

✱ Oratorical  
Culture in  
Nineteenth-  
Century  
America ✱

✱ Transformations  
in the Theory and  
Practice of Rhetoric ✱

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# The Popularization of Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric ❀ Elocution and the Private Learner ❀ *Nan Johnson*

\*The nineteenth-century academic tradition in rhetoric fostered the view that eloquence in speaking and writing was the mark of the well-educated and thoughtful citizen. Prominent nineteenth-century rhetoricians such as Samuel P. Newman, G. P. Quackenbos, and John Franklin Genung, whose treatises were widely circulated in nineteenth-century colleges and universities, defined rhetoric as the art that contributed the most toward the proper workings of the political process, the disposition of justice, and the maintenance of the public welfare and social conscience. Nineteenth-century rhetoricians equated the moral obligations of the rhetorician with the preservation of democratic culture and promoted the assumption that training in oratory and composition increased a citizen's ability to participate in civil life and thus contribute to the intellectual and spiritual health of a progressive nation. Although the nineteenth-century rhetorical tradition placed the most ideological stress on rhetoric as a form of training for civil life and as a central means of cultivating intellectual and moral taste, academic rhetoricians also promoted the practical uses of rhetoric and increasingly acknowledged the relationship between the study of rhetoric and professionalism as the century advanced.

In the first half of the century, academic training in rhetoric focused on instruction that would benefit young men training in law, the ministry, or politics, all professions in which public speaking was a central and necessary skill. By mid-century, college doors were

beginning to open to a more diverse middle class that viewed an advanced education as a final preparation for many walks of professional life. Academic rhetoric was able to offer this group a more encompassing definition of the relevance of rhetorical skills to careerism and social success because the disposition of nineteenth-century theory favored defining rhetoric as a comprehensive art of communication. Strongly influenced by the orientation of the New Rhetoric toward a definition of rhetoric as a general art of discourse, nineteenth-century rhetoricians such as Henry N. Day, Adams Sherman Hill, and Genuing defined rhetoric as a general expertise in speaking and writing applicable to a wide range of public and professional uses and settings. For example, Genuing defines rhetoric as "the art of adapting discourse, in harmony with its subject and occasion to the requirements of a reader or hearer" and points out that the word "discourse . . . is broad enough to cover all forms of composition, and deep enough to include all its processes" (Johnson 1991, 87-110). Cooperating closely with the expressed ambition of higher education in the latter half of the century to foster a quality of mental discipline applicable to any chosen profession or life of common sense, academic rhetoric placed more and more emphasis on what Genuing terms the "broadened field of action" of modern rhetoric. By rationalizing rhetoric as an invaluable skill, Genuing and other academic rhetoricians ensured a high status for rhetoric in the face of shifting economic and class distinctions that demanded more of rhetorical education than the training of a comparatively small number of young men for a few highly placed professions. In the service of the presumption that rhetoric should be taught as a general skill of discourse rather than as the art of persuasive oratory alone, academy and college rhetoric courses offered instruction in principles (invention, arrangement, and style) that could be adapted to any text (oral or written) or occasion (public or professional).

Popular rhetorical education in the late nineteenth century garnered credibility and authority by promoting the importance of rhetorical skills for the general citizen and "private learner" along the same lines as the academic tradition—rhetoric was practical and versatile. Although rhetoric manuals were marketed to the general public throughout the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, an upsurge in the public's demand for literacy training and interest in rhetorical performance as a social and community event

encouraged a burgeoning of popular education in rhetoric between 1850 and 1910.

Relying heavily on the academic discipline's extended definition of the range of rhetoric, popular rhetorical educators designed a program of study tailored to everyday uses of rhetoric by the average individual. One of the most distinctive ambitions of the popular rhetoric movement was its characterization of rhetoric as an indispensable skill in professional and social life. While the importance of rhetorical skills to engaged citizenship was often mentioned in popular rhetoric manuals, more stress was placed on the practical uses of rhetoric in business, community, and private life. Campaigning to make speaking eloquently and correctly every literate person's ambition, the popular rhetoric movement strove to make the cultivation of rhetorical skills a priority in every office and in every parlor. J. W. Shoemaker, author of the popular manual *Practical Elocution*, expresses this creed when he rationalizes the importance of elocution as its benefit "in social life," "in business life," and in "public life" (1886, 21-22). Shoemaker insists that the skills of "practical elocution" apply to every instance in which an individual wants to communicate clearly, whether that be in a social setting, a private conversation, a public discussion, or reading aloud. Although Shoemaker recognized the traditional relationship between elocution and public speaking, his defense of the importance of elocution rested on the general claim of the popular rhetoric movement that the applications of rhetorical skills exceeded the traditional arenas of public address.

Popular rhetoric manuals covered a range of topics, including speech making, composition, letter writing, public readings, and elocutionary entertainment. The most successful and widespread branch of popular rhetorical education in the nineteenth century was the elocution movement, which was supported by the general public's keen interest in oratorical skills and the popularity of the practice of rhetoric in the public forum and the parlor. Interest in oratory and elocution was especially intense, encouraged by numerous and varied occasions for oratory and elocutionary performances serving a variety of political, cultural, and social functions.

Such speechmaking as has been reported centered chiefly in the courts, the legislature, and the church. Other speechmaking occasions . . . derived from the schools, from business, trade, labor, and from the

multitude of causes that were coming into being. . . . [S]peechmaking went on in the daily exercise of life in situations and under conditions that defy classification. And if no situation requiring speechmaking was at hand, then one was invented. The literary society, the "bee," the debating society, and the lyceum were largely given over to speechmaking in one form or another. (Aly and Tanquary 1943, 73, 89)

In addition to supporting a wide range of occasions for public speaking, the nineteenth-century public showed a self-conscious interest in promoting high standards for oral performances of all kinds. It was commonplace for nineteenth-century literary journals and local newspapers to publish reviews of the addresses of well-known speakers such as Daniel Webster and Henry Clay and of the lectures and sermons of distinguished pulpit and platform speakers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Henry Beecher. Local newspapers gave similar coverage to orations and dramatic readings presented at community events, church occasions, and college and school ceremonies. Such reviews offered summaries of the speaker's arguments and typically evaluated the speaker's ideas, style, and elocutionary technique. Herbert A. Wichelns has summarized newspaper reviews of Emerson's performances that reveal how carefully the popular press scrutinized the elocutionary skills of platform speakers:

Most observed that the eyes . . . were only occasionally raised from the manuscript and then in such a way that only those at the side of room met his glance. None felt that he had the usual platform manner of the experienced speaker. We read of a "shapeless delivery" without gestures save nervous twitches and angular movements of the hands and arms—"curious to see and even smile at" and a slight rocking of the body. . . . The voice, which James Russell Lowell described to the readers of the *Nation* in 1868 as a rich baritone, struck on Margaret Fuller's ear as full and sweet rather than sonorous, yet flexible and haunted by many modulations. But others thought there was little variation. . . . report[ing] a reading without excitement, without energy, scarcely even with emphasis. (1943, 517)

Reviews like this indicate that the literate public was well aware of the importance of standard elocutionary techniques such as the

modulated voice, timing and emphasis in reading, and control over gesture. By awarding critical attention to elocution, the popular press aided the academy in the enterprise of instilling in the public mind the notion that rhetorical skills, especially delivery, were essential to speech making and dramatic readings, no matter the occasion.

Because the virtues of oratorical and elocutionary performance were so widely regarded in the nineteenth century, Americans were keenly interested in instruction in the rudiments of oratory and elocution for the average citizen rather than for the specialized uses of those preparing to be lawyers, preachers, or public servants. In response to public interest, various forms of popular instruction in elocution developed to provide rudimentary instruction in delivery and multiple selections for practice and performance. These materials supplemented efforts to promote popular instruction in elocution by academic elocutionists such as Alexander Melville Bell, Merritt Caldwell, and J. H. McIlwaine, whose elocution texts were designed for both the student and the private learner.

Popular rhetoric manuals were modeled closely on academic treatises that analyzed the philosophical, aesthetic, epistemological, and physiological elements of elocution. Typically designed for advanced instruction in academies, colleges, and seminaries, texts such as Porter's *Analysis of the Principles of Rhetorical Delivery as Applied to Reading and Speaking* (1827), William Russell's *Orthography* (1846), and Merritt Caldwell's *Practical Manual of Elocution* (1845) were regarded by popular elocutionists as authoritative texts. Nineteenth-century academic elocutionists drew upon a diverse theoretical base to justify their definition of elocution as a practical art and rational science. Major theoretical sources included Cicero's and Quintilian's theories of delivery and the work of British elocutionists Thomas Sheridan (*Lectures on Elocution*, 1762), John Walker (*Elements of Elocution*, 1781), and Gilbert Austin (*Chironomia*, 1806).

The authority of Cicero and Quintilian over academic theories of elocution endured throughout the century, as did the influence of Austin's work on gesture; however, by mid-century, the exclusive theoretical influence of Sheridan's and Walker's theories of the voice had been supplemented by James Rush's *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* (1827). Rush's views shaped the theories of a number of influential American elocutionists including Russell, Caldwell, James E. Murdoch, and Jonathan Barber, who shared Rush's interest in how

expressive use of the voice enhances emotional appeals and the clarity of ideas. Rush's theory of the voice was coopted by Silus S. Curry, whose treatises *The Province of Expression* (1891) and *Foundations of Expression* (1907) represent the increasingly eclectic state of elocutionary theory at the end of the century. Curry valued Rush's notions of the natural use of the voice but believed that most other elocutionists of the time relied on an artificial separation between the function of the voice and the body, functions that Curry believed should be unified in a "whole body" approach to delivery.

In taking the "whole body" approach to expression, Curry helped to popularize some elements of the theories of Francois Delarte, whose theory of expression drew on the assumption that the voice and the body are one with the mind and the soul. Although never exerting measurable influence over the academic tradition in elocution, the "Delarte system" was promoted by successful popular elocutionists Steele Mackaye, Lewis B. Monroe, and William R. Alger, whose publications and public lectures defined elocution as the development of "physical culture." The Delarte system was also promoted by elocutionists who applied principles of elocution to the dramatic arts, primarily involving dramatic interpretation, pantomime, and tableaux. Several books addressed to the popular audience advocated this latter program in the last decade of the century, including Genevieve Stebbins's *Delarte System of Dramatic Expression* (1886) and Anna Morgan's *An Hour with Delarte: A Study of Expression* (1889), which were both "widely used and sold" (Shaver 1954, 216).

Despite shifting allegiances to theoretical authorities, one of the most characteristic tenets of nineteenth-century academic and popular elocutionary theory was the assumption that the state of mind of the speaker can be inferred from tones and inflections of the voice, movements of the body, and expressions of the face. It is this natural correspondence among mind, voice, and body that allows the speaker to engage the minds and emotions of the audience more completely than the absence of the art of delivery would allow. Like their eighteenth-century predecessors, nineteenth-century academic and popular elocutionists stressed that elocutionary principles should be based on the natural disposition of voice, expression, and gesture. Caldwell explains that the study and practice of elocution provides "a theoretical knowledge . . . of natural language" that leaves "the learner sufficiently in possession of all his natural peculiarities. Their

[principles drawn from nature] entire object is to refine and perfect nature; not to pervert it" (1845, viii, 22). Like other prominent elocutionists in this period, Caldwell stresses that the aim of elocutionary technique is to enhance the speaker's or reader's ability to increase the impression ideas and emotions make on others by employing the natural properties of the voice and of action.

Popular elocutionists persistently encouraged the student of elocution to regard conversation as the best source of clues as to how voice and gesture confer individuality on expression. In explaining that "the study of natural speech [is] revealed by Conversation," Shoemaker reiterates the dominant nineteenth-century view that the most effective speakers are those who have studied spoken language in its original and simplest form:

The conditions of mind and body in ordinary conversation are best adapted for the study of our own individuality. . . . We should study ourselves and seek our examples from that condition where true nature is least modified. This condition we believe to be that of *conversation* with our intimate friends. . . . [W]e will find in it a harmony with our own natures, and constantly recurring lights and shades of natural expression that may serve as models for study and imitation, such as we can find nowhere else in the whole range of utterance. (1886, ix-x)

While Shoemaker expresses the standard notion that elocutionary abilities are natural and thus potentially in the grasp of any speaker of the language, he also contends that study and practice are required to bring natural skills up to their most effective level. As Shoemaker puts it, "God . . . gives us the plastic material . . . we must develop into mature faculties through the formation of conscious habits" (xii).

Nineteenth-century popular elocutionists confidently proclaimed that the study and practice of principles could allow even the most unpromising initiates to capitalize on their natural expressive inclinations. Practice in elocution helps the speaker become more self-conscious in the use of the voice and body and therefore more skilled. Defending a pedagogy in which the student learns "general principles" and is then "drilled," George L. Raymond, author of the widely used manual *The Orator's Manual* (1879), confides that his years of teaching experience have made him

believe that it is only a question of time and patience, and any person, not physically incapacitated, may be made to become an interesting and attractive speaker. By this is meant that he can be cured of indistinct and defective articulation, of unnatural and false tones, and of awkwardness; and be trained to have a clear, resonant voice, an unaffected and forcible way of modulating it so as to have it represent the sense, and a dignity and ease of bearing, all of which together shall enable him to continue to hold the attention of an audience. (7-8)

By promoting a pedagogical model that stresses mastery of principles combined with practice, "time and patience," Raymond and other popular elocutionists reinforce the pedagogical stance of prominent rhetorical theorists of the period such as Newman, Genung, and Alexander Bain who insist that oratorical and composition skills can be acquired through systematic study of theoretical principles and their applications to various types of rhetorical performance (Johnson 1991, 231-40).

One of the most significant gains attributed to the study and practice of elocution is the elimination of speech habits that lower one's standard of expression. Nineteenth-century elocutionists, academic and popular alike, assumed a one-to-one correspondence between natural skills that had been brought up to the level of art and the development of correct habits of speech. Raymond's concern for the elimination of "indistinct and defective articulation" and "false tones" is characteristic of the attitude of other theorists such as Caldwell, Porter, and Russell who regard the preservation of a standard of spoken English as a major goal of elocutionary training. Instruction in elocution promotes "vocal discipline" and the tasteful use of gestures that accompanies a cultivated variant of English. Defending the role of elocutionary training in the eradication of a "low style" of speaking, Russell defines one of the crucial pedagogical commitments of the nineteenth-century elocutionary movement:

It is unnecessary here to enlarge on the intellectual injuries arising from the want of early discipline in this department of education, or to speak of the habits of inattention and inaccuracy, which are thus cherished, and by which the English language is degraded from its native force and dignity of utterance, to a low and slovenly negligence of style, by which it is rendered unfit for the best offices for speech. (1844, 9)

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Russell assumes that the study of elocution purifies the speaker of defects and habits that are offenses against nature in the first place. The study of elocution offers the speaker an opportunity to become conscious of those defects and to eradicate them through a program of systematic study and practice. Russell's commitment to the importance of "discipline" indicates the level of confidence in the effects of systematic pedagogy held by elocutionists and rhetoricians alike in this period. Rather than being a type of interference in the development of natural instincts of expression, the formal study of elocution reinforces the most elevated forms of English while it suppresses all forms of the "slovenly." At the foundation of this view is a persistent association between the systematic study of elocution and rhetoric and the development of expression as an art. While art has its origins in the natural, the ways and means of nature can be known through the study of principles, mastered through practice, and applied at will for the greatest effect.

Popular elocutionists also stressed that systematic study of natural expression would eradicate speaking defects that interfered with communication and created negative impressions on others. Addressing more often the practical consequences of poor speaking habits rather than the virtues of acquiring artistic expression, popular elocutionists argued that a working knowledge of the principles of elocution and practice in correct speaking could further professional and social aims and enhance everyday enjoyment of conversation. Emma Griffith Lumm, who introduces her text *The New American Speaker* as an effort to teach "the boy on the farm and the girl in the shop" the art of speech, argues for the everyday importance of elocution: "Not all are public speakers or readers, but everybody talks, and to speak in a well modulated voice is an accomplishment worth effort to obtain (1898, 1, 38). In the introduction to *The American Star Speaker and Model Elocutionist*, Charles Walter Brown similarly points out that it is necessary to speak correctly in order to make "ourselves agreeable in our intercourse with our fellow creatures as our opportunities may permit." Without attention to proper speech, "the consideration and continued high respect of the world" cannot be won (1902, 21).

The social inducement for elocutionary practice promoted by Lumm and Brown is a characteristic of how popular elocutionists created a motive to study elocution for those who had no particular

interest in learning the art of oratory but who were invested in getting along with others. Brown conjures a rather unpleasant image to further his argument that no one can afford to be without the skills of proper speech: "The hermit, withdrawing to his forest cabin or mountain cavern, may with impunity lapse into uncouth barbarism and give expression to his aches and pains in rasping pectoral grunts, since no other being is to be attracted or delighted by his words and manners; but woe to him who seeks amid the social hive for human sympathy if he ignores his tones and speech" (21). The contrast implied here between the animal-like utterance of the untutored hermit and the graceful, clear tones of the skilled speaker is an image often outlined by popular elocutionists as they argued for the improving effects of elocutionary study. One of the most insistent messages of the popular elocution movement was the maxim that the person who speaks correctly wins affection and acceptance; the person who speaks poorly is isolated from social rewards. By equating correct speaking with access to the respect and affection of others, popular elocutionists defined elocution as a necessary study for anyone who hoped to enjoy happiness and success in daily life.

In addition to promoting diligent study of the principles of proper speaking as these apply to conversation and public speaking, popular elocutionists reiterated the claim of academic theorists that elocutionary skills can be acquired through dramatic reading of great works. A prominent claim of nineteenth-century rhetorical theory was the assumption that the critical study of great masterpieces cultivates taste and an appreciation of rhetorical style (Johnson 1991, 75-84). Elocutionists in this period similarly argued that the practice of reading great works aloud sharpens the mind and nurtures elocutionary talent. The dramatic reader benefits intellectually and morally from both the study and the performance of the work, and the audience is similarly improved by experiencing the actual performance and by being exposed to the subject and the rhetorical qualities of the work.

The assumption that the study and practice of elocution has these far-reaching intellectual and moral implications is a pervasive principle in nineteenth-century elocutionary theory and accounts for why popular texts typically combined theoretical discussions of principles with a section of selected works for study and practice. The title pages of popular manuals highlight the importance of the variety and

quality of selections for practice: *The Handy Speaker: Comprising Fresh Selections in Poetry and Prose, Humorous, Pathetic, Patriotic* (Baker 1876); *The Peerless Speaker Being a Compilation of the Choicest Recitations, Readings and Dialogues from the Most Celebrated Authors* (Fenn 1900); *The Ideal Speaker and Entertainer: Being a Choice Treasury of New and Popular Recitations, Readings, Original and Adapted Comedies, Recitations with Lesson Talks, Etc. Comprising the Best Selections from the Most Celebrated Authors and Composers* (Northrop 1910). Elocutionists assumed that the oral performance of "choice" works provided ongoing training in the use of the voice and gesture and also exposed the performer to elegant language and moving emotions. While popular elocutionists stressed that one learns most from what is "best," they also made it clear that selections for practice were chosen with the varied needs of the public in mind, especially the need to have appropriate material for performance at social events and in the home. Recognizing dramatic reading as a popular form of entertainment in the way that academics did not, the compilers of elocution readers and speakers stressed the versatility of elocutionary materials as well as their merit. As one compiler explains, selections cover as wide a range of subjects, emotions, and occasions as possible while still offering "excellent specimens":

Taken as a whole, this work presents an array of choice Poetry and Prose, so comprehensive and varied in style as to offer a responsive chord to every possible mood or phase of human feeling, and call forth every emotion of the heart; presenting a complete Library of Popular Gems. . . . By thus providing intellectual food for all the varying tastes and desires of a reading people, this work must necessarily prove a delightful traveling companion, a welcome visitor at every fireside, and a real household treasure; as no time, occasion or circumstances, but is here furnished suitable and enjoyable material for either reading or speaking. (Garrett 1874, preface)

By characterizing elocutionary material as "intellectual food" suitable for performance and enjoyment in social and private settings, popular elocutionists defend the art of dramatic reading as a skill that enhances private as well as public and professional life. Popular and academic elocutionists alike claimed that the art of dramatic reading ranked with public speaking as an indispensable skill. As Porter argues, "No one is qualified to hold a respectable rank in a well-bred

society, who is unable to read in an interesting manner, the works of others" ([1827] 1830, 13-14). Within the nineteenth-century cultural climate, "well-bred" carried with it associations with higher intellectual and moral virtue. Popular elocutionists stressed the relationship between the study and practice of elocution and the development of "well-bred" qualities by pointing out that the practice of correct speaking through dramatic reading and conversation elevates the mind in the same way that the study of great orations enhances the powers of expression. In his introduction to *The Peerless Speaker*, Frank H. Fenko, author of several popular elocution manuals, explains that "an improved style [in conversation] will suggest better thoughts, and as so much of our happiness if not existence itself depends upon a conveyance on our ideas, cultivation in this direction will certainly make us happier, nobler and better (1900, vii). S. S. Curry expresses the same view when he observes that dramatic reading can be used "for the cultivation of taste" and that it provides "a great means for the development of the human being" (1891, xv). Porter, Fenko, and Curry all assume that elocution should be cultivated for the sake of personal development and to ensure full participation in life. Popular elocutionists defined a role for elocution in all spheres of private, professional, and social life by arguing that elocution was just as important in the parlor as in the office, just as crucial to the conversation as to the public lecture, and just as important to the ordinary person as it was to prominent speakers.

Elocutionary texts designed for the private learner typically presented abridged treatments of the theoretical principles treated at length in academic texts. The general public had access to three kinds of instructional materials: cross-over manuals, designed for both the academic student and the home learner that outlined an extensive treatment of the principles and techniques of delivery; popular elocution speakers, which provided rudimentary treatments of theoretical principles of delivery and multiple selections of readings for practice; and elocution rectifiers, which offered minimal instruction and consisted primarily of anthologized selections for practice and dramatic performances.

Cross-over manuals excised the elaborate philosophical and theoretical justifications typical of the philosophical academic treatises of Porter, Russell, and Curry and treated the principles of the voice and gesture with varying levels of sophistication. Like academic treatises, cross-over manuals were typically organized in two major

sections: one devoted to a discussion of the major properties of the voice (articulation, inflection, accent, emphasis, pace, force, time, and pitch) and the second covering action or gesture (stance of the body, gestures of the hands, gestures of the arm, position of the feet and lower limbs, and expression of the face and eyes). Practice readings were usually included as exercises within discussions of the voice, and drawings and diagrams of different gestures, stances, and facial expressions were often included in the discussion of action.

Cross-over manuals combined an account of principles with a compendium of poems, plays, prose, and model speeches for practice, providing both theoretical and practical instruction under one cover. Cross-over manuals announced this double usefulness quite overtly. George L. Raymond and Frank H. Fenko, two of the most successful popularizers of elocutionary theory in the last decades of the century, indicate the range of readers they hope to educate in the subtitles to their manuals. Raymond explains that his text is "designed as a textbook for schools and colleges, and for public speakers and readers who are obliged to study without an instructor" (1897, 1). Fenko's subtitle is even more inclusive in its appeal: "A comprehensive and systematic series of exercises . . . designed to be used as a text book in the class-room and for private study, as well as for the use of readers and speakers generally" (1900, iii). Following the example of academic treatises, Raymond and Fenko provide fairly detailed discussions of principles of the voice and gesture and include readings for exercises and further practice. Other widely circulated cross-over manuals included Alexander Melville Bell's *Principles of Elocution* (1878), J. W. Shoemaker's *Practical Elocution* (1886), and Isaac Hinton Brown's *Common School Elocution and Oratory* (1885), later reissued as *Brown's Standard Elocution and Speaker* (in a revised edition by Charles Walter Brown). These texts all incorporate the same organizational framework and cover similar topics: (1) a definition of elocution as the manner or style of speaking; (2) the proposition that good elocution consists of natural expression brought up to its most effective level; (3) the argument that good elocution is necessary in social, business, and public life; (4) the argument that the study of elocution develops the mind and a healthy body; (5) definitions and illustrations of the principles of elocution covering the use of the voice and gestures; and (6) selections for practice, either presented as exercises within discussions of principles or appended as exercises.



Although these elements parallel the contents of academic treatises, cross-over manuals presented this material with what authors claimed as deliberate "conciseness." Charles Walter Brown describes this distinctive theoretical stance of the cross-over text by explaining that the purpose of his text, one directed to "Schools, Colleges, Universities and Private Pupils," is to "present the science of human expression in a manner so simple, so concise and so reasonable that no student with average zeal and ability would experience difficulty in comprehending and applying its principles" (1911, 3). Because he assumed that many of his readers would be studying on their own, Brown shaped his text so that theoretical fundamentals and techniques could be grasped by any individual willing to give the task intelligent attention. What cross-over elocutionists want to avoid is a level of theoretical complexity that might not be self-explanatory.

The concise approach of cross-over manuals is also characteristic of the theoretical style of cross-over readers, texts designed for the use of "advanced pupils" in common schools and academies as well as for the instruction of the home learner and the family. Cross-over readers such as Wilson's *Fifth Reader of the School and Family Series* (1861), McGuffey's *New Sixth Eclectic Reader* (1857), and Parker and Watson's *National Fifth Reader* (1870) offer a more truncated version of elocutionary theory than the cross-over manuals, and they typically treat only principles of the voice, often neglecting gesture altogether. This omission of gesture is largely due to their exclusive focus on the art of reading literature aloud, a type of elocutionary performance in which gesture was considered less important than it would be in public speaking and dramatic performance. The authors of *The National Fifth Reader* represent their text as a "simple, complete, and eminently practical Treatise on Elocution" that provides a "collection of pieces so rich, varied, perspicuous, and attractive, as to suit all classes of minds, all times, and all occasions" (Parker and Watson 1870, iii). Cross-over readers extended an education in elocution and taste to the home learner through the type of selections included for performance and practice. Like other types of cross-over manuals, cross-over readers promote the premise that the student of elocution learns best by practicing the works of the masters:

The Selections for Reading and Declamation contain what are regarded as the choicest gems of English literature. The work of many authors, ancient

and modern, have been consulted, and more than a hundred standard writers, of the English language, on both sides of the Atlantic, have been laid under contribution to enable the authors to present a collection, rich in all that can inform the understanding, improve the taste, and cultivate the heart, and which, at the same time, shall furnish every variety of style and subject to exemplify the principles of Rhetorical delivery, and form a finished reader and elocutionist. (iii)

The theoretical hallmark of cross-over readers is simplicity, a level of explanation that preserves the theoretical principles of manual-length treatments of elocutionary principles but treats these issues with less sophistication. In his cross-over manual *Elocution: The Sources and Elements*, McIlvaine allots three chapters to an extensive discussion of aspects of correct pronunciation, detailing explanation of articulation, accent, and control over vowels, accent, and word endings (1870, 199–293). In contrast, *The National Fifth Reader* provides a mere fifteen-page summary of the principle of articulation, focusing on a series of sentence-long "definitions" of what articulation must control (Parker and Watson 1870, 21). This type of theoretical simplicity indicates the distillation of theoretical content that accompanied attempts to "popularize" elocutionary theory for a wider readership.

The theoretical distillation of elocutionary theory is at work in cross-over manuals and readers at different stages. This process is revealed in more extreme stages in two types of materials designed exclusively for the popular audience—elocution speakers and reciters. These texts were marketed strictly for use in the home and as a resource for elocutionary performances at social and community events. Efforts on the part of authors to widen the appeal of elocutionary training and performance resulted in the further reduction of theoretical discussion and the inclusion of far more categories of selections for performance in informal settings.

Elocution speakers provided rudimentary theoretical instruction in the form of rules and handy hints; this "how-to" approach represents the popularization of elocutionary theory at its most simplistic. In *The New American Speaker*, Emma Griffith Lumm offers an extremely abbreviated treatment of the principles of elocution in a form of a list of twelve "Practical Suggestions" (1898, 39). For example, Lumm compresses the complex principles of clear pronunciation

(articulation), modulation of voice, and time (pace of expression) into two rules: "Finish the sentence, make the pitch of the voice high enough at the beginning of a sentence to keep the last word from dropping back into the throat" and "*Speak slowly*, take time to *think* the words, and the words will express your thought" (40). When compared with the sophistication of discussions of the same issues provided by cross-over manuals, the theoretical distillation characteristic of popular speakers is quite dramatic. In contrast to Lumm's advice that the demands of correct pronunciation are met by the maxim "speak slowly," Fenko explains that articulation (the distinct and correct utterance of elementary sounds) depends on the control of vocal sounds, aspirate sounds, and combined sounds; he also provides a "table of exercises" for the practice of each type of pronunciation (1878, 21-24). Similarly, Fenko offers a far more complex analysis of modulation than does Lumm, who simply implies that correct expression will result from "finishing the sentence," "speaking slowly," or "thinking" the words. Fenko explains that modulation (the use of voice to convey the thought in the best manner) depends upon the control of several qualities of the voice, including melody (effect on the ear of a succession of vocal notes), pitch (elevation or depression of tone), slides (ascending and descending inflection), cadence (tone with which the sentence terminates), and time (rate of speech and use of pause) (25-42). Although not nearly as extensive a treatment of modulation as Porter or Russell offer, Fenko's discussions of articulation and modulation are infinitely more complex than Lumm's, who translates elocutionary theory at the most basic level in order that the principles of elocution can be understood by the greatest diversity of individuals and applied to the greatest range of activities and occasions.

Although simplistic in approach, elocution speakers did successfully popularize a number of standard elocutionary techniques through rudimentary reminders about voice control (pronunciation, rate of speech, tone of voice, force, and stress) and the use of the body and gesture (standing position, head positions, position of the hands, arm movements, and facial expressions) (e.g., Brown 1911, 23-59). Usually organized under attention-getting headings such as "Requirements of Good Elocution" and "The Four Positions," the instructional content of speakers retained distinct theoretical links to the more amplified discussions provided by cross-over manuals. Al-

though providing highly abbreviated treatments of theoretical principles, the "how-to" instructional approach of elocution speakers confirmed the general assumption of the elocution movement that elocution was a skill that required study and practice. The "how-to" approach to instruction was at its most influential in the 1880s, 1890s, and the early decades of the twentieth century. Texts like Brown's *American Star Speaker* (1902), Fenko's *Peerless Speaker* (1900), and John Coulter's *New Century Perfect Speaker* (1902) combine the how-to instructional mode with the presentation of "appropriate selections from the masterpieces of thought, sentiment and feeling of great orators and writers" (Coulter [1901] 1902, preface).

The authors of elocution speakers were often elocutionists who produced various levels of popular materials, as in the case of Brown and Fenko, who also authored full-length theoretical manuals. These authors clearly perceive the simplistic and condensed approach of the speaker genre to be a direct response to "popular demand for a work containing information, instruction, an advice regarding elocution . . . with immediate reference to availability in a practical way" (Coulter [1901] 1902, preface). The "popular" and "practical" appeal of elocution speakers is confirmed by the fact that these texts include many more selections for private, social, and community occasions and fewer selections from the masterpieces of oratory than cross-over manuals typically offer. Speakers advertise selections for every conceivable occasion: Christmas, New Year's, Easter, Thanksgiving, old settlers' gatherings, Labor Day, Arbor Day, "dramatic, pathetic, humorous recitals and readings . . . for schools, lodges, public entertainments, anniversaries, Sunday-schools," "selections . . . suitable for home, school, church, lodge, club, literary societies, . . . and public and private recitals" (Lumm 1898, 6; Northrop 1920, 1; Brown 1902, 1). The most distinctive characteristic of the popular elocution speaker as a class of instructional text is this sweeping generalization of what constitutes everyday rhetorical occasions to which elocutionary skills could apply.

Unlike elocution speakers, elocution reciters provided little to no instructional content, concentrating on providing anthologized readings for practice and performance. Reciters were published in two forms, single volume anthologies (often reprinted) and in serials of monthly, quarterly, or annual issues. Both of these types of texts present a cross section of selections for practice and performance

geared for the general reader and favoring loose genre categories such as "humorous, pathetic, and patriotic" or simply "prose" and "poetry." The massive number of elocution reciters available in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century testifies to the widespread popularity of elocution as a form of private and public entertainment. Popular reciter series included the two widely circulated series published by Phineas Garrett, *The Speakers Garland and Literary Bouquet* (1870-1926) and *One Hundred Choice Selections for Readings and Recitations* (1866-1914), as well as Werner's *Readings and Recitations* (1890-1915) (published by Edgar S. Werner, founder of the elocutionist magazine *Werner's Magazine*, later *The Voice* [1879-1902]), and George M. Baker's series, *The Reading Club*. Selections from *The Reading Club* were collected in Baker's widely circulated anthology *The Handy Speaker* (1876). Like elocution speakers, reciters fed the public's seemingly inexhaustible interest in elocutionary performance. Baker announces his collection as a response to the general reader's "cry for 'new pieces'" (1870, 2) and Shoemaker introduces his reciter series, *The Elocutionist's Annual*, as a collection that provides eagerly awaited "fresh selections" (1873, 4). Baker's and Shoemaker's perception that the public clamored for "fresh selections" for study and practice indicates that by the 1870s, the popular elocution movement was already responding to the public's conviction that elocution was necessarily applicable to an extensive range of subjects and occasions. The publication of reciters also motivated that interest by continuing to promote the assumption that the application of elocution to everyday professional, social, and private life was nearly unlimited.

Although elocution reciters did not provide the level of theoretical instruction offered by speakers and cross-over manuals, these texts made a distinct contribution to the enterprise of promoting vocal culture, which all popular elocution texts supported. By widening even further the sphere of elocutionary activity to include an extensive list of performance occasions in the community and in the home, compilers of reciters confirmed the general importance of elocution by reminding the average citizen that correct expression was in vogue in all aspects of life. Cross-over manuals and readers recommended the study of elocution for its practical versatility and for the insights into taste, the power of language, and the higher emotions that elocutionary and performance provides. Compilers of widely circulated reciters also stressed the connection between elocutionary

performance and the acquisition of "a refined taste and a cultivated judgment" (Werner 1890, iii-iv) and link the practice of elocution with patriotism, culture, and self-improvement: "[This volume is dedicated] to the good and the true of the nation, to the millions of intelligent readers and speakers throughout our country and to all who appreciate Choice Literature, either in the Parlor, School Room, Library or Forum" (Garrett 1885, 6: iii). Like cross-over manuals and elocution speakers, reciters self-consciously affirmed the centrality of elocution by proclaiming its wide applicability and by promoting the cultural norm that correct speaking marked the individual for personal development and a happier life.

By stressing that the dramatic reading of a poem or essay at a backyard picnic was just as likely a means of practicing and acquiring forceful powers of expression as the giving of formal lectures and orations, the popular elocution movement made rhetorical training relevant to a whole group of people for whom formal training in oratory was irrelevant or impractical. The mission of the popular elocution movement to offer "the private learner" the opportunity to develop more dignified and forceful speech drew support not only from the powerful pragmatism of its appeal but also from the commonly held cultural view that improvement in expression contributed in a general way to the improvement of character and the mind. Sharing with their academic counterparts in the academy the notion that rhetorical skills were versatile and essential to good communication of all types, popular elocutionists stressed that self-improvement through better speaking resulted in a life of greater fulfillment, ease, and success.