Thou sittest at another boke....

English Studies in Honour of Domenico Pezzini

Giovanni Iamartino
Maria Luisa Maggioni
Roberta Facchinetti
editors

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Elocution and eloquence in the 18th and 19th centuries: British and American Sources

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1. Introduction

The importance of studying the manifold aspects of elocution and eloquence is becoming increasingly important as oral discourse, with all the intricacies and complexities that it entails, broadens its boundaries to encompass innovative forms of global communication. Investigations into this field cannot be complete, however, without a historical perspective on the ways suprasegmental features have been viewed throughout the centuries. Therefore, our contribution will move from the two keywords 'pronunciation' and 'delivery' to explore the British and American approaches to the subject as complementary, rather than contrasting, aspects of the study of elocution and eloquence in English.

2. Pronunciation and delivery

In English, 'pronunciation' had been established since the early 16th century as the technical term for the 'oral delivery of discourse'. Only when the science of phonetics began to emerge did the term acquire a new technical meaning.[1] In 1617 Robert Robinson wrote *The Art of Pronunciation* (see Dobson ed. 1968: 200-214), a treatise on phonetics, describing in detail "the elements and parts of the voice"

[1] For various instances where Latin *pronuntiatio* has been rendered into English as pronunciation, see Howell (1961: 81-82, 89, 104, 112, 255-256, 325).

together with the main problems of spelling and pronunciation. Unfortunately, this book was considered a work on voice and gesture for years, because in Robinson's time the art of pronunciation would technically refer to the art of delivering a speech. William Phillips Sandford said of it, for example, that it was "probably the first book written in English devoted exclusively to the subject of delivery" (Howell 1971: 148). In the 18th century, the dangers involved in having two different technical meanings for the same word may have worried the British elocutionists, who were the first to take the term 'pronunciation' from its setting in rhetoric and to use it in an unambiguous technical sense in lexicology and phonetics.

If the difference between 'delivery' and 'pronunciation' is now clear, it is nevertheless not easy to understand why the word 'elocution' was chosen by British, and then, by American elocutionists to name the fifth part of rhetoric. This is a problem widely discussed by Wilbur Samuel Howell in his tribute to the British Elocutionary Movement (1702-1806):

> After all, was not elocution already recognized in England as the term for the lore of the tropes and figures and for the doctrine of the three kinds of style? If so, how was a new ambiguity to be avoided when the term was made also to mean oral delivery? [...]The elocutionists could have avoided this sort of confusion, of course, by calling the fifth and last part of rhetoric by the alternate name of *action,* as classical authorities would have authorized, or by the new term *delivery,* as the twentieth century was going to do (Howell 1971: 149-150. My italics).

As a matter of fact, these rhetoricians refused both the term 'action', because it could be associated in English with the idea of 'gesture' (physical motion) rather than of 'oral utterance', and the term 'delivery', probably because it had no roots in the Latin rhetorical tradition of which they were proud.

Only in the 18th century would the word 'elocution' finally be used in its full present meaning: traditionally connected with rhetoric, this term was a close relative of 'eloquence'. Thomas Sheridan employed this word in its 'new' sense in 1756, translating it directly from the Latin *pronuntiatio* in a well-known passage taken from

Rhetorica ad Herennium: "*Elocution* is a graceful management of the voice, countenance, and gesture" (Sheridan 1979 [1762]: 158).[2]

3. The classical tradition in rhetorical studies

Rhetorical education in Europe and America was based essentially on the classical writings on the subject, especially on the works of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. It is through their writings that scholars became acquainted with the concept of 'delivery', the fifth traditional rhetorical canon, later on referred to as 'the Art of Speaking'.

In particular, both Cicero and Quintilian underlined the importance of 'delivery' in speeches: although neither of them dealt directly with the relationship between the speaker and the audience, they both noted how speaking may be affected by variations in the voice and body movements. As a consequence, they stressed the necessity for proper sounds and gestures in meeting the situational demands of rhetoric. The word used by the great Roman authorities to name this part of rhetoric was *pronuntiatio* or *actio*. Cicero wrote in *De Inventione* (1.7.9):

> Pronuntiatio est ex rerum et verborum dignitate vocis et corporis moderatio (Hubbell (tr.) 1976: 41).

On the same subject, we read in *De Oratore* (1.31.142 and 3.59.222):

> Cumque esset omnis oratoris vis ac facultas in quinque partes distributa; ut deberet reperire primum, quid diceret; deinde inventa non solum ordine, sed etiam momento quodam atque iudicio dispensare atque componere; tum ea denique vestire atque ornare oratione; post memoria saepire; *ad extremum agere cum dignitate ac venustate* (Sutton (tr.) 1976: 203. My italics).

> Est enim actio quasi sermo corporis, quo magis menti congruens esse debet (Sutton (tr.) 1976: 224).

[2] For a modern, English-language edition of Cicero's *Ad C. Herennium* see Caplan (tr.) (1981).

Quintilian uses the same words as Cicero with the same meaning in his *Institutio Oratoria*:

> Pronuntiatio a plerisque actio dicitur, sed prius nomen a voce, sequens a gestu videtur accipere (Butler (tr.) 1953-1959: 71).

Apart from the classical tradition, two schools made the history of British and American elocution: the Ramistic and the Baconian schools.

4. The Ramistic and the Baconian schools

Ramus, or Pierre de la Ramée (1515-1572), redefined rhetoric as the study of style and delivery only.[3] The content and subject matter, traditionally considered as parts of 'invention' and 'arrangement', were placed by him into the domain of dialectic. Under logic or dialectic, he argued, belonged the canons of invention and disposition. Since rhetoric, on the other hand, should not be permitted to share the same subject matter, it should consist merely of style and delivery. Although Ramus is not the originator of the idea that rhetoric should be limited to style and delivery, he proved to be such a popular and influential persuader that he won the devotion of numerous followers, who proclaimed him a seminal thinker (Golden, Berquist & Coleman 1997: 128).

The Ramistic pattern of rhetoric and dialectic constituted the dominant theory of communication in America from the 17th century on. Not only did it break away from the 'classics' but also it determined a new perspective in education. In fact, the separation of the classical canons of rhetoric still exists today: whereas logic is traditionally taught in philosophy departments, rhetoric is studied in speech, communication, and English departments in most American colleges and universities (Golden, Berquist & Coleman 1997: 129).

One of the forces working against the Ramistic school of thought at the end of the 17th century had been set in motion by the publication of Francis Bacon's philosophical writings. Bacon (1561-1626) considered 'delivery' as part of the *Art of Elocution or*

[3] On his attitude to classical rhetoric see Ramus (1990 [1549]) and Pierrepont Graves's (1912) monograph.

Tradition, that is the art of "expressing or transferring our knowledge to others" (Dick (ed.) 1955: XI). The terms 'style' and 'delivery' of Ciceronian rhetoric became the single term 'Tradition', which stood for the process of communication, to which grammar, logic, and rhetoric make their distinctive contributions, and it is one of the so-called *'Intellectual Arts'*. In Bacon's analysis, rhetoric contributes to Tradition by supplying knowledge of the means by which thoughts may be vividly represented to man's imagination.

5. The study of elocution: British and American sources

As a modern study, elocution originated in England in the 18th century. Training in elocution became a need especially for the clergy, often criticized for their colourless way of making speeches on the other hand, the 17th-century growing interest in the English language had brought increased attention towards all its aspects, both written and spoken. The elocutionary movement was a direct outgrowth of the main 17th- and 18th-century linguistic trends. All the greatest English lexicographers, grammarians and, in some way, phoneticians of these two centuries have left wonderful pages on voice management and elocution.

The word 'elocution' was chosen to indicate 'the art of delivery'. It was a word traditionally connected with rhetoric, and a close relative of the word 'eloquence'; it could perfectly replace the ancient Latin word *pronuntiatio*, too limited in scope, or the modern word 'delivery', of French origin (Fr. *délivrer*, 'to set free').

The printed page, the voice, language and the body supplied the material upon which the movement brought to bear philosophy, rules, principles and notation. In devising ways to analyse these materials the elocutionists used the precepts of ancient rhetoric as well as the practices of the stage. They generally referred to their subject as 'an art' during the whole of the 18th century, but with the beginning of the new century the subsidiary subjects investigated became nearer to 'science', in the sense that elocution tended to be concerned with speech correction, with the anatomy of vocal physiology, and with the physics of sound production. Only 19th-century elocutionists, such as Thelwall (1812) and Bell (1859, 1866), looked upon elocution as a 'science'.

Either scientific or artistic in perspective, the elocutionists' contributions concentrated on three main fields:

1. bodily action (modifications of facial expressions, manner and attitude, movements of arms and legs);
2. voice management (vocal flexibility, control, and buoyancy through proper use of accent, emphasis, force, rhythm, tone, pause, pitch);
3. pronunciation (identification and production of speech sounds, standard vs dialectal variations, first studies on the anatomy of speech mechanisms).

Despite the peculiarities of the various works, all of them aimed at improvement in delivery, together with the development of a taste for culture and quality.

Given this background, the American movement may best be understood by an examination of the British books on the subject which were imported and studied beyond the ocean. Although hundreds of them were available, only those falling into three main categories deserve consideration here: investigative[4] treatises, manuals designed for use in different professions, and books for school and home use.

As far as investigative treatises are concerned, some of them made outstanding and valuable contributions to the study of human voice. Some books must be considered here. Apart from Thomas Sheridan's *A Course of Lectures on Elocution (*1762), and John Walker's *The Melody of Speaking (*1787), at least three other authors deserve a quotation: John Mason, James Burgh and Alexander Melville Bell.

John Mason's *An Essay on Elocution, or Pronunciation* (1748) is a short work which deals with "the right management of the voice in reading or speaking" (from the titlepage). He develops this thought in two sections: *Section I* describes what he means by 'bad pronunciation' and how a reader, or a speaker, can avoid it; *Section II* deals with 'good pronunciation' and the way to attain it. As all the elocutionists, by 'pronunciation' Mason means the 'art of speaking' in general. Therefore, his books contains some general advice on how to "make the Ideas seem to come from the Art" (Mason 1968 [1748]: 37) – in other words, on natural and

[4] This is the term used in Wallace (1954: 395-399).

spontaneous speaking – together with some elementary prescriptive rules on rhythm.

James Burgh was a successful writer on political philosophy that published his only book on oratory – entitled *The Art of Speaking* – in 1761. The book is divided into two Parts: *Part I* is an essay "in which are given Rules for expressing properly the principal passions and Humors, which occur in Reading, or Public Speaking" (Burgh 1953[1761]: titlepage); *Part II* is an anthology of readings, with glosses referring to the 'passions' defined in the essay. The volume contains directions on the vocal management of certain types of sentences, some general observation on oratory, and an exposition of physical demeanour in depicting seventy-six different 'humours and passions'. This final section is particularly striking: the Author describes here how the primary tools for communication are attitudes, looks, gesture, and language. As far as *despair* is concerned, for instance:

> Despair [...] bends the eyebrows downward; clouds the forehead; rolls the eyes around frightfully; opens the mouth towards the ears; bites the lips; widens the nostrils; gnashes with the teeth, like a fierce wild beast (Burgh 1953 [1761]: 173).

Burgh held the central idea, eagerly accepted by the elocutionists, that physical features (such as the eyes, the mouth, the entire face and the voice itself) are capable of projecting every 'emotion of the mind' into its 'proper outward expression'. Burgh's thought had great success both in England, where his book had at least seven editions, and in America, where eight reprints were issued. *The Art of Speaking* was read by Sheridan, paraphrased by Walker, anthologized by Scott, quoted by Austin, and recalled in one way or another by elocutionists for over a century.

Alexander Melville Bell was one of the most famous phoneticians and elocutionists of the 19th century. In his forty-nine publications, he touched on almost every part of the so-called 'science of elocution'. However, his most original contribution was his study of vocal production. In this area, he was particularly concerned with the discovery of the physiological means by which each speech sound is produced, the scientific classification of these sounds and the usage of a 'notation' that would include a symbol for every

sound. His task was to find a rational basis upon which to build a system of symbols. He started describing the physiological positions of the articulatory organs while producing sounds and to determine which sounds corresponded to each position; then, by systematically modifying each of the 'articulators' in turn, he obtained different sounds which formed a concatenated progression; finally he could account for any sound produced by the human voice. The symbols representing he actions of the organs that produced the different sounds were widely described in *Visible Speech*, his 1867 book that exerted an enormous influence on Bell's followers and became the basis of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Bell had described the various inflections in two other volumes, particularly concerned with elocution (*The Elocutionary Manual*, published in 1859, and *The Emphasised Liturgy,* dated 1866): the basic division was between falling and rising intonation, but the two main kinds of intonation were in turn divided into simple and compound versions (the latter being rising-falling and falling-rising), all having high and low 'modes'; rise-fall-rise and monotone were also mentioned.

Besides such learned works as Mason's, Burgh's and Bell's, a different typology of texts was used and studied in America during the 18th and 19th centuries in order to improve the correct usage of one's voice and intonation, especially in public reading and speaking, viz. the manuals designed for use in different professions. Most of them were written for the clergy. They were small volumes for easy consultation, very concise and clear in theoretical explanations, and full of helpful suggestions and pieces of advice for the reader. There emerges a lesson on the typical gestures of conversation and public speaking on the one hand, and on the main prosodic features on the other: posture, hands, eyes and voice are as important as the content of words and sentences. As for voice in particular, intonation, stress and emphasis are the main subjects to be practiced, usually with the help of a musician.

Among these manuals, those published by Anselm Bayly – *A Practical Treatise on Singing and Playing* and *The Alliance of Musick, Poetry and Oratory* (see Bayly 1771 and 1989 [1789]) – seem to have been the first ones to develop the elocutionary theories for church service. Two other manuals deserve consideration: John Wesley's *Directions* (1770) and James Wright's *The Philosophy of*

Elocution (1818). Wesley's booklet (only a dozen pages) gives some examples of what Mason had explained in his *Essay on Elocution* of 1748, whereas Wright's big volume (two hundred pages are devoted only to voice management) is a sort of paraphrase of Sheridan's thought and an adaptation of the kind of notation created by Walker. A final volume to be included in this short list of publications for professional elocution is *Garrick's Mode of Reading the Liturgy of the Church of England*, written by Richard Cull in 1840.

There were hundreds of manuals of elocution published between 1750 and 1900 which were intended for use in schools and for personal use. They usually had an introductory text and an anthology of passages for reading. Although the authors of these manuals might have different aims in view, three were the main objectives they all wanted to achieve: (a) their readers' acquisition of elocutionary effectiveness: delivery of discourse with "distinct and pleasing articulation, graceful modulation, and decorous demeanor" (Wallace 1954: 122); (b) the inculcation of moral excellence; and (c) the development of a taste for culture and quality.

The format of these books, well exemplified by the selected elocutionary exercises created by Thelwall in 1812, was particularly successful in the USA. Such works as *The American Elocutionist*, published in 1851 by William Russell, *The Science and Art of Elocution* by Frank H. Fenno (1970 [1878]), *The Speaking Voice* by K. Benkhe (1897), or *The Orator's Manual* by George Raymond (1910 [1879]) are the American version of the first 'didactic' manuals of elocution written in Great Britain.

6. The British elocutionary studies

In the 18th century, scholars started to be seriously interested in speech mechanisms and in English oral communication. This century saw the flourishing of 'delivery'.[5] Speaking opportunities were developing rapidly everywhere: in parliament, at the bar, from the pulpit, in the theatre and in polite conversation. The interest in

[5] For a discussion on the meaning of the word 'delivery' in the 18th century, see Zanola (2002).

private and public speech was matched by a corresponding concern for the study of the English language and pronunciation.

That was the ideal period for the development of studies on elocution. At last, in 1775 the first impressive study on English intonation appeared. It was *An Essay Towards Establishing the Melody & Measure of Speech* (later known as *Prosodia Rationalis*) by Joshua Steele: this work added a much wider perspective in the study of prosodic features as a whole. It was followed by John Walker's *The Melody of Speaking* (1787), a markedly pedagogical treatise aimed at giving a guide to those who wanted to read and speak well.

After these, there was little additional information about English intonation until the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The great majority of 18th-century language manuals restricted the treatment of oral language to inaccurate generalizations on the motivational power of words, though concentrating on the relationship between language, voice and gesture: as a consequence, there is a considerable number of volumes which may be of interest to a psychologist or a communication expert. Further comments on intonation were occasionally dealt with inside wider studies on the art of speaking and delivering a speech all through the 18th century. One of them is *Lectures on Elocution* (1762) by Thomas Sheridan: the volume anticipated the modern distinction between 'natural' tones, which are universals, and 'instituted' tones, which are language-particular.

Steele's, Walker's and Sheridan's works will be commented here below as the best examples of the British 18th-century studies on elocution.

Steele's Melody and Measure

In 1827, the American scholar James Rush wrote in *The Philosophy of the Human Voice:*

> *Time*, in speaking, is denoted by the terms: long, short, quick, slow, and rapid. Music has a more precise scale of relationship, in its order of signs from semibreve to double-demisemiquaver. [...] Mr. Steele gives examples of an application of the symbols of music, to the variable time of discourse (Rush 1893 [1827]: 70).

Steele's *Essay* provided demostration for the existence of tonal variations in English a few decades before Rush.[6] Joshua Steele was a prosodist, a musician, and an elocutionist, who made the first attempt to create a systematic transcriptional method for notating length, stress and pitch features.

Steele's study on English melody started as a reply to Lord Burnett (or Burnet, better known as Lord Monboddo) on the subject of English oral language. Monboddo wrote that the melody of the English language was

> nothing better than *the music of a drum*, in which we perceive no difference except that of a louder or softer, according as the instrument is more or less forcibly struck" (Burnet 1974 [1773-1792]: 300).

In answer to this statement, Steele convinced Monboddo that English speech 'has' melody and rhythm. He showed that this melody was a kind of tune or pitch pattern inherent to speech; that this rhythm was a recurrence of measured quantity which depends on the nature of language and on an inner understanding of the context.

To prove his theses, he analysed oral speech according to musical principles, showing how speech moves up and down the musical scale by infinitesimal intervals between syllables. He noted that, unfortunately, these intervals are not perfect, unlike the intervals between musical notes, which are always perfectly distinguishable. Since speech melody could not be precisely rendered by literal musical symbolizations, Steele invented a new notation for speech consisting of curved lines or 'slides', replacing the traditional notes on a musical scale, and a complex system of symbols adapted from musical notation.

On both sides of the Atlantic, prosodists and elocutionists employed in one way or another Steele's new analysis of the phonetic, dynamic, and prosodic components of speech. His lively concern for living facts was atypical of his time: in this way, he taught his followers to observe the phenomena of English speech, rather than to yield to any authoritarian pronouncement.

[6] On Rush's work see, below, section 7.

Walker's 'new' canons of elocution

Walker published six books on elocution: *Exercises for Improvement in Elocution* (1777) is a collection of readings, dedicated to Garrick; *The Elements of Elocution* (1969 [1781]) is an important systematic presentation of his elocutionary theory, later summarized in *Hints for the Improvement in the Art of Reading* (1783); *A Rhetorical Grammar* (1822 [1785]) presents an adaptation of the old canons of rhetoric to the 'new' canons of elocution; *Melody of Speaking Delineated* (1970 [1787]) explains a method of teaching elocution by means of signs adapted from musical notation; finally, *The Academic Speaker* (1817 [1789]) is a book of extracts for declamatory practice (see Wallace 1954: 117; Cohen 1977: 432; Howatt 1984: 123). *The Elements of Elocution* and the treatise on *Melody* are his most interesting works for our research.

The basic idea in Walker's *Elements* is that the reader obtains harmony of sound and achieves fidelity to the author's purpose by applying the inflections found in nature to the various grammatical forms utilized by the author. These inflections are four:

- rising;
- falling;
- circumflex rising;
- circumflex falling.

His distinction is not new: Steele had written about rising, falling, and circumflex inflections six years before Walker's publication; however, Walker's application of the theory of slides to grammatical forms is undoubtedly original.

Walker went back to this subject in the following years, especially in his treatise on *Melody*. Here the inflections were widely described and exemplified in five groups:

i) *The monotone*. Transcribed with a horizontal line, similar to that which is used to express a long syllable in verse (¯), it is considered by the Author as "a continuation or sameness of sound, like that produced by repeatedly striking a bell; it may be louder or softer, but continues in exactly the same pitch" (Walker 1970 [1787]: 15). According to Walker, one of the best examples of this inflection is given in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book ii, v. I: "High on a throne of royal state, which far...").

ii) *The rising inflexion* (´). It is described as the "upward turn of the voice we generally use at the comma, or in asking a question, which begins with a verb" (Walker 1970 [1787]: i).
iii) *The falling inflexion* (`). It is generally used "at the colon and semicolon, and must necessarily be heard in the answer to the former question" (Walker 1970 [1787]: ii).
iv) *The rising circumflex* (ˇ). It begins with a falling slide and ends with a rising slide on the same syllable.
v) *The falling circumflex* (ˆ). It begins with the rising and ends with the falling slide.

A choice of readings follows the theoretical explanation. Here it is the complete list: *Mr. Pitt's Answer to Mr. H. Walpole, Lord Strafford's Speech, Lord Clifford's Speech, King Edward the IV's Speech, The Oration of Cominius, The Speech of Hermocrates, John of Gaunt's Speech, Speech of the Lady in Comus on Temperance, Speech of the Lady in Comus on Chastity, Portia's Speech on Mercy, Demosthenes against Aeschines on the Crown.*

Sheridan's lectures on elocution

Sheridan's biography is astonishingly similar to Walker's: both of them were actors, theatre managers, and then lecturers, writers and lexicographers. Their methods, however, were basically different. As we have seen previously, Walker was a pedagogue and tried to establish a system; on the contrary, Sheridan was an observer, liked generalizations, and sought a revival of oratorical training.

Sheridan's writings cover three main subjects: education, pronunciation, and elocution. His three works dealing more specifically with reading and speaking are published lectures. In *A Discourse being Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Elocution and the English Language* (1759), Sheridan recommended the study of the spoken language and the principles and rules of elocution. He insisted on these subjects also in *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762): in this series of seven lectures he provided the working definition of elocution, established his philosophy, and discussed articulation, pronunciation, accent, emphasis, tones (or 'notes') of the speaking voice, pauses or 'stops', key or 'pitch', management of the voice and gesture. *Lectures on the Art of Reading* (1775) repeats many of the theories discussed in *A Course.* The central

proposition of these works is that oratory, properly taught, will eliminate the disorders in the English language. By 'language' he means:

> any way or method whatsoever, by which all that passes in the mind of one man, may be manifested to another. And as this is chiefly done by an agreement in the use of certain signs, it is no matter what those signs are; there being little or no natural connection, between any verbal signs and our ideas, which is sufficiently evinced, by the variety of languages that are spoken, in the different countries of the world (Sheridan 1775: 15).

Sheridan's *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762) underlines the importance of words, which are necessary tools for the expression of ideas. As a matter of fact, words are the marks or symbols of our ideas. However, the usage of words is strictly dependent on correct pronunciation. In fact, the meanings of words is entirely conditioned by the speaker's good pronunciation. For what, Sheridan asks, would be the point of being able to be sure of the meaning of a word if the pronunciation of the same word by different speakers resulted in our not being able to recognize that word? Communication cannot take place without good elocution. The Author explains the idea clearly in his *Lecture VI*, in which the 'tones' of the English language are described:

> Now, as in order to know what another knows, and in the same manner that he knows it, an exact transcript of the ideas which pass in the mind of one man must be made by sensible marks, in the mind of another; so in order to feel what another feels, the emotions which are in the mind of one man must also be communicated to that of another, by sensible marks.
>
> That the sensible marks necessary to answer this purpose, can not possibly be mere words, might fully be proved by a philosophical disquisition into their nature [...]. It is certain that we have given names to many of these emotions [...]. But the use of these names is not to stand as types of the emotions themselves, but only as signs, of the simple or complex ideas, which are formed of those emotions (Sheridan 1775: 99).

True signs of passions are tones and gestures, which are expression of the language of passions (or emotions). Tones may express feelings, whereas words express contents and ideas. Tones are even more important than words, because

> words are limited to their peculiar office, and never can supply the place of tones; yet tones, on the other hand, are not confined to their province, but often supply the place of words, as marks of ideas (Sheridan 1775: 108).

Unfortunately, there is no further reference to the functions of prosodic features throughout Sheridan's work. He was a great innovator, however, in depicting the use of language not merely to communicate ideas, but also all the emotions, and the sensitive and imaginative faculties of man. Sheridan's ideal delivery was to be characterized by grace and naturalness. When he began his work, Cicero and Quintilian were his frame of reference in the elocutionary field, but he later created his own categories; he reached a large audience through his lectures and his books and practiced his own art brilliantly.

7. The American 'elocutionary art'

The analysis of a non-written suitable style in communicative situations appears sporadically before the end of the 19th century, but finally the American Elocutionary Movement focused on the power of oratory, of eloquence, and of effective speech. The American Elocutionists' manuals are – especially from a pragmatic point of view – much more original and interesting than those produced a century before by their British predecessors in the English schools of elocution.

In general, the work of British rhetoricians was eagerly sought for and readily accepted in America. The demand for elocution in this country being as great as – or even greater than – in England, it is not surprising that British elocutionists found there 'the' market for their publications. The Americans, in the early stages of the movement's history, republished British authors, copied them, sometimes modified and adapted their teachings to their situations.

They finally created an original movement which was able both to adopt the British approach to elocution and to adapt it to the new socio-cultural context, thus showing independent thinking to some degree.

A strong desire for education and the wish to be entertained contributed to the elocutionists' success. Many people, often trained for such professions as medicine or the theatre, became 'teachers of elocution' in response to a growing demand for training in this field; their personal background was often vital to a better specialist knowledge of the vocal system, and to the improvement of teaching methods. One of the greatest elocutionists of the 19th century, James Rush (the author of *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*, 1827), was a doctor; Jonathan Barber (who published *A Grammar of Elocution* in 1830) worked as a physician while teaching elocution at Harvard and Yale; Andrew Comstock (*Practical Elocution* 1837; *A System of Elocution* 1844) did the same.

Rush, in particular, made a very detailed analysis of human vocal expression, based on philosophical and scientific enquiry. His study was divided into fifty-one 'sections' devoted to:

1. the English sounds (description and production);
2. the melody of speech (intonation, tones, rhythm, accent, stress, emphasis, pause);
3. elocutionary practice (with particular attention to time, force, pitch, cadence and monotony).

The book's apparent and immediate usefulness to teachers made Dr. Rush a recognized authority in the discipline of elocution: influential teachers of preachers, doctors, actors, together with all the specialists in speech therapy, phonetics and voice training were attracted to his masterpiece. Rush experimented his theories with his own voice and narrated the process of his evolving ideas: his method demonstrated that time was ripe for physiology to take the study of the human voice out of the hands of rhetoricians and grammarians. The development of a natural, systematic, analytic science had to be supported by new and precise observations. His way of describing and teaching elocution not only signalled the end of British elocutionary practice, but also stimulated many American teachers to produce their own textbooks.

In 1850, the theatre circuit, from Boston to New Orleans and to California, with more than fifty companies scattered throughout the United States, produced programmes of readings in schools and universities which were useful to most actors of the time.[7] Among the clergy, too, we find some elocutionists who made history: Rev. James Chapman, author of *The Original Rhythmical Grammar of the English Language* (1821); Rev. William Bryant, episcopal schoolmaster in Philadelphia; Rev. Ebenezer Porter, professor of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover Seminary.

As in Britain in the previous century, the production of the elocutionists' treatises, manuals or textbooks was enormous and had wide circulation till the end of the 19th century. They were later to be criticized as 'unscientific', 'over-simplifying', and of purely historical interest. There is something true in this negative way of thinking: what might have been a valuable emphasis on the prosodic features of utterance, in fact, was in some cases made valueless by a thoroughly unscientific, prescriptive and impressionistic attitude (which for example omitted to define crucial descriptive terms).

American rhetorical studies had a quicker development than the British ones and they obviously revealed a completely different nature. The emphasis in all the American writings was less on the use of prosodic features in literature and more on their use in order to promote 'effective' speech: on the contrary, the need for a 'correct' oral style is recognised sporadically in early English texts on language. In the American writings of the 18th and 19th centuries, a first attempt was made to develop a 'science of speech': the manuals published during that period are a very useful source of information about reading and speaking skills, speech sounds (isolated or in context), prosodic features, speech defects and speech correction. Their authors' aim was the sincere desire to improve the speaking and reading of the American people; their common interest was to study vocal mechanism and prosodic features – joined to body movements – as one of the cues to effectiveness in oral communication in general, or public speaking in particular. Unfortunately, students and followers sometimes brought discredit upon the writers on elocution, by misinterpretation and lack

[7] James Murdoch, for example, extended Rush's system by his lectures and public reading entertainments (see Bernstein ed. 1974: vol.1, 12).

of serious study and appreciation. Nevertheless, thanks to all the American scholars, teachers, and rhetoricians of the 18th and 19th centuries, studying human voice became an important part of the educational plan of any American student: public speaking courses are nowadays part of the curricula in U.S. universities, and their subject matter is considered as classical as that of literature, while yet suiting the 'pragmatic temper' of the modern United States.

8. Conclusion

The study of rhethoric, as applied to public speaking, is reaffirming its classical centrality. Issues such as determining the validity of evidence, assessing the adequacy of proof, deciding when conclusions are justified in the light of proof and evidence, being efficient and effective in oral production, are re-emerging not only as personal or pedagogical concerns but also as a pre-requisite at the heart of any oral production in English. A major goal of eloquence and elocution is to make people sensitive to their words' impact on the lives of others.

British and American elocutionists, specialized in the correct usage of the voice in public speaking, have taught that speech communication can be considered a form of rhetoric in that it uses the five traditional rhetorical canons to get a point across to the audience effectively. Invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery have been considered as fundamental keys to speech. The last, delivery, has had a particular influence over the effectiveness of any oral performance, because it refers to the way any orator uses his or her voice and gestures to accompany spoken words.

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