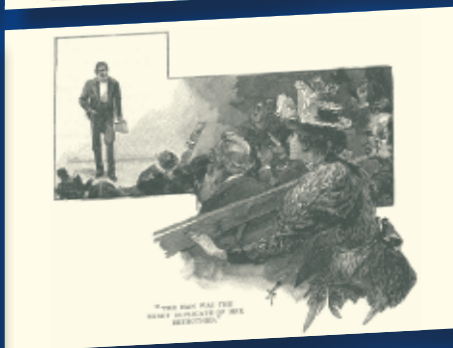


ANNE-JULIA ZWIERLEIN
HEIDI WEIG
SEBASTIAN GRAEF (Eds.)

Cultures of Lecturing in the Long Nineteenth Century

VOL. I: Practices of Oral Performance
in Manuals of Rhetoric,
Journalism and Autobiography



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Edited by
Rainer Emig
Anne-Julia Zwierlein



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Anne-Julia Zwierlein

Introduction: Cultures of Lecturing in the Long Nineteenth Century

Oral Performances: Lecturing, Public Speaking, Reciting

The Victorian rise of mass print media competed against persisting cults of presence and orality: lectures, speeches, sermons, penny readings, and recitations, oral storytelling, and the reading aloud of newspapers contributed to a heterogeneous and thriving oral culture. “Public speech lay [...] at the core of Victorian public life”, writes the historian Joseph Meisel (2001, 115; see also Rose 2001, 84); and fellow historian Martin Hewitt, who has produced groundbreaking work on Victorian platform culture (2002; 2012), emphasizes that “audiences were often of a size to warrant the description of the platform as a system of mass leisure” (2002, 3). He also warns the aspiring researcher that “[s]ystematic records of any forms of nineteenth-century platform activity are entirely lacking: it was an element of public life that defied quantification.” (2002, 2) Public speech events were omnipresent in all cultural fields during the Victorian period, in politics, higher education, and rational recreation. Oral performances were also ingrained in Victorian biographies, as they had become an increasingly central element of pedagogy since the mid- to late-eighteenth century, when the elocution movement installed oral recitation, supported by elocutionary techniques, as an important aspect of school teaching (see Robson 2012 and Schroeder 2015).

The popularisation of the platform and the diversification of oral formats were important catalysts, and symptoms, of the political tendencies of the later half of the nineteenth century – a period of incremental democratisation which includes the long campaign for women’s suffrage. The second Reform Bill (1867) doubled the British electorate by including working-class males, and the same year saw the beginnings of the women’s rights movement, the 1867 foundation of the liberal feminist Langham Place group and John Stuart Mill’s unsuccessful petition for female franchise. Our period, the ‘long nineteenth-century’ addressed in the title, ends with early-twentieth-century organised mass events staging women’s public visibility and vocalicity: the famous 1907 ‘Mud March’ of suffragists from Hyde Park Corner to Exeter Hall and the 1910 mass demonstrations in Hyde Park. This increasingly energetic incursion of women into the urban public sphere in Britain was facilitated through a developing mass culture which comprised both print and orality – periodicals, newspapers, and popular fiction as well as popular lectures, oratory, and recitations. The nineteenth century has been called “the performing century” (Davis 2007), and emerging female identities, social aspirations, and political positions were performed and articulated in (mass) print and speech.

Traces of the ephemeral rhetorical performances of the long nineteenth century are accessible through the rhetoric of texts, through journalistic coverage of lectures and speeches in newspapers and periodicals, through lecture notes, epistolary or (auto)biographical reports, and mediations of public speech in fiction. If we define the culture of public speech as comprising oral performances as well as their journalistic coverage, overall audience numbers could be huge indeed: thousands of listeners indoors as well as outdoors in the case of attractive or controversial topics (see Hewitt 2002, 2, and Meisel 2001, 262), multiplied by the hundreds of thousands of readers who followed speech events in the newspapers. The circulation numbers of the larger dailies could reach between half and one million (see King 2004, 84, and Ellegard 1971), and we know that each paper copy was shared statistically by a sizeable number of people – partly owing to the fact that articles were read aloud in group settings (see King 2004, 120, and Rose 2001, 87-88). Periodicals actively mediated and disseminated popular orality and lecture events, via a range of genres such as lecture advertisements, reports, and fictionalised accounts that underlined the social and affective dimensions of the voice-event. Robert Ellison argues that “residual orality is one of the most significant aspects of Victorian discourse” (Ellison 1998, 132), and indeed, oral speech travelled through the medium of print in order to resurface in other oral performances.

British lecture culture was undergoing huge transformations at the time: despite his own focus on “the notable orators of the period” (2001, 278), Meisel confirms that “the practices of public speaking as they developed in nineteenth-century Britain were a *new* formulation strongly connected to a host of other modernizing trends in the period” (2001, 5). Increasingly, the public speaker’s and lecturer’s personality and platform presence became part of the new spectacle of orality (see also Zwierlein 2016a), and the late-Victorian sensationalist ‘New Journalism’ thrived on a similar fascination with speakers’ appearance and modes of delivery. Julie Early summarises the intricate connections between the new culture of celebrity, and mass oral and print entertainment: “At the turn of the century [...] we see not only an age of the ‘personality’, but understand as well that publicity and celebrity are reciprocal functions of audience and technologies [...], [inducing] a blurring of boundaries between professional discourse and entertainment.” (Early 2002, 151) While Joseph McCabe, writing in 1908, judged that by 1870 the “high point of the culture of public speech” had passed (1908, 2:285), the late nineteenth century was in fact the period when oratory completed the transition from “great speeches” by “great men” (Meisel 2001, 9) to a more comprehensive, popular culture of public speeches and lecturing (on the embeddedness of popular lectures in other metropolitan social calendars and publishing rhythms see also Zwierlein 2022a). Joseph McCabe thus seems to be yearning back to a period of (male) parliamentary debates and ‘great speeches’, bypassing in his assessment of the state of oratory both working-class public speaking leading up to and following the 1867 Reform Bill – and the broadening of platform speech to include popular and women’s cultures.

Women’s Incursion onto Print and Speech Platforms

Despite the Victorian ubiquity of “speechification”, as Charles Dickens called it in an 1869 letter (see Watson 1973, 141), cultures of lecturing and public speaking have

remained “strangely invisible” in Victorian literary and cultural studies (Hewitt 2002, 1). Historians (for instance Meisel and Hewitt, quoted above, as well as their predecessor, Henry Jephson, 1892) have stolen a march on literary and cultural scholars in this particular field. Amanda Adams in her 2014 study of transatlantic lecture tours by British celebrity authors also observes that “work on Victorian oral culture has been slow in materialising compared to work in the field on the American side” (4). Indeed, US-American historians have recognised for a long time the importance of “speechifiers” for American nation building (Eastman 2009; see also Wright 2017; Ray/Stob 2018). Most importantly in our context, there is still much mileage in researching British women’s participation in nineteenth-century cultures of lecturing and public speaking. In 2002, Hewitt concluded his two-page survey of women speakers (until 1870) by emphasizing that “the precise role of women within nineteenth-century public speech remains obscure” (Hewitt 2002, 13), and Meisel’s study of Victorian public oratory by “great men” (Meisel 2001, 9) likewise excluded popular lecturers – and women. Lilian Shiman (1992, 126-37) had offered a few pages on women’s late-nineteenth-century incursion into political speech-making, and Janice Schroeder’s work on “the significance of public speech and private conversation for the mid-Victorian feminist movement” (2003, 97), with particular emphasis on women’s roles in the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (1857-86), was an important case study highlighting the incremental stages of women’s participation in cultures of public speech. Still, more remains to be done. Historically, women orators had been accorded some prominence in radical working-class movements during the 1830s-40s, yet the mid-Victorian conservative backlash, promoting the ideologies of femininity and respectability, had brought renewed restrictions for middle-class female public presence (see also Hewitt 2002, 13). Clare Midgley has shown how the anti-slavery and Temperance movements served as vehicles preparing later feminist campaigns from the 1860s onwards (1992, 172). It is vital to recognize the importance of semi-public sites of female speech for women’s collective elocutionary and oratorical training – among them, for instance, women’s work for philanthropic organisations, women’s teaching in Sunday Schools, and especially women’s reciting and speaking in front of ‘mixed’ (male and female) audiences in the context of late-Victorian rational recreation. Such collective preparation could then develop into the increasingly more energetic, eventually militant fight for the vote around the turn of the century.

Karen Boiko comments on the affect produced in audiences by the physical presence and immediacy of public lecturers, now lost beyond recuperation: “we have no way of truly recovering the experience of Victorian oratory. Yet, as Patrick Joyce has observed, it is worthwhile to try to recognize the ‘semi-religious effect’ of the aural and immediate.” (Boiko 2002, 33, with reference to Joyce 1994, 98) In late-nineteenth-century New Woman and suffrage fiction, we can glimpse the auratic ‘presence’ of women’s voices in print, literary stage-acts which were also meant to work as catalysts, generative of further female presences in public life and speech. Glenda Norquay (1995), Ann Heilmann (2003), Carolyn Nelson (2004) and others have written about, and documented, the religious overtones of the later phases of the suffragette movement. An intense traffic between orality and print is involved: women lecturers recount their own experiences in print, as in the case of famous suffragist Florence Fenwick Miller who thereby also placed the spoken word centre-stage: her autobiographical article on “How I Made My First

Speech" (1894) was the beginning of her association with the feminist periodical *The Woman's Signal* (whose editorship she was soon to take on). New Woman novels likewise deliberately incorporated the multimedia context of newspapers, periodicals, and public speaking, imagining the novel as a metatextual platform. The charisma of platform oratory is of paramount importance in suffrage texts, which restage in print the suffragettes' multimedial public protests, turning lecture events as literary settings into sites of shock and transformation.

During the militant phase of the suffragette movement, female campaigners actively and deliberately staged the 'sensation' of their own speaking performances (thus responding implicitly to the codes of respectability that they were breaking). They became adept at producing public sensations when accosting ministers in the street and haranguing male speakers unexpectedly from auditoriums – seemingly spontaneous actions which were in fact carefully scripted performances. Suffragists' (auto)biographies record their "sensational protest[s]" during the "great years" from c. 1907 onwards (Strachey 1928, 305). Audiences of suffrage meetings, Ray Strachey insists in her 1928 history of the women's movement, were in their turn "startled to attention", and some of the "converted" were then "sent out to lecture" themselves (1928, 120-1; cf. Norquay 1995, 11; for the narrative of conversion see also the eponymous novel by Elizabeth Robins, *The Convert*, of 1907). Among the enabling contexts for women orators were the mixed formats of popular oral performances; the term "lecture", as in Strachey's text, was often used for political speeches, and we encounter the term across suffrage writing. Lectures could thus make the transition to political agitation without necessarily breaching genre restrictions; Hewitt remarks on the specific "cultures of the political platform, where lecture, address and public meeting offer a particularly blurred and protean version" (2012, 82). The female appropriation of semi-public speaking forums, such as recitations and penny readings, thus both preceded and informed the hyperbolic vocality of early-twentieth-century suffragism, which took female oral delivery from indoor settings out into the streets, culminating in megaphoned speeches (see Oliver 1987, 185). In Arnold Bennett's suffrage novel *The Lion's Share* (Cassell, 1916), for instance, the megaphone figures as both technical instrument and spiritual experience, creating exhilarating feelings of empowerment. Simultaneously, 'first speech' moments such as Fenwick Miller's are here combined with the – literal and metaphorical – raid upon obstacles: "She took the megaphone and put it to her lips, but no sound would come. Then, *as though it were breaking through an obstacle*, the sound shot forth [...]." (129; my italics)

Anthology Volumes: (1) *Practices of Oral Performance*; (2) *Women and Public Speech*

The two anthology volumes on *Cultures of Lecturing in the Long Nineteenth Century* explore the important cultural practices of Victorian lecturing, speech-making, and reciting. Volume 1 on *Practices of Oral Performance in Manuals of Rhetoric, Journalism and Autobiography* sets the scene by addressing general questions of rhetorical conventions and techniques. Volume 2 on *Women and Public Speech in Manuals of Rhetoric, Journalism, Autobiography and Fiction* sifts the evidence of late-Victorian (female self-)censorship where public speech was concerned, but also makes visible the

permeable boundaries between the alleged ‘separate spheres’ of Victorian gender politics, exploring how during the late nineteenth century numerous women underwent what we might call collective training for the oratorical competences that were then employed to such great effect by women suffragists.

Volume 1 analyses the following aspects of lecture culture: ‘The Art of Public Speaking’ (Section 1); ‘Speaking Techniques and Voice Production’ (Section 2); ‘Gesture and Attitude’ (Section 3). It also probes the social dimension of the speech event by taking a closer look at the lecturer’s ‘Relationship with the Audience’ (Section 4), as well as the duties of ‘Chairmanship’ (Section 5), the introducing and moderating of lecture performances. This first volume also acknowledges the material and organisational paraphernalia of lecturing – the vending of tickets, the question of venue, the rules of admission, the roles of lecturers, chairpersons, and audiences (see Section 6, ‘Managing Lectures and Lecture Tours’). It goes on to examine related forms of public oral performance that were popular during the Victorian period, such as ‘Public Reading and Reciting’ (Section 7) and ‘Penny Readings’ (Section 8). The latter originated around mid-century as a form of rational recreation for the working classes (but see 8.VII on Samuel Taylor’s claim to the ‘invention’). They consisted in public readings from literary and expository texts, in most cases performed by a number of local volunteers, and were often also accompanied by brief explanatory lectures. Penny readings became increasingly more middle-class, and eventually lost their mass appeal during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The volume closes by taking a look at representative examples of ‘Humorous and Satirical Approaches’ to the scene of lecturing (Section 9).

Volume 2 then concentrates on the participation of women in Victorian cultures of lecturing. When looking for oral performances by women – at least in the period before militant suffragettism – we have to attend more closely to the scene of rhetorical education and women’s participation in what has been termed the Victorian “craze for elocution” (Adams 2014, 4), as well as the more inclusive cultural scene of rational recreation and popular voice events. Volume 2 accordingly starts with a section on ‘Women and Elocution: Reading and Reciting’ (Section 1), and then moves on to an important venue and training ground for female public speech, ‘Women’s Debating Clubs’ (Section 2). This section, as will become apparent, also includes satirical commentary, and Section 3 is then dedicated wholly to the ‘Satirizing [of] Women Speakers’ that was a ubiquitous expression of male (and sometimes female) conservative backlash against female public speech, across the spectrum of newspaper and periodical publishing from mid-century into the era of the suffragettes. The final two sections of volume 2 are investigations into women’s own narratives about the moment of ‘speaking out’: their ‘Conversion to Suffragism’ and ‘First Speech’ (Section 4). Such narratives trace the almost religious moment of awakening and conversion to the Cause – the fight for the vote – which was an omnipresent, indeed topical feature in New Woman and especially suffrage fiction and autobiography (see my reference to Strachey’s *The Cause* and Robins’s *The Convert*, above). It was often combined with another topos, a woman speaker’s ‘First Speech’, which imitated the long-established male ‘first speech’ convention (compare volume 1, section 1.I, where Edward William Cox in 1863 exhorts the promising young law student that “You may now make your first attempt to speak in public”, and section 1.VIII, where Andrew Wilson in 1898 reminisces about “My First Lecture”). In the case of women speakers, a particular narrative construction of

coincidence is a frequent feature: the first speech was not premeditated, neither was it prepared. It is constructed as happening on the spur of the moment, for instance because the woman protagonist has to stand in for an absent speaker at the last minute – as with Fenwick Miller’s above-mentioned “First Speech” (compare volume 2, section 4.II), or with Beth’s spontaneous demand, “May I speak?”, in Sarah Grand’s *The Beth Book* (1897) (volume 2, section 4.IV), or with Ursula’s “first effort” in Edith Zangwill’s *The Call* (1924) (volume 2, section 4.XIV). Such constructions are obviously at odds with the increasing professionalisation of women’s public speaking that we observe during the last decades of the nineteenth century: Section 5 deals with the ‘Training and Professionalising [of] Women Lecturers’ which suffrage periodicals and suffrage organisations undertook on a systematic scale, developing specific training to further their campaigners’ public speaking skills.

Together, our two anthology volumes offer a window into the cross-traffic between orality and print (as well as other media) that defined late-Victorian metropolitan cultural life, tracing representations and fictionalisations of ephemeral oral performances through print and, sometimes, manuscript. From manuals of rhetoric via journalism and autobiographical writing to fiction, our excerpts are taken from serial and volume-format publications (many of them still out of print today), and in some cases transcribed from manuscript notes in the archives of late-Victorian lecturing institutions. The sources have been selected, introduced, and annotated with care. Some of our materials are published here for the first time (and most of them for the first time since the Victorian era). In both anthology volumes, we include documentation from handbooks of rhetoric produced in the context of higher education and professional training, autobiographical material by lecturers and orators, as well as journalistic pieces. Questions of representation and audience targeting became more complex as the professionalisation of journalism introduced standardised formats for lecture reports, from full-text versions to brief paraphrases, with specific price tags attached by the news agencies (see Meisel 2001, 270, on agencies’ offers to their client newspapers, from the mid-century onwards, of a choice of either “verbatim”, “full”, or “summary” reports). Frequently the mode of reporting also had gatekeeping functions, in many cases serving to suppress women’s voices by omitting them from record (see Zwierlein 2022b).

At the same time, mass print reached out to an increasingly heterogeneous audience as the century progressed, creating new spaces for women’s voices in print: “Provincial newspapers, women’s magazines, children’s periodicals, and illustrated fiction weeklies, along with temperance, trade, and myriad other classes of periodicals either sprang into being or proliferated into other formats and titles. By the second half of the nineteenth century, it was generally acknowledged that choice of reading matter marked membership not only in a national framework but also in overlapping sets of niche markets and interest groups.” (King/Easley/Morton 2016, 7) We reflect this diversity – which was accompanied by an increasingly active participation of women, as contributors, producers, and editors, in the periodical market (see Mutch 2016; Palmer 2011; Ballaster et al. 1991; Beetham 1996; Fraser et al. 2003) – by including in our volumes excerpts from a range of upmarket periodicals and newspapers (*The Times*; *The Train*; *The Strand Magazine*), as well as magazines addressing a mixed upper-middle to lower-middle-class audience (*All the Year Round*; *Belgravia*; *Punch*; *Judy*), magazines issued by the Religious Tract Society (*The Leisure Hour*; *Sunday at Home*), feminist periodicals

(*Women's Penny Paper*; *The Woman's Herald*; *The Woman's Signal*) as well as popular penny fiction weeklies (*Bow Bells*; *London Journal*; *London Reader*). For a systematic content analysis of these and other periodicals in the context of 'lecturing women' see also Zwierlein 2018.

In both volumes, we offer additional evidence from the archives of some of the important physical sites of speech: Mechanics' Institutes, and Literary and Scientific Institutions. These recognised public sites staged educational and entertaining speech events – both lectures and recitations – to aspiring audiences, prompted by but developing beyond a social reformist programme of 'rational recreation' (see Bailey 1978). They were part of a multimedia metropolitan culture, vying against a range of other, even more spectacular attractions, for instance the light-and-sound shows offered at the Royal Polytechnic (see Groth 2013; Flanders 2006; Altick 1978). Lecturing institutions provided rational recreation and popular education, thus reaffirming the importance of the spoken word in a culture supposedly dominated by print (and increasingly the visual). They were instrumental in promulgating knowledge to larger segments of the population (the working class; women) before the advent of the University Extension scheme, and before the women's colleges at Cambridge, Oxford, and London took over those functions in a more systematic form. Through their combined attention to physical sites of speech and represented speech in print culture, our two volumes thus respond to recent turns in cultural studies which emphasize the institutional cultures of performance and popular periodical literature. They also intervene in the field of sound studies (see Picker 2003; Sterne 2003) by attending to theorisations of Victorian voice and vocality in the one source type centrally concerned with voice production: manuals of elocution and rhetoric. In volume two, we include manuals of rhetoric explicitly addressing women and their (alleged) physiological specificities. The period's masculine ethos of public speaking was here reframed by and for women, and the male-oriented conventions of audience behaviour and management applied to a 'mixed' or female audience. Such texts endeavoured to generate new female presences in public life and speech. We also include fiction excerpts that show how New Woman and suffrage novels imaginatively transformed and developed the ideological and political potentialities of the lecture scene with a specific view to women's participation. Both volumes combined show how the vibrant scene of lecturing became increasingly more socially diversified, popularised, and (in incremental, sometimes countervailing steps) more socially inclusive – a catalyst of social change.

Documenting, in volume one, some of the multiple formats, genres, and material paraphernalia of the vibrant nineteenth-century scenes of lecturing and speech-making, we then home in, in volume two, on how women participated in and redefined that culture by making use of both oral and print platforms. The two anthologies are thus roughly divided along seemingly traditional binary lines: the masculine frameworks in volume one, the incursion of women in volume two. While closer inspection of both volumes will also reveal many cross-currents and overlaps between these, far from 'separate', 'spheres', we have to acknowledge along with Helena Michie that many of the late-nineteenth-century social debates operated with an assumed "hyperbolic gender difference" (1999, 409) which, due to its very hyperbolism, was both proposed and contested at the same time. Where the technicalities of oral delivery were concerned, nineteenth-century manuals of rhetoric routinely reached back towards the standards of

oratory as defined by Cicero's *De Oratore* (55 BC) and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (95 AD), whose shared emphasis on the style of address as much as its substance remained hugely influential. Those classical models were mediated to nineteenth-century readers through a plethora of eighteenth-century manuals of rhetoric which had defined the scene in Britain for decades, unsurprisingly with a 'masculinist' bias (see also 'A Note on Annotation' below). There are some overviews (and reprints) of eighteenth-century rhetorical treatises, products of the heyday of formalised rhetoric in Britain (see Zunshine 2008 and McDowell 2017), but histories of rhetoric, as Boiko confirms, have not been helpful "in providing a sense of Victorian public speech, for they serve chiefly to remind us that by the early nineteenth century formal rhetoric had declined" (Boiko 2002, 33). The field of rhetorical practice, however, continued to be dynamic and thriving. Volume 1 focuses on the vitality of the lecturing scene: The excerpts from mid- to late-Victorian as well as Edwardian publications on rhetoric have been selected with a special view to the specificities of the social situations of lecturing and the varying relationships with the audience thus created. There are no modern reprints of nineteenth-century manuals – in contradistinction to the better-known eighteenth-century manuals by Sheridan, Walker, and Blair (see 'A Note on Annotation'). This neglected tradition of treatises for male and, increasingly, female speakers frequently emphasized practice rather than theory, and attended to the co-production of the lecturing event between lecturer and audience (see also Ray/Stob 2018). These publications also departed from classical and eighteenth-century antecedents in that they attended to the specific situation of women lecturers, including the social prescriptions – which they, alternately reinforced and criticised – around women's self-presentation. Codes of propriety and respectability, however, were increasingly contested and eventually forcefully undermined when the suffragettes became visible and vocal agents in the public contest of voices around the turn of the century.

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A Note on Annotation

Our nineteenth-century handbooks of rhetoric and elocution frequently quote from earlier, mostly eighteenth-century rhetorical treatises. One early modern treatise, Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique*, 1553, is also mentioned several times, and of course the all-important models from classical antiquity, most prominently Cicero's *De Oratore* (55 BC) and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (95 AD). In our anthology volumes, the bibliographical data for these earlier rhetorical treatises are given only once, on first mention.

For our readers' orientation we enumerate here the most frequently recurring eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century treatises which function as points of reference in our excerpts. In alphabetical order: Austin, *Chironomia* (1806); Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783); Graham, *Principles of Elocution* (1837); Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762); Walker, *Elements of Elocution* (1799); Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* (1828).

Furthermore, biographical data for frequently mentioned famous orators, writers, politicians, and scientists are given only once per volume – on first mention (this is the case, e.g., for Demosthenes, Disraeli, Emerson, Gladstone). Finally, as our two-volume anthology addresses mainly English literary and cultural scholars, we have refrained from annotating canonical authors such as – in alphabetical order – Arnold, Browning, Carlyle, Darwin, Eliot, Milton, Pope, Shakespeare, Shelley, Tennyson, Thackeray, Wordsworth.

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Section 1

The Art of Public Speaking

(I)

*Edward William Cox (1809-1879): Serjeant-at-law, and publisher and proprietor of several journals, including the Law Times, The Field, The Queen, and The Royal Exchange. Cox also founded the Psychological Society of Great Britain in 1875, which was dissolved subsequent to his death. He published poetry, legal works, as well as treatises on human psychology.*¹

[From: Edward William Cox. "Public Speaking." *The Arts of Writing, Reading and Speaking*, in *Letters to a Law Student*. London: John Crockford, 1863. 211-216.]

LETTER XXXIII. PUBLIC SPEAKING.

You may now make your first attempt to speak in public.

If possible, select the occasion. Do not trust yourself to say something about anything – which usually amounts to saying nothing – but avail yourself of the discussion of some subject to which you have given some thought, and on which you can say something.

Turn the subject over in your mind; think how you shall treat it – what general view you can take of it; how you shall arrange your ideas upon it so that they may be presented in orderly array, and connected link by link into a chain of argument.

Having planned it roughly in thought, put your plan upon paper.

But *only* in outline. Do not provide the words; note down nothing but the subjects to be treated, with the order of treatment. Trust entirely to the impulse of the moment to provide words wherein to express your thoughts; but let those thoughts be firmly fixed in your memory.

[212] Some famous orators are accustomed, in addition to this outline of the argument, to compose the peroration and recite it from memory. It is, however, a question of doubtful expediency at all times, and I would especially counsel you, as a beginner, *not* to resort to it.

There are many objections to a written speech. In the first place, you are dependent upon your memory, and if that should fail, your discomfiture is complete – you break down altogether! Few memories are so perfect as to preserve their power when the mind is otherwise disturbed. The fear of failure is very likely to be the cause of failure. A single word forgotten causes alarm and hesitation, and while you are trying to recall that word, others fade away, and in the accumulated confusion a whole sentence disappears. You hesitate, you stammer, you try back – in the hopeless chaos you are lost. From this danger the speaker of a written speech is never safe; it may occur at any moment, and the result is always humiliating.

¹ R. C. J. Cocks. "Cox, Edward William." *ODNB Online* (12 Mar 2021).

But there is another objection to written speeches; they can never be effective; and for this reason, that they are projected by a process altogether different from that of an extempore speech. What you have first written, then committed to memory, and now proceed to deliver by the lips, you utter by a process that is little better than mechanical. The memory is the only mental faculty engaged in the operation, and your whole attention is concentrated upon the work of recalling the words you have learned. This process within you is distinctly manifested to your audience; it is betrayed in face, in tone, in gesture, and your speech, wanting soul, fails to move soul.

But when you speak from the prompting of your [213] intellect, the whole mind is engaged in the operation; you say what you think, or feel, at the moment of utterance, and therefore you say it in the tones and with the expression that nature prompts, without an effort on your part. It is a law of our being that mind is moved by mind. There is a secret sympathy by which emotions answer to emotion, and your feelings stir the like feelings in your fellow-man. But no feigned emotions, however skilfully enacted, can accomplish this. You may admire the skill of the performer, but you do not *feel* with him.

Again, the language of a written speech is altogether different from extempore expression. The mind, when it discourses through the pen, throws itself, as it were, into a different attitude from that which it assumes when speaking through the lips. The structure of the sentences is different; the words are different; there is a difference in the array of the thoughts. Written composition is obedient to rules. There are certain conventional forms of expression, so unlike the language of speaking that they betray themselves instantly to a practised ear; and although an unskilled audience might not know the cause, they show the effect in uneasiness, and complain of stiffness and dullness in the orator. Therefore never *write* a speech, but only give it careful thought and set down the heads of it in the order in which you propose to treat them.

Thus armed, and screwing up your courage for an ordeal whose severity I have no wish to underrate, go to the meeting at which you are to make the first real trial of your capacities. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and therefore I will tell you what you will feel.

[214] If the audience be a large one, so much the better; it is easier to address a crowd than a small company. You are not scared by a multitude of eyes, but by the fixed gaze of a limited circle. The aspect of an assembly from a platform is very remarkable. Being raised so much above them, and all faces being turned up and eyes fixed on you, the consciousness of individuality is lost; you recognise nobody in particular, and the whole seems like one personage having as many eyes as a fly. No beginner ever looked on this sea of eyes without more or less of fear, or when he looked at it saw anything but eyes. But try to make it familiar by an attentive survey of it while you are waiting your turn to speak, if that be possible when you are intently thinking what you will say and how you will say it. Anxious you will be, if there is anything in you; some fear is inseparable from the modesty that accompanies genuine capacity; but, in spite of anxiety and fear, let it be your resolve to go on, come what come may.

At length it is your turn. As the time approaches, your heart will begin to flutter, and then to thump audibly against your ribs, and there will be a curious creeping of the flesh, growing almost to a shiver, while your cheeks are burning and your head is throbbing. You stand up. Your knees tremble; your hand shakes; the sea of eyes swims before you and vanishes into a dark mist; you are conscious of nothing but the lights. Suddenly your

tongue becomes dry, and, worse than all, your memory fails you, and you feel it failing. Be thankful now that you have not trusted your speech to it. These symptoms have been experienced, more or less, by every man who has achieved the art of oratory; and some I have known who never escaped from them [215] entirely – the trembling knees and parched tongue attending the first sentences uttered in all their speeches, however frequent. Few there are who succeed in avoiding them altogether.

But go on. Say something, however dislocated or unmeaning; anything is better than silence. A little hesitation at the beginning of a speech is never unbecoming, and is often highly effective. One of the best and most practised speakers I ever listened to opened with stammering voice and imperfect sentences, and seemed continually on the point of breaking down; but as he warmed in the work, words began to flow and self-possession to return, until he rose to eloquence that held his audience in delighted thralldom for three hours. In this, as in all the business of life, he who has not courage to fail must not hope to achieve success. Do not venture at all unless you are resolved to go through with it. Even if you cannot collect yourself sufficiently to say the sensible things you intended to say, do not give it up, but talk on; for you may be assured of this, that half your audience will give you credit for having some meaning in your words, though they cannot exactly find it out, and if words come freely will think you a fine speaker, regardless of their sense or nonsense. There is but one hopeless failure – coming to a full stop. But it is probable that, after you have conquered the first terror at the consciousness of lost memory and scattered thoughts, when you find your audience still patient and listening, your self-command will return and you will make a triumphant ending.

Whatever the issue of that first trial, try again. Be not daunted even by failure. Practice will overcome all difficulties. If you have planned a formal speech, [216] the structure of it will be present to your mind; if you throw yourself upon the inspiration of the moment, thoughts will arise as they are summoned, and where thoughts are, words will not be wanting.

Do not, as many do, make preparation for your speeches on *all* occasions, great or little. There is a time for *talking*, and a time for *speaking*, and a time for making a set *oration*. Choose your time and adapt yourself to the subject. Nothing is more indecorous than a flight of oratory out of place. The occasions that properly demand an oration rarely offer even to the most practised speaker. The larger portion of your speeches will be upon commonplace themes or matters of business, when your address should be but lengthened talk. To do this well is as difficult and almost as rare as to make a great speech on a great topic. I purpose to describe this particularly when I come to treat of the various forms of oratory. The subject at present under consideration is your general practice as a beginner, and how best you may perfect yourself in the art, without reference to the special applications of it, which will come to be considered when we have reviewed the accomplishments you should labour to acquire for the purpose of doing most effectively that which you must be presumed now to have learned to do without positive failure.

(II)

The Quarterly Review was initiated in 1809 by John Murray as a Tory counterpoint to the Whig Edinburgh Review. The journal's lengthy issues covered a multitude of topics from the fields of the arts and sciences, as well as politics. A prestigious and widely read conservative publication until the spread of the daily press in the mid-nineteenth century, the Quarterly Review's contributors include Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, Matthew Arnold, and Edward-Bulwer Lytton.¹

[From: Anon. "ART. II. – Institutes for Working Men." *Quarterly Review* 113.225 (Jan 1863): 42-45.]

In respect to delivery, a lecturer is too apt to adopt that undemonstrative manner which marks most men of cultivated intellect; nor, indeed, would we have him rant or rave. But as men of simpler minds require every assistance from emphasis to detect the point of the sentence or argument – for emphasis is to them like light and shade in a picture – he that would engage them for long together must not despise the aid of a lively, variable intonation.

*Mauvaise honte*² is a sad hindrance, and must by all means be laid aside; for if it be worth while to speak to the working classes, it must be worth while to speak effectively. The bounds of good taste will seldom be overstepped by an educated man; his danger is in the other direction. And be it observed that our lecturer has an advantage over the preacher, or at least over the parish clergyman, in the point of which we are speaking: for the latter has to address a mixed assemblage, and runs the risk of startling the educated class in his congregation by that liberal use of animation and emphasis which would arouse and interest his poorer brethren; but the former, who has to do with the working class alone, may safely solicit their attention by every available method.

[43] We are far from contending that all lectures should be extempore. Few can expect to interest and amuse by a spoken address more than Mr. Dickens does in one of his readings of his own works.³ And a good reading from Shakespeare will often be attended with eagerness. Hence it should seem that the main point lies rather in the treatment of the subject and the style of the delivery than in the mere fact of the lecture being written

¹ David Ian Morpeth. "Quarterly Review (1809-1967)." *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*. Ed. Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoore. Gent: Academia Press, 2009. 522-523.

² "Bashfulness, sheepishness, shyness." See e.g. *A New Dictionary of Quotations from the Greek, Latin, and Modern Languages*. London: John Farquhar Shaw, 1859. 268.

³ Charles Dickens (1812-1870) began to deliver readings of his works to select private audiences in the 1840s and gave his first public reading of *A Christmas Carol* and *The Cricket on the Hearth* in 1853. From 1858, he gave paid readings, which eventually brought him more substantial revenue than the sales of his novels (Philip Collins. "Public Readings." *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*. Ed. Paul Schlicke. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 482-485; Michael Slater. "Dickens, Charles John Huffam." *ODNB Online* (12 Mar 2021)).

or unwritten. A man may utter a perfectly extempore speech in so heavy a way as to make it an effectual soporific; and on the other hand it is surely possible to deliver written words in so dramatic or colloquial a way as to give them the same lively air as if uttered on the spur of the moment. As regards the structure of the address, the advantage in some points is on the side of one which is written. Nothing repels a half-educated mind like an involved style. Yet speakers of no mean ability are apt now and then to fall into parentheses, out of which they do not always find their way as intelligibly as might be desired. Even in Parliament the figure anacoluthon is not wholly unknown. Now in a written composition it is easy to avoid such errors, for a little labour will make the sentences short and simple. Again, as to phraseology. A speaker who clothes his ideas in the words which naturally rise to his lips as he goes on will fall into the expressions that are habitual to him. Yet the ordinary language of cultivated men is not that of the working classes. When the subject is a philosophical one, there is double danger on this head, as we have already seen. Now a resolute desire to translate the matter in hand into popular words may succeed when aided by the deliberation which a man can command in his study, but may be overmastered by the force of habit when he trusts for his expressions to the impulse of the moment. But let us not be misunderstood. It may be, after all, that the most effective lecturer is the one who can give a telling address without manuscript. Our point is that a good written is better than a bad spoken address, and we think that many could write well who could not speak otherwise than imperfectly.

[...] But we must pass on to observe that some lectures probably fail because the subjects are ill-chosen. The minds of the [44] hearers are never brought in their freshness and morning vigour to the consideration of the subjects of lecture. Personal adventures in travel are always found to interest and amuse, and the tourist may interweave in his narrative much information about distant lands, which in this form will be understood and remembered. Biographical lectures seldom fail. Historical knowledge may thus be imparted, and moral and religious suggestions conveyed, without ostentation. The great facts of civilization, such as railways, the electric telegraph, steamships, newspapers, the post-office, are interesting and practical. The elements of human physiology in relation to health are also a very popular topic. These latter subjects, as relating to everyday life, form a link between scientific and general lectures. Purely scientific lectures should, in our judgement, be sparingly used, unless they bear upon the trades and occupations of the audience, when they have a special value, and may be useful as well as interesting.* But whatever be the matter in hand, much may be done by the aid of illustration. Indeed, of all the steps that can be taken to make a lecture popular, few are more effective than to accompany it by diagrams or pictures.

And here we must do justice to the Society called 'The Working Men's Educational Union,' which has effected so much in this line that we cannot refrain from wishing that its managers would perfect their good work by going one step further. Founded in the year 1852, this Society has published at various times a large number of diagrams and illustrations, together with a list of useful works from which materials for lectures may be gathered. Of the former it is difficult to speak too highly. Being printed on linen, they are durable and thoroughly adapted to their purpose; and they are executed in a style which, while it attracts the illiterate, will bear the criticism of the artist. The only objection which we have to make is to the notification in the Report that 'the Union does not lend the diagrams.' Their expense wholly forbids their purchase with a view to a single lecture,

and the consequence is that the machinery for their diffusion is most inadequate. Could the Society be persuaded to set up dépôts in the principal towns throughout Great Britain, and to arrange that the diagrams might be hired at a small cost for lectures in the neighbourhood, it would confer a real benefit on the country. But until this is done its work is sadly incomplete. It is true, indeed, that Mr. Stock of Paternoster Row⁴ has come forward to supply in some measure the deficiency, and that [45] the diagrams may be hired from him at a reasonable charge. But this is by no means equivalent to their being lent out by a society with regularly organised branches throughout the kingdom, and is chiefly important as tending to show that the scheme now recommended is quite practicable. The probability is that in a short time it would be a source of profit instead of entailing any loss.

It is almost superfluous to mention dissolving views as a resource for rendering a lecture popular. Should the Committee of the Working Men's Educational Union adopt our suggestion with respect to their diagrams, it would be worth consideration whether their dépôts might not also have a few good lanterns and slides, to be lent out at a moderate rate. Being in the hands of a Central Association the slides might from time to time be changed for others, and the old ones passed on to another town, where they would have the attraction of novelty. It will be observed that the suggestions which we have ventured to make are based on the ground that undertakings for the benefit of working men should promote rational recreation as well as instruction. This indeed does not seem to have been contemplated by the founders of the original mechanics' institutes, who, as we have seen, looked only to the acquirement of knowledge, and that chiefly of a scientific kind. But when it was found that these institutes failed to attract the working classes, other schemes, called Lyceums (to which we have already alluded), were set on foot in many places. These, as Dr. Hudson⁵ tells us, were set up with the avowed object of affording lighter reading and amusement of different kinds. [...]

* Many suggestions of lecture-subjects will be found in the Report of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes.

⁴ Elliot Stock (1838-1911) owned a publishing house on Paternoster Row, London, from 1859 until shortly before his death (Anon. "Mr. Elliot Stock." *The Athenæum* 4350 (11 Mar 1911): 277).

⁵ James William Hudson, Ph.D., author of *The History of Adult Education*. London: Longman, 1851. Biographical data for Hudson is scarce, but W. A. Munford estimates that he was born in circa 1800, and died circa 1870 (*Who Was Who in British Librarianship 1800-1985*. London: Library Association, 1987. 37-8).

(III)

William Stewart Ross (1844-1906): Ross was a Scottish-born poet, writer, editor and publisher, as well as an outspoken advocate of the Free Thought Movement and Secularism. Contributing to various local papers from a young age, Ross got introduced to the literary scene of his day. Among his new acquaintances was the publisher Thomas Laurie, for whom Ross began to work as a writer and publisher of educational works in London. This occupation he would keep up even after he had established himself as a publisher in his own right. Apart from this, Ross also edited and contributed to several journals, including the School Magazine and the Secular Review. Among his best known publications are God and his Book (1887) and Woman, her Glory and her Shame (1894).¹

[From: William Stewart Ross. "On Public Speaking." *A System of Elocution, Based upon Grammatical Analysis*. Edinburgh: Thomas Laurie; London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1869. 52-65.]

ON PUBLIC SPEAKING.

Infinitely the most important requisition in regard to oratory is the possession of something that is really worth the saying. No amount of elegant diction and impressive delivery can lend a real dignity to nonsense, or kindle a halo over the dull forehead of ignorance. No one of any intellectual cultivation can listen with either pleasure or profit even to a post-prandial speech where the speaker rises to say *nothing*, and endeavours to atone for his error by saying that *nothing* beautifully. Even the most distant approaches should be made to the shrine of oratory, remembering that she is a goddess grand and august, presiding over the emotions, passions, and intellect of man, commensurate with the loftiest sympathies of his nature, and almost ashamed of the mere tongue, the mean and humble medium through which she exercises the sway of her tremendous energies. Let the brain be possessed of intelligence and power, and the heart keenly susceptible to emotion, and let an emergency present itself on which this power and this emotion can be brought to bear directly, and they shall impart to an ordinary command of language the force and the grace of eloquence. In the majority of instances, after a course of literary and elocutionary training, if the speaker is thoroughly conversant with his *subject*, and earnestly impressed with the conviction of its importance, the *speech* will take care of itself. Thought and feeling have a stronger tendency to produce speech than speech to produce thought and feeling. The true orator thinks himself into speech, and never attempts to speak himself into thought. It is true that several of our more eloquent orators have not been elocutionists at all in the strict sense of the term. But it cannot [53] be denied that they would have been still more eloquent if they had. A gigantic savage can

¹ W. B. Owen and H. C. G. Matthew. "Ross, William Stewart [pseud. Saladin]." *ODNB Online* (12 Oct 2020).

fell a forest-tree with a rude implement of stone and bronze, but he could do so more readily with an axe of tempered steel. It required a very Samson to do with the jaw-bone of an ass more than Gideon might do with a sword. [...]

The great requirement in oratory is true *manhood*, in the elevation of its moral and intellectual greatness – a keen susceptibility of all the depths and all the heights of humanity, as considered ethically, aesthetically, and intellectually. In every sphere of mental pre-eminence the good alone are the truly great. The germ of all greatness is nobility of character. He who would be an eminent and impulsive orator loses somewhat of his chance of success every time he succumbs to a seductive vice, stoops to a paltry thought, or condescends to a despicable action. The Greek Longinus opines emphatically, that “never a slave became an orator.”² His spirit being effectively broken, the [54] timorous vassal will still be uppermost; the habit of subjection continually overawes and beats down his genius. For, according to Homer (Odys. i. ver. 322),

Jove fixed it certain, that whatever day
Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away.³

Moreover, he is only “the freeman whom the truth makes free;” and, in communities where we have neither feudal serfdom nor Hindu caste, we are yet liable to have an unlimited number of slaves; for all are serfs who do not possess a mastery over self, and who by dint of self-culture and self-abnegation have no possession in the mines of religious, moral, and intellectual wealth. In ancient Greece, the land of eloquence, Athens was the State which enjoyed the greatest liberty; and hence, as observed by Paterculus, “eloquence flourished in greater force and plenty in that city alone than in all Greece besides.”⁴

The cultivation of a good style in writing is not directly synonymous with the cultivation of a good style in speaking. In the former, words enter slowly and accurately into the embodiment of thought, or rather the thought is vaguely defined, and it suggests aptly selected words to give itself clearness and decision; in the latter, the utterance and the conception of the thought keep pace with each other. Indeed, this principle of simultaneous conception and utterance is one of the grand secrets of oratory. If the delivery outstrip the process of the thought, the result is unimpressive verbiage; and, *vice versa*, the result is an unseemly gasping and stammering, painfully suggestive of an inadequate command over the resources of language.

² Longinus, also referred to as Pseudo-Longinus: Greek writer active in the first century AD, whose identity is unclear. The quote ascribed to Longinus by Ross is from *On the Sublime*, “one of the great seminal works of literary criticism,” which is in turn “sometimes” attributed to an author by the name of Dionysius Longinus (“Longinus.” *All* 22 Aug 2017 (14 Mar 2021)).

³ Ross appears to be using Alexander Pope’s translation of the *Odyssey*. The quote is from book XVII, verses 392-393 (e.g. *The Odyssey of Homer. Translated by Alexander Pope, Esq.* Vol. 3. London: J. Johnson et al., 1806. 275).

⁴ Velleius Paterculus (c. 19 BC-after 30 BC): Roman politician and amateur historian (“Velleius Paterculus.” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (14 Mar 2021)). The reference is to Paterculus’s *The Roman History*, Book I, Chapter XVIII.

In ordinary cases, the tenor of a speech should be loud enough to be heard distinctly by the audience, but not louder. The groundwork of the discourse should be the conversational tone, and upon it, as occasion requires, can be [55] superinduced all the gamut notes of rhetoric. The very highest key ought not to be higher than that in which the speaker can retain a decided mastery over articulation and the resources of his voice; and when he strikes a key beneath the conversational tone, the utterance should be more than ordinarily slow, articulated and impressive. Moreover, a marked demonstration of vocal energy should never be adopted without the exercise of the most keen discrimination to determine whether or not it may be apposite. An outburst of rhetorical grandeur, which in itself may be suggestive of sublimity and Cicero,⁵ applied to a passage where it may not be in requisition, may only suggest burlesque and a buffoon.

It is of much consequence to hold the head erect upon the shoulders and present the full face, as a rule, to the greater mass of the audience, as the voice can be heard considerably farther in front than either behind or laterally. "Concerning of the placing of the pulpit," says Sir Christopher Wren, "I shall observe a moderate voice can be heard fifty feet distant before the preacher, thirty feet on each side, and twenty feet behind the pulpit, and not this, unless the pronunciation be distinct and equal."⁶ As a rule, there is no echo within a distance of sixty-three feet.

In oratory, the greatest discretion should be exercised to introduce gesticulation and grimace appositely and gracefully. These two items, as treated in the chapter on THE PASSIONS, when applied to the rhetorician, must be taken with a reservation. The actor is, or ought to be, unconscious of his audience, and lose his own personal identity in the character he personates; but the true orator can never become oblivious of the presence of his audience: although, like the actor, his individuality is nothing, his [56] audience is everything. He cannot, like the tragedian, give way to the abandonment of passion, for however much the grandeur or the intensity of his theme may be supposed to affect him, he stands before the public in the capacity of its champion and exponent, not of its rapt visionary or wild and ecstatic devotee. His object is to reason, to persuade, to convince. He cannot effect this by allowing himself to be borne away from his audience in the whirlwind of a passion; he must physically and morally confront them manfully and firmly, and besiege them with facts and arguments; the intellect doing everything, the emotions merely flashing through as an evidence that the speaker is truly and absolutely in earnest. Accordingly, the gesticulation and grimace of the actor and orator, although identical in species, are yet different in degree. In the former, passion may preponderate over reason and persuasion; in the latter, it never can. He must use gesture and facial grimace, simply as the legitimate complement of impassioned eloquence, not as the evidence of reckless abandonment, and the surrender of individual identity. All grimace and all action not relevant with the speech should be studiously avoided. The "Spectator" records the case of a celebrated lawyer, who could not speak except when manipulating

⁵ Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC-43 BC): Roman lawyer, scholar, writer, and republican statesman. Cicero became famous for his oratorical skills and the eloquence with which he delivered his speeches (John P. V. Dacre Balsdon and John Ferguson. "Marcus Tullius Cicero." *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (23 Aug 2020)).

⁶ Slightly altered from Christopher Wren. *Parentalia: Or, Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens*. London: T. Osborn and R. Dodsley, 1750. 320.

a piece of pack-cord, which the wits designated the thread of his discourse, and aptly remarks in reference to the favourite resort of the embarrassed speaker's twirling round his hat in his hands during his oration, that a deaf man observing him would naturally fancy he is cheapening a beaver, while he may be in reality wielding the destinies of the British empire.⁷

[...] The orator under certain conditions of subject, may approximate pretty closely to the violent manner of the actor. The fact of Demosthenes studying gesticulation before a mirror is well known;⁸ and Cicero even impaired his health by the vehemence of his action. "When persuasion is the end," as Dr Campbell remarks in his "Philosophy of Rhetoric," "passion also must be engaged. If it is fancy which bestows brilliancy on our ideas, if it is memory which gives them stability, passion doth more, – it animates them. Hence the divine spirit and energy. To say that it is possible to persuade without speaking to the passions is but at best a kind of specious nonsense. The coolest reasoner always, in persuasion, addresseth himself to the passions some way or other. This he cannot avoid doing if he speak to the purpose."⁹

[58] "Take time," the simple and epigrammatic elocutionary rule of Mrs Siddons,¹⁰ is worthy of all acceptance. Throw, as it were, each syllable into the ear of the most remote individual of the audience, and give it time to alight before the utterance of its successor. The smallest and least important word in the sentence – in the discourse – if worth uttering at all, is worth uttering audibly. Even in instances of the most absolute animation there is no necessity for throwing words hurriedly together into heaps, mangled and mutilated, wanting limbs and members to such an extent that they are not properly the word-symbols of any language, but ugly specimens of verbal abortion. Besides, an awkward and embarrassing pause must follow such a display – a pause if not to adjust the reciprocity between language and thought, at least to gasp for saliva and breath. It is the vulgar fluster and flurry, not the deep and impressive baritone, the high-sounding trope, or the grandeur of the metaphor, which results in the too frequent stand-still to gulph [*sic*] water and wipe perspiration. And these practices are to some degree defects, inasmuch as in the cessation of delivery the mind of the audience has a tendency to reaction, and even the most intelligent involuntarily give them attention. The audience like only to conceive of the

⁷ The original section in the *Spectator* reads: "A deaf man would think he [an imaginary speaker] was cheapening a beaver, when, perhaps, he is talking of the fate of the British nation. I remember, when I was a young man, and used to frequent Westminster-hall, there was a counsellor who never pleaded without a piece of packthread in his hand, which he used to twist about a thumb or a finger all the while he was speaking; the wags of those days used to call it *the thread of his Discourse*, for he was unable to utter a word without it" (Joseph Addison. *Spectator* 6.407 (17 June 1712). Emphasis in original.)

⁸ Demosthenes (384 BC-322 BC): Athenian statesman, social and political commentator, and orator, who became famous for stirring opposition in Athens against Macedonian rule (James J. Murphy. "Demosthenes." *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (23 Aug 2020)).

⁹ George Campbell (1719-1796): Minister in the Church of Scotland and principal of Marischal College of the University of Aberdeen (Jeffrey M. Suderman. "Campbell, George." *ODNB Online* (12 Mar 2021)).

¹⁰ Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) is widely considered "the greatest female performer in English theatrical history" (Robert Shaughnessy. "Siddons [*née* Kemble], Sarah." *ODNB Online* (12 Mar 2021)).

speaker as the champion and evangel of the principles his oratory supports, and it is not to the advantage of either himself or the principles to give a practical demonstration of how much the comfort of the one and the propagation of the other have affinity with such commonplaces as a glass of water and a pocket-handkerchief. Everything should be sedulously avoided which, although it may make the injudicious laugh, cannot fail to make the judicious grieve. That part of the audience must be “levelled up” who judge “as Partridge in Fielding’s [59] novel judged of Garrick’s acting. He could not see the merit of a man who merely behaved on the stage as anybody might be expected to behave under similar circumstances in real life. He infinitely preferred the ‘robustious periwig-pated fellow,’ who flourished his arms like a windmill, and ranted with the voice of three.”¹¹ [...]

[60] A good literary style can only be attained by the careful perusal of the best authors. And how far a style has been acquired should be frequently put to the test of experiment. The would-be orator should, by way of probation, speak on some subject with which he is conversant and, his aim being to make a continuous speech, he should carefully mark where the resources of language fail him.

As previously remarked, the ability to write well is not synonymous with the power to speak well. The juvenile member of the village Debating Society may excel in facility of expression the venerable author of half a dozen quarto volumes. This is a fact which seems to be lost sight of in the curriculum of our school education. We have no lack of themes for exercises in composition, but these exercises are all written, they are never oral. How few boys at school are expressly educated for professional authorship, yet they are taught to *write*; while there are very many who look forward to their life being intimately associated with the senate, the bar, the platform, or the pulpit, and yet there is no direct scholastic provision to teach them to *speak*. Can it be wondered at, that as they arrive at manhood, they experience, in nine cases out of ten, a humiliating consciousness of oratorical impotence? The wrangler completes his course at the university, and, with his vast resources of intellectual wealth, becomes aware that he can hardly cope with the artizan [*sic*] politician, and the aproned and semi-illiterate agitator of Locks Out and Trade Unions. He has the proud consciousness of being a scholar and a gentleman; but the artizan politician and the man of Trades Unions, with one hundredth part of his learning, are yet of ten times his importance, not only in the opinion of the party whom they harangue and demagogue, not only in their own egotism, but they really leave [61] ten times more strongly the mark of their individuality on the thought and action of their day and generation. In some respects how little of a practical cast has the education of our times! How futile is the scholar with his locked-up magazines of erudition – how few, comparatively, among the learned can write well, and fewer still can pretend to oratory at all. [...]

[62] [...] How a little attention to Elocution and extempore speaking in youth might have obviated this! If the school-boy is asked frequently to express orally the incidents of

¹¹ The reference is to Squire Partridge’s assessment of Garrick’s acting of Hamlet on stage, in *Tom Jones* (Book XVI, ch. VI); compare Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. Sheridan Baker (New York: Norton, 1995) 557. The inset quotation is from Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.2.9 (from Hamlet’s speech to the players). For the frequent redeployment of this Hamlet speech in public speaking / elocution contexts see also sections 3.V; 3.VI; 3.VIII; 3.IX; 7.III.