The Women’s Elocution Movement in America, 1870-1915

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

“The Women’s Elocution Movement in America, 1870-1915,” examines late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century women's contributions to the American elocution movement, a rhetorical education movement devoted to the study of the uses of voice, gesture, and the body in public speaking and dramatic performance. The elocution movement was a popular cultural force during its own time and brought rhetorical education to a large, diverse population of students and private learners. In particular, the movement made rhetorical education accessible to women who became not only students of elocution but also prominent figures in the teaching and theorizing of elocution.

Women were prolific in the publication of elocution and Delsarte textbooks, compilations for recitation and performance, and physical culture manuals. This dissertation recovers a canon of women’s published elocution texts to demonstrate the ways in which women regendered elocutionary training as a site of women’s rhetorical education. Such training had direct influences on women rhetors as they began to take up the speaking platform in larger and larger numbers at the turn of the century. Specifically, the women’s elocution movement taught the novice woman speaker regendered notions of feminine eloquence, delivery, ethos, and persuasion. Women elocutionists also provided female speakers with new speaking genres such as poetry recitation and tableaux, which they could use as they argued for social reform.
Influenced by the expression theories of French vocal and acting coach and philosopher François Delsarte, late nineteenth-century women elocutionists emphasized the rhetorical power of an affective mind, body, and soul in tune with the impressions it receives and able to express those internal feelings, thoughts, and emotions to others. In their texts, women elocutionists targeted female readers and students. In their elocution and Delsarte manuals, elocutionists like Genevieve Stebbins employed a woman-centered pedagogy based on conversational and intimate dialogue between student and teacher. Other elocutionists like Hallie Quinn Brown and Emily M. Bishop positioned their teachings in elocution as important to women’s liberation and to women’s preparation for participation in community activism and social reform. In physical cultural manuals—systems of physical exercises designed to train the body as a medium of expression in rhetorical and dramatic performance—women elocutionists such as Eleanor Georgen and Carrica LaFavre regendered the traditionally masculine rhetorical body by privileging feminine bodily attributes such as beauty and grace and by featuring visuals of feminine rhetorical bodies. In their elocutionary compilations of poetry and prose recitation, dialogue, and tableaux, women editors incorporated selections that revealed a nascent feminism: pieces that explored women’s changing roles at the turn of the century, that celebrated women’s historical accomplishments, and that argued directly for women’s rights. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women elocutionists regendered every area of elocutionary study; these women helped usher in a new era of American oratory in which women speakers, performers, and elocutionists were regarded as eminent.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Genevieve Critel.
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First and foremost, I thank my advisor Nan Johnson, whose ongoing guidance throughout the dissertation process, careful reading and commentary on numerous drafts, and sage advice throughout my doctoral career have made me a better scholar and a better writer. Nan, you have been such a dependable, loyal, and enthusiastic advisor; it has been a privilege to work with you.

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manuscripts, and ephemera was an invaluable resource for my project and will continue to inspire rhetoric and composition scholars for years to come.

I wouldn’t be here without Jane Greer, who first introduced me to the exciting worlds of archival research and feminist scholarship in the history of rhetoric. Jane, thank you for being my teacher, my mentor, and my friend; whatever you do, keep teaching young women about the archives.

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Vita

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Introduction

_A sign of the times, which should be encouraging to all teachers of elocution, is the progress of woman in public affairs, and the consequent necessity that they should become proficient in public speaking._

- Anna Morgan, “The Art of Elocution,” 1893

Anna Morgan, an accomplished elocution teacher, dramatic reader, and author of numerous elocution manuals and readers, is representative of the significant number of women who became involved in the study and teaching of elocution in the late nineteenth century. Her speech to the Woman’s Congress at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 brings to the fore the importance of elocution in women’s rhetorical education at the end of the nineteenth century.¹ Morgan acknowledges in her comment that late nineteenth-century America was witnessing significant changes in women’s societal roles, and as women continued to gain an increasingly influential voice in public affairs, women’s need for rhetorical training also increased. Elocutionary study played a

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¹ Morgan received her elocutionary training from the Hersey School of Music in Chicago. Touring through New York, Boston, and throughout the Midwest with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau, Morgan earned a reputation for her dramatic reading skills. From 1884-1981, Morgan was on the faculty at Chicago Opera House Conservatory (later named the Chicago Conservatory), where she taught elocution, drama, and
integral role in providing women with this rhetorical training—particularly as women themselves became leaders in the elocution movement through their teaching, theorizing, and promulgation of elocutionary study.

Figure 1 – Anna Morgan, Frontispiece from My Chicago (1918)

This dissertation, “The Women’s Elocution Movement in America, 1870-1915,” recovers a canon of women’s elocutionary study by looking primarily at women’s published elocutionary texts. The elocution movement was a popular cultural force that brought rhetorical education to a large, diverse population of students and private learners. In particular, the movement made rhetorical education accessible to women. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century women had taken the lead in the teaching and
theorizing of elocution. Women such as Anna Morgan, Genevieve Stebbins, Emily M. Bishop, and Anna Randall-Diehl made names for themselves as elocution teachers, theorists, lecturers, and performers; these women elocutionists were also prolific in the publication of elocution textbooks and treatises, compilations for recitation and performance, and physical culture manuals. As I argue throughout this project, women’s work in elocution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constitutes a women’s rhetorical movement in which women regendered elocutionary training as a site of women’s rhetorical education. Such training had direct influences on women rhetors as they began to take up the speaking platform in larger and larger numbers at the turn of the century. In particular, the women’s elocution movement taught the novice woman speaker regendered notions of feminine eloquence, delivery, ethos, and persuasion. Women elocutionists also provided female speakers with new speaking genres such as poetry recitation and tableaux, which they could use as they argued for social reform.

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the study of elocution in America transformed from the physiological study of voice and mechanical training in speaking into a broadly defined study of expression. Influenced by the expression theories of French vocal and acting coach and philosopher François Delsarte, late nineteenth-century American elocutionists emphasized the rhetorical power of an affective mind, body, and soul in tune with the impressions it receives and able to express those internal feelings, thoughts, and emotions to others. This brand of rhetorical education in expression emerged at the end of the late nineteenth century and introduced a new understanding of rhetorical eloquence—an eloquence that emphasized qualities such as affect, beauty, and
moral purity. Although not a conscious regendering of rhetorical practice, the theoretical developments in American elocation that took place in the late nineteenth century opened the door for women elocutionists to regender the masculine traditions of elocutionary and oratorical study as sites of women’s rhetorical education.

One of the most significant developments in American elocation at the end of the nineteenth century was the large number of women who became involved in elocutionary study, teaching, theorizing, and performing. Women were not merely students of this new study of expressive elocation; they were at the front of the movement. Expressive elocation and Delsartism came to be defined as a woman’s rhetorical movement quintessentialized by American women Delsartians such as Henrietta Hovey, Genevieve Stebbins, Emily M. Bishop, and Hallie Quinn Brown through their feminine embodiments of Delsarte principles. In their texts, women elocutionists targeted female readers and students. In their elocation and Delsarte manuals, elocutionists like Stebbins employed a woman-centered pedagogy based on conversational and intimate dialogue between student and teacher. Other elocutionists like Brown and Bishop positioned their teachings in elocation as important to women’s liberation and to women’s preparation for participation in community activism and social reform. In physical cultural manuals—systems of physical exercises designed to train the body as a medium of expression in rhetorical and dramatic performance—women elocutionists such as Eleanor Georgen and Carrica LaFavre regendered the traditionally masculine rhetorical body by privileging feminine bodily attributes such as beauty and grace and by featuring visuals of feminine rhetorical bodies. Through descriptions and illustrations of women’s rhetorical bodies,
women physical culturists redefined eloquence, once understood as an essentially masculine characteristic, as feminine eloquence. Through public speaking, poetry readings, and tableau performances, women could perform their feminine eloquence. In their elocutionary compilations of such performances, women editors incorporated selections that revealed a nascent feminism: poetry and tableaux that explored women’s changing roles at the turn of the century, that celebrated women’s historical accomplishments, and that argued directly for women’s rights. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women elocutionists regendered every area of elocutionary study and made elocution a site of women’s rhetorical education that took into special consideration the needs of novice women speakers. Women’s work in elocution helped usher in a new era of American oratory in which women speakers, performers, and elocutionists were regarded as eminent.
Moreover, the women’s elocution movement was contemporaneous with and often informed by late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century women’s reform movements. As progressive era woman rhetors became involved in causes such as temperance, suffrage, labor reform, and dress reform, women’s regendered elocutionary training prepared them to be eloquent and womanly as they took up the speaking platform. Thanks to the work of feminist scholars in the history of rhetoric and composition, we already know a great deal about nineteenth-century women’s speaking and rhetorical practices. Over the past twenty-five years, feminist scholars have brought
to light the numerous rhetorical accomplishments of nineteenth-century American women reformers. This recovery of women's rhetoric has arguably reshaped our understanding of the rhetorical landscape of nineteenth-century America. The influence of feminist recovery scholarship such as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her* (1989), Shirley Wilson Logan's "*We Are Coming": The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (1999), Carol Mattingly's *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (2000), and Jacqueline Jones Royster’s *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* (2000) have made the rhetorical practices of nineteenth-century women who participated in social reform movements such as abolition, women's rights, temperance, and "racial uplift" important pieces of rhetorical history. The nineteenth-century women that feminist scholars have recovered—including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Margaret Fuller, Frances Willard, Frances Watkins Harper, Ida B. Wells, and many others—have been incorporated as important rhetors in our rhetorical tradition.

Until recently, scholarship on nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric has tended to focus more on women’s rhetorical practices than on women’s rhetorical theories. In other words, feminist scholars have recovered women’s speeches, writings, and other artifacts of rhetorical practice. As Krista Ratcliffe suggests, the recovery of women’s rhetorical practice can allow scholars to extrapolate theories of rhetoric that resist traditionally masculine understandings of rhetorical concepts (4). For example, in *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women’s Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (2002), Mattingly examines women’s dress and appearance as rhetorical practices to argue for an expanded
notion of “what counts” as rhetoric. Likewise in *Vote and Voice: Women’s Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930* (2004), Wendy Sharer’s exploration of the literacy practices of women in post-suffrage organizations leads her to a new theoretical understanding of the “cumulative rhetorical power of everyday micropractices of rhetoric” (7). Similarly in *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon of Antebellum Women Rhetors* (2005), Lindal Buchanan examines early nineteenth-century women’s speeches and other artifacts that document women’s speaking careers in order to revise traditional theories of rhetorical delivery. Such scholarship—scholarship that uses historical women’s rhetorical practices to extrapolate feminist theories of rhetoric—provides a rich and useful understanding of women’s rhetorical history. However, as Jane Donawerth argues, feminist historians of rhetoric are “now at a turning point in the scholarly conversation where we need to consider women’s rhetorical theories as a context for their rhetorics” (*Conversational* 7).² An examination of women’s elocutionary work provides feminist scholars with a much-needed understanding of how historical women contributed to and revised rhetorical theories and pedagogies.

Women’s rhetorical theory is overlooked in part because, as Patricia Bizzell has noted, women’s theoretical texts “usually do not resemble the kinds of theoretical texts written by men and familiar in the canonical tradition,” and this is often the case with women’s elocutionary texts (“Feminist” 6). Moreover, nineteenth-century American

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² Donawerth’s *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900: An Anthology* (2002) and *Conversational Rhetoric: The Rise and Fall of a Woman’s Tradition, 1600-1900* (2011) both demonstrate a tradition of women’s rhetorical theory. Other examples of the recovery of women’s rhetorical theory can be found in scholarship on Gertrude Buck, who wrote rhetorical and composition theory around the turn of the twentieth century. See, for example, Suzanne Bordelon’s *A Feminist Legacy: The Rhetoric and Pedagogy of Gertrude Buck* (2007).
women’s involvement in the study of elocution is an understudied site of rhetorical history largely because elocution itself has often been positioned on the margins of rhetorical history. Particularly in the field of rhetoric and composition, where historically the emphasis in both teaching and scholarship has been on writing instruction, the study of elocution has been largely ignored.

Some of the most extensive scholarship on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elocution has been produced by speech communication scholars between 1950 and 1970. Twenty-first-century historians of speech communication looked to eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century elocution movements in Britain and the United States as important moments in their disciplinary history. This early speech communication scholarship largely overlooks women’s contributions to the teaching and theorizing of elocution and defines the nineteenth-century elocution movement’s "key figures" as men—namely, Ebenezer Porter, James Rush, James Barber, William Russell, Silas S. Curry, and Steele McKaye. In Karl R. Wallace’s edited collection History of Speech Education in America:

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3 Elocution’s marginalization—and sometimes demonization—in the history of rhetoric is most evident in Wilbur Samuel Howell’s seminal Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric (1971), in which Howell criticizes eighteenth-century elocutionist Thomas Sheridan and his contemporaries for “truncating” the study of rhetoric to the fifth canon. The treatment of late nineteenth-century elocution is often worse. For example, in “What Was Elocution?” (1960), an article meant to reclaim the study of elocution, Giles Wilkerson Gray describes late nineteenth-century elocutionary theory as “mysticism” and the study of “false gods.” According to Gray, “much of the elocution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries devolved into statue-posing, bird-calls, and imitation of children—probably not all of which was imitation” (7).

4 Recently, rhetoric and composition scholars have begun to shift their attention to new understandings of composing that move beyond “writing” in the strict sense of composing in print alphabetic text. See for example, Cynthia L.Selfe’s “The Movement of Air, The Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing,” for a discussion of the privileging of print over aural modalities in rhetoric and composition and a brief history of the position of aurality in the history of writing instruction in America. Selfe’s focus on aurality is particularly apropos when thinking about how historical studies of elocution might be relevant to today’s study and teaching of composition.

5 See for example, Benzie, Ehninger, Fritz, Gray, Grover, Guthrie, and Vandraegen.
Background Studies, published in 1954, seven chapters are devoted to nineteenth-century elocutionary education, yet these studies only hint at women's involvement as students, teachers, and theorists of elocution. For example, Claude L. Shaver's chapter "Steele MacKaye and the Delsartian Tradition" focuses on Mackaye as the "only one man" who was "able to give an adequate formulation of Delsarte's principles," despite the fact that Mackaye himself never published a book or manual on the Delsarte system of elocution, and despite the fact the Delsarte's theories became popular in large part through the publications and teachings of women (203). Likewise, in Edyth Renshaw's chapter, "Five Private Schools of Speech," published in the same collection, women's contributions to the elocution movement are downplayed as women elocutionists such as Rachel Shoemaker and Jessie Eldridge Southwick, are positioned as the helpful wives of prominent male elocution theorists. For example, Shoemaker's textbook Advanced Elocution is described as a less effective derivative of her husband’s textbook, differing only in its "lack[ of] the simple directness of [Mr. Shoemaker's] Practical Elocution" (311).

In the past fifteen years, there have been some efforts to revive interest in the study of elocution in the history of rhetoric and composition. Scholars such as Nan Johnson (1993), H. Lewis Ulman (1994), and Thomas P. Miller (1997) demonstrate the importance of elocutionary study in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a popular

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form of rhetorical education, an early precursor to the study of performance and language, and an integral part of the early development of English studies. Of particular interest are the recoveries of women elocutionists made by feminist historians of rhetoric. For example, in *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education, 1885-1937* (2001), Susan Kates recovers the elocution pedagogy of Hallie Quinn Brown. Positioning Brown's elocutionary texts against the backdrop of the elocutionary theories of Brown's white male contemporaries, Kates argues that Brown conceives of elocution as an embodied rhetoric "located within, and generated for the African American community" (54). Kates convincingly demonstrates how Brown's approach to the teaching of elocution engenders pride in the language, history, and literature of the African American community. As Kates argues, Brown promotes training in elocution as preparation for civic activism. However, while Kates' analysis of Brown's elocution pedagogy demonstrates one way that women revised dominant approaches to the teaching of elocution in the nineteenth century, she tends to position Brown as an anomaly in the elocution movement—a single woman working against the grain of a predominantly white, male elocutionary tradition. Given the numerous women making contributions to the teaching and theorizing of elocution, it seems Brown was not the only woman contributing to and resisting the dominant elocutionary tradition.

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7 Other recent research on elocutionary history includes Phillipa Spoel’s articles on Gilbert Austin (1998) and Thomas Sheridan and John Walker (2001), M. Wade Mahon’s discussion of the relationship between writing, oral reading, performance, and literary consumption in Thomas Sheridan’s elocutionary theory (2001), Ben McCorkle’s look at eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bellettism and elocution as theories of remediation (2005), Susan Miller’s recovery of elocutionary history in *Trust in Text: A Different History of Rhetoric* (2008), and Dana Harrington’s examination of the social and ethical claims in Thomas Sheridan’s and John Walker’s elocution manuals (2010).
There is more of a sense of the broader community of women contributing to elocution in Jane Donawerth's *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900* (2002), where the inclusion of excerpts from Genevieve Stebbins' *Delsarte System of Oratory* and *The Genevieve Stebbins System of Physical Training*, Anna Morgan's *An Hour with Delsarte*, and Hallie Quinn Brown's *Bits and Odds* and *Elocution and Physical Culture* helps to put three little known rhetorical women on the map for future feminist scholars to explore. Donawerth describes how the elocution movement "helped give nineteenth-century women voice" (xxvii). In particular, she notes how elocution offered to women a theory of communication that "urg[ed] a conversational tone and a collaboration among writer, speaker, and listener of the works performed" (xxvii). In her most recent publication, *Conversational Rhetoric: The Rise and Fall of a Women's Tradition, 1600-1900* (2011), Donawerth continues the discussion of elocutionary theory by Stebbins, Morgan, and Brown, adding also the elocutionary accomplishments of Emily M. Bishop. *Conversational Rhetoric* helps to establish women’s elocutionary work as part of a women’s theoretical tradition of rhetoric. Specifically, Donawerth points to elocution as a valuable part of this tradition of women’s rhetorical theory for the ways women elocutionists theorized a performance of femininity as a means of persuasion.

Through her analyses of Stebbins’, Brown’s, Morgan’s, and Bishop’s elocutionary texts, Donawerth demonstrates that women’s elocutionary study was an empowering form of rhetorical education for women. Other recent feminist scholarship on elocution makes similar claims. For example, in “Living Pictures, Living Memory: Women’s Rhetorical Silence within the American Delsarte Movement,” published in *Silence and...*
Lisa Suter points to the elocutionary contributions of American women Delsartians, arguing that this “massive” movement was a site of feminist rhetorical practice (96). Specifically, Suter argues that her recovery of women Delsartians (who were “acutely aware of the absence of women from the rhetorical canon”) is mirrored in the recovery efforts of the women she studies (96). As Suter writes, “As the Delsartists established schools of expression, wrote elocutionary curricula, and authored books on delivery and more, I propose that they tried to reclaim earlier women’s voices, too” (96). A similar argument is made in the collaboratively authored article “Elocution and Feminine Power in the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century: The Career of Carolyn Winkler (Paterson) as Performer and Teacher” (2011), which examines the career and education of an early twentieth-century female elocutionist through scrapbooks recording her performances and teachings. As Whitburn et al. argue, elocution was an important site of women’s rhetorical education that “afforded women the confidence, opportunities, and capabilities to take charge of their own destinies” (403).

These recent recoveries of women’s elocution are encouraging and do much to demonstrate the importance of elocutionary study for women in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century America. Building from this initial work, “The Women’s Elocution Movement in America, 1870-1915,” provides an extended treatment of women’s elocutionary work. The project is organized into four chapters. Chapter one, “Philosophies of Expression: American Elocution Theory, 1872-1900,” surveys developments in elocutionary theory in the late nineteenth century. During this time,
prominent elocutionists began to expand their study beyond the mechanical systems and physiological studies of voice that were prominent in the first half of the nineteenth century to consider a more broadly defined concept of expression. Specifically, elocution theory was strongly influenced by the French opera singer, vocal and acting coach, and self-made philosopher François Delsarte and the various interpretations of his theory of expression, which claimed to uncover universal principles uniting the human mind, body, and soul applicable to all forms of expression. Delsartism encouraged elocutionists to think about the broader implications of their study as it related to aesthetics, philosophy, criticism, and psychology. The development in elocutionary theory during this period is a significant but often overlooked moment in the history of rhetoric when issues of the body, performance, and affect were brought to bear upon the study of communication. Chapter one examines the mid-century elocutionary theories that preceded Delsartism before moving into a discussion of the key theoretical influences of Delsarte’s theories of expression on elocutionary study in America. In the second half of the chapter, I look at how Delsarte’s ideas were adapted and evolved in the work of Robert Fulton and Thomas Trueblood, Moses T. Brown, Samuel S. Curry, and Charles Wesley Emerson.

The rich landscape of elocutionary study in the last three decades of the nineteenth century serves as an important backdrop to the work of women who took up the study of elocation. Chapter two, “Delsartism as a Women’s Rhetorical Movement: Fostering Women’s Expressive Consciousness,” examines women’s prominent place in the theorizing, teaching, and promulgation of new elocutionary theories in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. Pointing to four key female leaders in
Delsartism—Henrietta Hovey, Genevieve Stebbins, Emily M. Bishop, and Hallie Quinn Brown—chapter two argues that women’s contributions to Delsartism constitute a women’s rhetorical movement in which women elocution teachers, theorists, and practitioners regendered elocution as a site of women’s rhetorical education. Specifically, chapter two argues that women’s regendered approach to Delsartism emphasized the development of women’s *expressive consciousness*—an embodied knowledge of the internal sensations of the mind and soul and the ability to translate those sensations through the body. In this chapter, I demonstrate the ways in which women pioneered American Delsartism. Hovey, Stebbins, Bishop, and Brown were among the first Americans known as Delsarte specialists, and in their special appeals to female learners, they worked to regender Delsartism as a woman’s movement. In particular, American women Delsartists held up Delsarte’s theories of expression as central to an educational program that would liberate women from restrictive gendered conventions and prepare them to take on more public roles as they entered the twentieth century.

Chapter three, “Rhetorical Bodies and Womanly Eloquence: Regendering the Public Speaker Through Physical Culture” focuses on woman-authored physical culture manuals, in which women elocutionists grounded their study of elocution in a strong understanding of the body and devised bodily exercises as foundational training to prepare women for public speaking. Physical culture was a large and important subset of elocutionary training that emerged in the late nineteenth-century. Influenced by Delsarte's emphasis on the relationship between mind, body, and soul in embodied expression,
women physical culturists outlined systems of bodily exercises designed to help female students cultivate their bodies as vehicles of expressive influence in rhetorical performance. Moreover, unlike male-authored elocutionary texts that typically privileged the classically male rhetorical body, women’s physical culture texts featured illustrations of women’s bodies and privileged women’s bodies as ideal vehicles of expression. Chapter three begins with an examination of the ways in which notions of masculinity, masculine eloquence, and the male body were prominent in male-authored elocutionary texts and in popular understandings of oratorical standards in mid- to late nineteenth-century America. Then, through an examination of the visual illustrations and discussions of women's bodies and physical exercises in physical culture texts by Eleanor Georgen, Carrica Le Favre, Genevieve Stebbins, Mary Tucker Magill, and Julia Thomas and Anna Gregory Thomas, I argue that women elocutionists’ study and teaching of physical culture contributes to a new, feminine ideal of bodily eloquence that regenders traditionally masculine notions of delivery and the rhetorical body.

Lastly, the fourth chapter, “Women’s Compilations of Recitations, Dialogues, and Tableaux: Building Feminist Rhetorics for the Twentieth Century,” takes up an examination of compilations of poetic and prose recitations, dialogues, monologues, speeches, pantomimes, and tableaux compiled and edited by women. The elocution compilation genre has most often been noted for its promotion of conservative gender ideologies. However, my analysis of the selections in compilations by Grace Faxon, Marie Irish, Anna Randall-Diehl, Rachel Shoemaker, Sarah Lovina Stocking, and Lilian M. Heath in chapter four demonstrates how late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century
compilations reflect the complex and unstable gender ideologies of the time. Women elocutionists who compiled elocutionary collections participated in cultural debates over “the woman question.” In particular, the selections in women’s elocutionary compilations called on novice women elocutionists to perform a womanhood ethos in which traditional notions of true womanhood were linked to a more progressive understanding of woman’s obligations that extended beyond domestic duties and into public and political arenas. In addition to providing a gendered analysis of the contents of women’s elocution compilations, I also point to specific examples of women activists using the genres of elocutionary performance in their rhetorics of reform. Through the examination of the selections in women’s elocutionary compilations and the use of these selections by women reformers, I argue that women’s elocutionary compilations contributed to the development of a feminist rhetoric based on celebrations of womanhood and womanly ethos.

As the following examinations of women’s elocution demonstrate, the women’s elocution movement was an important site of women’s rhetorical education during a time when women’s societal roles were changing at a rapid pace. Positioning women’s work in elocution as a significant theoretical revision to the rhetorical tradition, I argue that women’s work in elocution holds unique possibilities for understanding the ways in which women gained oratorical training and adapted elocutionary study for their own ends.
What is meant by expression? If we study a man standing face to face with his fellow-man, wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement, endeavoring to reveal his thoughts and feelings, we find there are many means which he simultaneously employs in making himself understood. So that the term expression is here employed to cover all the living languages of man, natural or artificial, which he uses in speaking face to face with his fellow-man. Sometimes it is used as merely covering the natural languages of motions, actions and tones. Here it is used in a slightly wider sense than this, as including the living language of speech as well as of motions and voice. (24)

--Samuel Silas Curry, The Province of Expression (1891)

The study of Human Expression has for centuries attracted the curious or critical attention of one or more of the great minds of each succeeding age. But it is only within the last half of this present century that this important subject has presented such a unity of classified knowledge as to make good its claim to be ranked among the recognized sciences. (iv)

--Moses True Brown, The Synthetic Philosophy of Expression (1886)

In the late nineteenth-century, prominent elocutionists began to expand their study beyond the mechanical systems and physiological studies of voice that were prominent in the first half of the nineteenth century to consider a more broadly defined concept of expression, which as Samuel Silas Curry explains, encompasses all the elements of face-to-face human interaction. In a sense, expression was a rhetorical study of the uses of motions, actions, tones, and speech to express feelings and communicate thoughts. As
Moses True Brown makes clear, the elocution theorists working in this area considered themselves pioneers in a new science.⁸

In part, the expression movement in elocution was brought on by the influence of opera singer, vocal and acting coach, and self-made philosopher François Delsarte and the various interpretations of his theory of expression, which claimed to uncover universal principles uniting the human mind, body, and soul applicable to all forms of expression. Delsarte's ideas were brought to America in the early 1870s by Steele Mackaye, the talented, young actor and speaker whose lectures mesmerized and motivated his audiences to take up their own studies of expression.⁹ Following the success of Mackaye's lectures, Delsarte's ideas became incredibly popular. Many of the elocutionary theories of the late nineteenth century either proclaimed to be Delsarte-based or showed evidence of his influence.

⁸ Described by Ruyter as "one of the major leaders and thinkers in the field of expression of his day, Samuel Silas Curry was an incredibly prolific elocution theorist, publishing fourteen books on expression (Cultivation 25). His background was in theology, but while a student at Boston University he became acquainted with Delsarte's theories of expression and gave up his theological studies to pursue training in elocution and expression. He served as the Snow Professor of Oratory at Boston University from 1879 until 1888 when he and his wife, Anna Baright Curry, opened their own private school, the School of Expression.

Moses True Brown began studying elocution with William Russell, one of the foremost proponents of the Rush school of vocal culture. Brown himself became a prominent figure in the Delsarte movement, with his numerous articles in Werner's Voice Magazine helping to promulgate Delsarte's theories to the wider professions of elocutionists, vocal culturists, and actors. Brown was the Chair of Oratory at Tufts University from 1866-1884; and from 1884-1894, he was the president and owner of the Boston School of Oratory. His only book publication was The Synthetic Philosophy of Expression, which provided a philosophic discussion of Delsarte, bringing Delsartian theories of expression into conversation with the scientific discoveries of Charles Darwin and Italian anthropologist Paoli Mantegazza.

⁹ Samuel Silas Curry attributes the popularity of Delsartism in American in part to the success of Mackaye's lectures and personal magnetism as a speaker (Province 336). Curry's experience as an audience to Mackaye's lecture on expression proved to be personally influential. Curry describes how the first time he heard Mackaye speak, he "heard such marvelous principles expounded, and saw such an exhibition of the control of being over body, that it came upon [him] as a revelation, and started [him] in a course of investigation from which [he] have scarcely deviated since" ("Delsarte and Mackaye" 42).
Delsartism was not the be-all end-all of late nineteenth-century elocution theory, but it was the most popular elocutionary movement of time. Moreover, Delsartism seemed to be characteristic of the general trend in late nineteenth-century elocution to re-define the study more broadly to create a discipline of elocution with its own sub-disciplines and specialties. The period of 1870 to 1900 was a time of discipline formation for elocutionists, and by the twentieth century, the study of elocution had so broadened and matured as to have its own professional association, conventions, publications, schools, college degrees, and departments, as well as its own disciplinary debates about methods, theories, and practices. Delsartism was not accepted by all elocutionists, but it did have a large impact on the study of elocution in the sense that it compelled elocutionists to ask new questions about the psychology of human expression, the relationship between mind and body, and the aesthetic and moral natures of movement and bearing. In these ways, Delsartism helped elocutionists to think about the broader implications of their study as it related to aesthetics, philosophy, criticism, physiology, and psychology.

Elocutionary Predecessor: Dr. James Rush and the Mechanisms of Voice

Compared to the mechanical and imitative systems of elocution before them, Deslarte-based theories of elocution constitute a significant turning point in the study of rhetorical delivery. Before Delsarte's ideas were introduced to the United States, Dr. James Rush's *Philosophy of the Human Voice* (1827) provided a scientific investigation of the physiological mechanisms of the vocal organs and served as the most authoritative
reference for American elocutionists. First and foremost a physician and physiologist, Rush sought to "apply medical science, as it was known to him, to the analysis of human behavior and the processes of neurological control" (Hale 219). Rush explains that he took up "the analysis of human voice . . . exclusively as a subject of physiological inquiry," but upon discovering "some essential functions of speech," he felt compelled to "attempt a methodical description of all the vocal phenomena, with a view to bring the subject within the limits of science, and thereby to assist the purposes of oratorical instruction" (xiii).

In addition to Rush, early nineteenth-century American elocutionists continued to cite the eighteenth-century British elocutionists Walker, Steele, and Austin. Like Rush, Walker and Steele have both been described as contributors to the mechanical school of elocution: Their methods were based on the discovery of rules or principles of execution which students would learn and practice. Both Walker and Steele may be considered grammatical elocutionists in the sense that they studied the grammar of speech sounds and attempted to base their rules of speaking on sentence structure. In addition, until the introduction and dissemination of Delsartism, Austin's Chironomia remained the authority on rhetorical action and the body, subjects not covered in the Rush system.
Rush's *Philosophy* was not meant to be a manual of elocution, but the concepts he put forward were taken up by elocutionists such as James Murdoch and William Russell who created systems of elocutionary training grounded in his scientific analysis of the vocal organs. Assuming that "every state of mind has its corresponding vocal signs in some of the varied forms of pitch, force, time, and quality," Rush observed and recorded

11 Murdoch, an actor, and Russell, an educator, were two of the Rush system's most prominent advocates. Robb describes Russell as "a leader in education," teaching at Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Andover Seminary, Boston Public Latin School, and Abbott Female Seminary, and lecturing on elocution all over New England. He published over thirty books, sixteen of which were on elocution (Robb 187). Murdoch's acting career took him from coast to coast where he appeared with the leading actors of the day, including Edwin Booth, Edwin Forrest, and Fanny Kemble. Murdoch and Russell worked collaboratively to found the School of Practical Rhetoric and Oratory in Boston in 1844, and they collectively authored and compiled *Orthophony*, a manual of beginning vocal exercises to be studied as a primer text to Russell's more comprehensive manual of elocution, *American Elocutionist*. *Orthophony* went through eighty editions between 1847 and 1897.
each vocal sign, and classified them according to their "natural relation to the mental phenomena of which they are the audible indication" (Murdoch "Elocution" 114). This taxonomy of vocal signs became the basis of the systems of elocation promoted by his followers. These systems tended to emphasize the mechanism or instrument of the voice and focused on the development and training thereof. For example, the elocationary program laid out in William Russell's *American Elocutionist* (1844), is described as a "systematic practice of elocation," beginning first with the proper regulation of the "functions of the voice . . . in its operations as an instrument," and then moving into the development of the three departments of elocation: the mechanical department, comprised of enunciation and pronunciation; the intellectual department, comprised of inflection, emphasis, and pausing; and the department of emotions, which Russell called *modulation*, comprised of "the consideration of tone, as adapted to the utterance of passion, or the strongest forms of emotion" (6 original emphasis). Although he acknowledges the interactions of thought, emotion, and body at play in elocationary practice, Russell conceived of these elements as physiological functions of the voice. Expression was defined as a physical skill based on the knowledge of different vocal signs, the physiological creation of these signs, and the technical ability to reproduce them accordingly.

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12 Russell's *American Elocutionist*, which went through five editions, serves as an illustrative and the most complete example of the Rush system. Unlike *Orthophony*, which focused more on the instrumental and mechanical functions of the voice than on the intellectual and pathetic departments of elocation, Russel's *American Elocutionist* outlined the departments of elocation beyond the elementary vocal functions; in particular, the text addressed the expression of ideas and emotions.
The Delsarte-based systems and philosophies of elocution that began to emerge in the 1870s were, in part, a direct reaction to the mechanical system of Rush and his followers. While Rush's scientific analysis of the vocal mechanism served as a fascinating insight into the physiology of human speech, it did not always translate into the best method of teaching elocution. In fact, Rush's system was often criticized for being too much focused on the very thing it intended to focus: the voice. Critics argued that Rush's virtual dissection of the human voice missed the mark because it ignored the psychological elements of thought and emotion and the situational aspects of a speaker communicating to a hearer. For example, in the brief history of elocution he provides in *Province of Expression*, Curry criticizes the Rush system for its emphasis on vocal execution over the ideas being expressed. "The greatest evil . . . of the whole system," he writes, "is that it introduces mere rules, founded upon a mechanical mode of procedure. The whole action of the mind is focused upon the modes of execution by the voice, and not upon the successive ideas" (317). Under the Rush system, "[t]he mode of delivery is studied as a thing in itself, independent of the thought of the passage. The mind is centered upon manner, rather than upon matter; upon the means and not upon the substance; upon the effect, and not upon the cause" (318). Curry believed that undue attention to the voice in the Rush system led the mind to become "uncentered, unbalanced," which thus made "[g]enuine, truthful emotion . . . impossible" (317-18). Curry's critique was echoed by many other elocutionists, who complained that the system was inadequate to the teaching of good oral interpretation and led to artificial styles of
speaking. Finding themselves dissatisfied with the Rush system, elocutionists in the second half of the nineteenth century seemed to find an answer in Delsarte's theories of expression, which expanded the focus beyond the physical mechanism of voice towards a broad focus on the relationship between mind and body.

Quite unlike Rush, Delsarte's background was in music, art, and the theater. As a young vocal student at the Paris Conservatory, he was frustrated with the inconsistency of his teachers' methods of teaching expression. He complained, "[T]hat which was imposed upon me by one teacher as absolutely necessary, was unpityingly interdicted by the others as ridiculous or injurious, without either the one or the other diegning [sic] to

13 For instance, in "The Rush Myth," an article published in an 1886 issue of The Voice, Frank Townsend Southwick condemned the method, saying, "Rush's idea of voice-culture is the attainment of an artificial, unnatural quality of voice, which later investigation has shown to be injurious and which is only slightly if at all capable of emotional color" (103). Of course, not all late-nineteenth century elocutionists rejected the Rush system. Robert I. Fulton responded to Southwick's article in "The Rush Method is Not a Myth." Fulton advocated the Rush system, and in Practical Elements of Elocution (1893), he and coauthor Thomas C. Trueblood attempted to carve out a new theory of elocution that harmonized the Delsarte and Rush systems of elocution. For more about the debate over the Rush system, see Thomas Trueblood's "The Rush System" and S.H. Clark's "The New Elocution," papers given at the 1893 and 1898 annual meetings of the National Association of Elocutionists; both of these papers initiated lively discussions about the Rush system and its problems and merits.

14 Curry eventually rejected Delsarte's theories, complaining that Delsarte's foundational principle of trinity was based on speculation and that the followers who turned Delsarte's theories into a system of expression ultimately made elocution just as mechanical as the Rush-based school. However, Curry did credit Delsarte with leading elocutionists in the right direction (Province 335-60). According to Curry, Delsarte "indirectly and unconsciously led men to study the mind and to study nature. While failing himself to get the true psychic action, yet he caused men to study the psychic action, and sooner or later this will lead to the discovery of the fundamental elements of all expression" (Province 359).

15 The re-telling of Delsarte's life story became somewhat of a trope in Delsarte-based elocution texts. See for instance, the biographies of Delsarte given in Arnaud's The Delsarte System (1882), Bishop's Americanized Delsarte Culture (1892), Curry's "Delsarte and Mackaye" (1885), Delaumosne's The Delsarte System (1882), Durivage's "Delsarte: The Great Apostle of the Science of Gesture and Expression" (1871), Georgen's The Delsarte System of Physical Culture (1893), and Stebbins' Delsarte System of Expression (1885). Each of these biographies offers a slightly different variation, but all tell the sentimental tale of an orphan boy of uncharacteristic genius who managed to prove himself at different moments in his life, achieving a moment of fame upon his discoveries of expression. His untimely death is treated as a tragedy; the plans had been set for a lecture tour in America, but Delsarte died too soon. As Stebbins lamented, with France in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War, "Delsarte could not leave his country, and before the angel of peace had descended on his troubled land, he had passed to the other world" (Delsarte System 78).
support their dictum upon the authority of an established principle" ("Address" 45).

Delsarte felt that such instruction forced him merely to imitate his teachers without truly expressing emotions or feelings. Unsatisfied by the lack of a consistent method or principle of the teaching of expression, Delsarte set out on his own investigation by observing "how people about him acted under the influence of passion" (Brown "The New School" 2). His study was not conducted at the anatomical level as Rush's investigation was; rather, he "analyzed the psychic element of man from the standpoint of manifestation . . . follow[ing] the scientific or objective method" (Brown 2). His pupil Delaumosne describes how Delsarte's study "took him . . . to hospitals, morgues, asylums, prisons, art galleries, etc."; he "watch[ed] the children at play in the great public gardens," and "weigh[ed] humanity everywhere and everyhow [sic]" (qtd. Stebbins Delsarte 75). Through this accumulation of evidence, Delsarte derived laws of expression and gesture, and his followers credited his process of observation and his collection of evidence as placing the study of expression on a "scientific basis" (Durivage 153). As Steele Mackaye claimed:

It is no exaggeration to say that Delsarte lifted expression to the level of an exact science, for he found the fixed laws of art in nature, and advanced only such propositions as could be instantly verified by the artist in himself. (40)

In other words, Delsarte was believed to have discovered principles that explained how certain movements, gestures, and countenances could express certain feelings, emotions, and thoughts.
Delsarte's endeavor to discover "the fixed laws of art in nature," was, in a way, similar to the goals of the many elocutionists before him, like Rush, Walker, and Steele, who hoped to be able to find rules for expression through the examination and observation of nature. However, Delsarte's theories took on applications much broader than just explaining the meaning of a certain tone of voice or certain gesture of the hand; Delsarte's observations led him to metaphysical principles about the relationship between man, the material world, and the spiritual world. As Claude L. Shaver describes in his 1937 dissertation "The Delsarte System of Expression as Seen Through the Notes of Steele Mackaye," "[Delsarte's] system was . . . not a science in the modern sense of the word, but was purely philosophical and speculative" (40). Regardless of whether we today might consider Delsarte's theories scientific, philosophic, or speculative, his discoveries did lead elocutionists to consider the possible rhetorical power in embodied expressions of thought, feeling, and emotion.

Delsartism in America

Despite the fact that Delsarte never visited America, his theories attracted a much larger following in the United States than they ever did in his home country of France. Delsarte's European success peaked during the mid-nineteenth century (1839-1859), when he lectured widely on his theories of expression to some of the leading artists, orators, and actors of the time (Percy Mackaye 132). By the time Steele Mackaye was under his tutelage, Delsarte was at the end of his career (135). Mackaye's wife describes the eight months from October 1869 to July 1870 that Mackaye studied with Delsarte as "the last months of Delsarte's active life," and she credits her husband with "rescu[ing]
[Delsarte's] name from the oblivion which, in spite of the loyalty of a few devoted followers, must have overtaken it" (qtd. Percy Mackaye 135). At the onset of the Franco-Prussian War, Mackaye was forced to flee France. Upon his arrival in America, Mackaye met with William Rounseville Alger, a prominent Unitarian minister, and Lewis Baxter Monroe, a leading elocution teacher and author of numerous readers. The three began to make plans to bring Delsarte to America to found a conservatory of arts dedicated to his philosophy. Delsarte passed away before the plans could come to fruition, but Mackaye, Alger, and Monroe had built up considerable interest in Delsarte's theories. Through their promotional work, they laid the groundwork for what would become one of the most popular elocution movements of the nineteenth century. Once "one of the most popular preaches in Boston," Alger gave up his successful career in the church and "devoted himself wholly to the study of Delsarte" (Percy Mackaye 1455). In 1871, Mackaye began to give lectures on expression in New York and Boston which garnered much enthusiasm for the study, and in the fall of that same year Mackaye opened his first Delsartian school of acting, the St. James Theatre and School in New York.\textsuperscript{16} In 1873, Monroe founded the Boston University School of Oratory.\textsuperscript{17} As a leading figure in the study of elocution and reading with a background in the Rush-based elocution systems of

\textsuperscript{16} The St. James Theatre was very short lived, being in operation barely six months. However, its founding is important as it marks Mackaye's first attempt at opening a "Free Conservatory of Art," in which Delsarte's principles of expression would be taught and employed. Later Mackaye would be involved in the establishment of the School of Expression at Union Square in 1877, the Madison Square Theatre in 1880, and the Lyceum Theatre and School of Acting. (See McTeague 1-43.)

\textsuperscript{17} Renshaw’s dates the opening of the Boston University School of Elocution to 1872, but contemporary sources describe school’s opening in the fall of 1873. Specifically, an announcement in the \textit{Christian Advocate} in 1873 states that the school will open its doors on October 18. This date is confirmed in Wellesley professor Mary Adams Currier’s a retrospective account of Monroe’s teaching (“Boston Univeristy” 299; Currier 133).
Murdoch and Russell, Monroe helped to formally bring Delsartism to the study of elocution through the courses given at his school of oratory, a forerunner in a long line of private schools of speech and oratory that would help promulgate the study of elocution in general and Delsartism in particular. Many of the elocutionists who would go on to publish work on expression and Delsarte, including among others Genevieve Stebbins, Moses True Brown, Frances Stuart Parker, Anna Baright Curry, Samuel Silas Curry, and Charles Wesley Emerson, had connections to Monroe's school either as students or as lecturers and teachers.

Although Delsarte's theories were never published, they were circulated through the publications, teachings, and lectures of this first generation of Delsartians – Mackaye, Alger, and Monroe – and through the publications, teachings, and lectures of their students. Distilled through the writings of American followers, students and teachers, Delsarte's ideas on expression and aesthetics helped to usher in a new era of elocutionary theory. In particular, Delsarte's theory of expression introduced two principles which turned out to have an incredible influence on the study of elocution and expression both inside and outside the Delsarte school: the law of correspondences and the concept of trinity.

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18 Monroe's publications include *Manuel of Vocal and Physical Culture* (1869), *The Third Reader* (1871), *The Fifth Reader* (1872), *The Sixth Reader* (1873), and *Public and Parlor Readings* (1873). Monroe did not produce a book on Delsarte; most of his publications pre-date his involvement with Delsartism.

19 The Boston University School of Oratory's history is somewhat short-lived. Following Monroe's death in 1879, the school of oratory separated from the university and was re-established as a private institution under the leadership of Monroe's former student Robert R. Raymond. At Boston University, the former School of Oratory was reduced to a single department in the School of All Sciences, and Samuel S. Curry was appointed Monroe's successor as the Snow Professor of Oratory, a position which he held until 1895 when he and his wife opened their own private institution, The School of Expression. (Renshaw 304-306; Ruyter *Cultivation* 23)
Correspondence of the Mind/Soul and Body

Probably the most foundational and influential principle that Delsarte's theory of expression introduced to American elocutionists, actors, and other students of aesthetics and expression, was the idea that there is a correspondence between the inner workings of the mind and soul and the outer workings of the body. Assuming a correspondence between the internal and external, Delsartians defined expression as "the Inner, Essence, or Soul, manifesting itself through the Outer, Substance, or Body" (Brown "New School" 3). In its various iterations, then, this concept of correspondence was used to describe the connection between thought and speech, mind and body, soul and body, spiritual and natural, metaphysical and physical, etc. Although often conflating the mind, the soul, and the spirit in their conceptions of what constitutes the internal realm, Delsartians fairly consistently define expression as the external manifestation of the internal. In his "Address Before the Philotechnic Society," for example, Delsarte describes his analysis of expression as able to reveal the two separate but corresponding functions of spirit and body:

To each spiritual function responds a function of the body. To each grand function of the body corresponds a spiritual act. Thus we can at the same time study separately that which is of the spirit and that which is of the body; thus from the concurrence of these two powers in the same person, results the intimate fusion of art and science, which, though each one is

20 Most Delsartians assume that Francios Delsarte was familiar with the work of Emanuel Swedenborg, to whom this concept of correspondence is often first attributed (Curry Province 338; Brown "The New School" 2; Northrop 21-22; Stebbins Delsarte System 390). Lewis B. Monroe was quoted as describing Delsarte as "Swedenborg geometrized" (qtd. Stebbins 114).
born of a different source, nevertheless ally, interpenetrate and reciprocally prove each other. (67)\textsuperscript{21}

In other words, art, the expression of human soul, is intimately related to science, which is grounded in the observations of the physical and material world. The study of expression lies at the intersection between the two separate but allied and interrelated functions of body and spirit. Expression is both physical and metaphysical, spiritual and natural; it is a product of both the body and the mind.

Genevieve Stebbins describes how "Delsarte welded the whole of his system together" with this law of correspondence, noting that "in its original form [correspondence] was a religious conception" (Delsarte System 391).\textsuperscript{22} As Shaver describes in his dissertation on Steele Mackaye, Delsarte's theory of expression was closely tied to a Judeo-Christian understanding of Man as the image of God:

Man is, at one and the same time, a physical being and an incorporated spirit. In his spiritual being man was created in the image of God. In his physical being he was created to resemble God. Man thus belongs to the two worlds, the physical world of earth and the spiritual world of heaven. The spiritual being is called the immanent being; the physical being is called the organic being. In his immanent being man reflects all the celestial virtues; in his physical being man reflects all the traits of the animal world. (46)

\textsuperscript{21} Delsarte's "Address Before the Philotechnic Society" is reprinted in Stebbins' Delsarte System of Expression 6th ed. (1902).

\textsuperscript{22} All references to Stebbins' Delsarte System of Expression are from the 6th revised and enlarged edition.
The study of expression extended the grand promise of understanding the relationship between Man and God. Delsartians believed that through expression in its highest forms of art that Man most closely resembles his maker.

The relation between these two beings – physical and organic, spiritual and immanent – serves as a central assumption in most Delsarte-based theories of expression making the study of expression a study of the human condition. Often the law of correspondence is understood in less religious and more psychological terms, describing the relation between the internal workings of the mind (rather than spirit or soul) and the external expressions of the body. Moses True Brown explains the correspondence between mind and body in *Synthetic Philosophy of Expression* (1886), in which he also points out the limitations of the older more mechanical means of teaching expression. Recalling his first introduction to Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia* by former teacher William Russell, Brown writes,

I attached little meaning to the picture [of Austin’s globe] then, and have since had a suspicion that neither the eminent teacher nor the author of the rare volume found any deeper significance in the pictured globe, inside which stood the orator, as in a cage, than a convenient way of enforcing the technique of the hand and arm in gesture. (145)

Brown's impression of Austin's system of rhetorical action is colored in the language of restriction: The orator's globe is "as . . . a cage," and hand and arm gestures are "enforc[ed]." However, after initially dismissing the *Chironomia*, some years later Brown comes across a line by Victor Hugo which prompts him to rethink Austin's
sphere: "Man stands on one globe and bears another on his shoulders" (146). Hugo's words suggested a revision to the *Chironomia* sphere. Rather than a globe that cages the orator in and enforces technique, Brown, remembering Hugo's words, re-imagines two globes, one depicting the material world and the other depicting the internal workings of the mind. As Brown describes, "it is a necessity that each man stands upon the globe, and at the centre of the Universe, and projects radial lines into the spaces above and around him, and refers to all objects as here or there, near or remote, from where he stands" (149). However, this sphere of the material provides only half the picture, for there is another sphere which man "bears upon his shoulders." It is the mind, "a world inexorably bound to matter, and yet the farthest possible remove from it." The sphere which sits atop man's shoulders reveals a whole other world distinct, yet related, to the material world: "A world of concepts,—images of the actual, pictures of the real" (149).
Brown's revision of the *Chironomia* sphere serves an illuminating example of how Delsarte's law of correspondence influenced the study of elocution. No longer would a gesture of the hand be examined according to its direction and angle mapped out on a mechanical sphere; instead there was supposed another non-material sphere where the external gesture of the hand indicated an internal thought or feeling. In other words, the study of elocution in the late nineteenth century took up inquiries about the psychological relationship between mind and body and the metaphysical relationship between soul and body.

Delsarte's Trinity: Life, Mind, Soul

To further analyze the correlation of internal and external elements manifested through expression, Delsarte divided the two realms – immanent or internal, organic or
external – into two sets of trinities. The trinity of the immanent being is life, mind, and soul. Because the organic being is considered a reflection or an expression of the immanent being, there is also a corresponding organic trinity: feeling, thought, and love. Through feeling, thought, and love, the organic being expresses the immanent essentials of life, mind, and soul, respectively (Shaver 51). This concept of the trinity serves as the second principle of expression in Delsarte's theory to have a significant impact on the American study of elocution in the late nineteenth century.

As Shaver describes, Delsarte considered this "principle of the trinity" to be "the criterion of all science." Shaver explains, "science consists of discovering the fundamental trinities of all things, and thus establishing the 'raison d'être' of their existence and their products" (41). With this scientific objective in mind, Delsarte broke down expression into sets of trinities. Not to be confused with the correspondence between mind/soul and body, the trinity of life, mind, and soul are all internal aspects or elements of the immanent being. The study of expression examines how expressions of feeling, thought, and love (expressions of the organic being) reflect the internal trinity. Life, mind, and soul thus became a taxonomy for understanding all the various ways people express; or in other words, all expressions were understood as reflecting back to these basic immanent elements of life, mind, and soul. Often these immanent qualities were understood as the vital, mental, and moral states of man.23

23 Terminology for these three states varied in different versions of Delsarte's theory. American Delsartians variously referred to the three states as sensitive, reflective, affective; vital, mental, emotive; or physical, mental, moral. As Brown notes, the third term –moral, affective, or emotive– does not have a good translation in English. Brown suggests the German word gemüth as the best term for this third state. Gemüth, he explains, "would cover the terms moral, spiritual, and mystic. Thus, through this side of our
Expression was thus broken down into three basic languages: a language that
expresses the vital state, one that expresses the mental state, and one that expresses the
moral state. As Delsarte's student Angelique Arnaud describes, Delsarte used the concept
of trinity as a lens through which to examine embodied human expression:

The primal faculties [of life, mind, soul] once ascertained, [Delsarte]
devotes himself to an analysis of the organism; he describes the harmony
of each of these faculties with the apparatus which serves as agent for
manifesting itself, and demonstrates the fitness of each organ for the task
assigned it. The master [Delsarte] establishes that the inflections of the
voice betray more especially the sensitive nature; that gesture is the
interpreter of emotion; that articulation–a special element of speech– is in
the direct service of intelligence and thought. (173)

Using the trinity to arrive at these three basic languages of expression, Delsarte found
himself at the three discrete categories of elocutionary study, which traditionally
separated the study of articulation and pronunciation from that of tones and modulation
from that of gesture and rhetorical action. However, as Delaumosne points out, none of
the three elements of the trinity can be separated from the others: "They interpenetrate,
interlace, correspond with and embrace each other. . . . The soul being the form of the

nature, a man loves his kith and kin, his family, friends and neighborhood; his country, justice and right; his
liberty and his God" "(New Philosophy" 67). The first term– sensitive, vital, physical – is also
problematic because it seems to suggest the external or physical realm, thus conflating the law of
correspondence which exists between internal and external with the concept of trinity, of which there are
supposed to be corresponding sets in both the immanent and organic realms. These two concepts, in fact,
did become very confused and conflated, often with the law of correspondence referring to the trinity itself
to explain the relationship between the external state of the sensitive/vital with the internal states of the
reflective/mental and affective/moral.
body, the body is made in the image of the soul" (xxvii). Or as Shaver describes, "A trinity is not composed of any three casual objects, but must consist of three things definitely related in such a way that each of the three affects the other two" (46).

Likewise, though the three distinct languages of expression all correspond to the three immanent elements of life, mind, and soul, each language also corresponds to the other two. For example, the vital language of gesture corresponds to the sensitive language of the voice to present an accurate expression of the internal thoughts, feelings, and emotions,

Each of the three languages are further broken down into sets of trinities. For example, even though gesture is considered the medium through which the moral or affective state is expressed, this language of gesture can be analyzed as sets of vital, mental, and moral trinities. The moral state is expressed organically via the muscular organism, which is itself composed of several zones of corresponding trinities. As Stebbins describes, the "human body has three grand divisions"; these are the head (mental), the torso (moral), and the limbs (vital). These grand divisions are even further divided. The head, for example, consists of two sets of trinities: the frontal (mental), buccal (moral), and genal (vital); and the temporal (mental), parietal (moral), and occipital (vital). The torso is also divided into three sub-zones: thoracic (mental), epigastric (moral), and abdominal (vital). Likewise, the limbs are broken down into triune zones corresponding to life, mind, and soul (Stebbins 117).

The divisions of the body into mental, moral, and vital zones allowed Delsartians both to analyze and teach gesture. For example, Delaumosne uses the hypothetical
character of "a gentleman who has been overcome by wine," to explain how gestures pointing to the various zones express the corresponding vital, mental, or moral state.

When the hand passes over the occiput bone, or back of the head, considered a vital zone,

Figure 5 - Triune Analysis of the Head in Stebbins' *Delsarte System of Expression* (1902)

the gesture expresses, "Here is an adventure! I have really had too strong a dose of them!"

When the hand passes over the forehead, considered a mental zone, the gesture expresses, "Reason however tells me to pause." When the hand passes over the buccal zone, or mouth, associated with man's moral state, the gesture expresses, "How shall I dare reappear before those who have seen me in this state!" (112), and so on.
As Delaumosne demonstrates, the taxonomy of trinities could be used to interpret expression. The trinities of expression could also be used to teach the expression of certain feelings, thoughts, or emotions; however, in teaching expression the taxonomies are designed to be aids for learning the nature of expression rather than mechanical rules for practicing expression. As Shaver points out, the Delsarte system is both semiotic and aesthetic: "The aesthetic proper is the outward expression of the inner state; the semiotic is the recognition of the inner state by its outward manifestations. The aesthetic proper is inventive; the semiotic is translatable" (55). However, Shaver notes that while the semiotic Delsartian study of expression is useful for training in expression, "The study should be so well assimilated that the movements become a spontaneous expression of the inner state of mind, and thus purely aesthetic" (55). Delsartians believed that the trinities of life, mind, and soul and the various languages and embodied zones that expressed these immanent elements in corresponding trinities truly could be observed in nature as laws; at the same time, the practice of expression itself was still considered to be a spontaneous manifestation of the inner realm through external, embodied mechanisms.

Influence of Delsartism: Redefining Elocution

The consideration of the relation between internal and external and the trinity of vital, mental, and moral had a lasting influence on elocution theory. Through its emphasis on the law of correspondences and triune divisions, Delsarte's theory encouraged late nineteenth-century elocutionists to address the relationship between the internal feelings and thoughts and the external manifestations thereof. Delsarte's triune analysis of human
nature helped to identify three lenses through which to understand expression; expression could be interpreted as an external response to the vital, mental, or moral natures. In general, Delsartian discussions of these internal/external aspects of human expression gave American elocutionists in the late nineteenth century a broad concept of expression which helped to re-define elocution.

Serving as an apt illustration of the new definition of elocution after the influence of Delsarte is Elizabeth Marney Connors' discussion on the relationship between psychology and expression at the First National Convention of Public Readers and Teachers of Elocutionists in 1892. Connors, the founder and president of the Buffalo School of Elocution, describes "this art of ours, too often known by the name of one of its parts and called elocution," as an art that "combines, to a greater or lesser degree, the beauties of most of the other arts," and as an art that "is so substantially a living thing, that it must necessarily deal with that by which life is expressed" (35). According to Connors, the study of elocution includes the disciplining of the body – "correct, regular and varied practice" that "free[s] all the agents of the body," as well as the psychological study of the mind, which "all agree . . . is the supreme, the controlling power." Without directly referencing Delsarte, Connors' words betray some of his influence. She assumes a correspondence between mind and body and therefore defines the art of elocution broadly. The name "elocution" itself implies a study too narrow for Connors; "elocution" seems to denote merely "one of [our arts'] parts." Rather, the art commonly called elocution includes the training of both mind and body. Furthermore, Connors goes on to explain that the training of mind and body for elocutionary art "cannot be done unless we
understand, either intuitively, or otherwise, something of what man is" (35). Positioning
the study of elocution as a study of body and mind, grounded in a broader study "of what
man is," Connors's words illustrate the changes in the discipline of elocution after
Delsarte.

Delsarte's theories opened up the study of elocution to a much broader set of
inquiries. The purview of Delsarte's theories included everything from "the Philosophy
of Man" to, as Moses True Brown described, the "Philosophy of the Infinite as revealed
in the Universe." ("New School" 3). Following Delsarte's significant popularity in the
field of elocution, the influence of this new all-encompassing perspective of expression
considerably changed the way elocutionists thought about their field. In fact, when
elocutionists met in convention for the first time, they debated using the word expression
instead of elocution in the name of their professional organization. Even though the
members of what would become the National Association of Elocutionists ultimately
decided against using expression, their consideration of the broader term indicates the
direction the field had taken. While the group chose to keep the word elocution central to
their name, they did so with the idea to give this old name a new image. When there was
a motion to substitute the word "expression" for "elocution," Robert I. Fulton, Dean of
the School of Oratory at Ohio Wesleyan University, objected, arguing that the naming of
their professional organization was "the first great opportunity in the history of our
profession to dignify the term [elocution]" ("Report of Committee” 103). "Many of us
have felt the keen edge of sarcasm with which that name has been uttered," he explained,
"and we have borne the disgrace that others have brought upon it; but we have not
forsaken the banner upon which that name is inscribed. We have fought for it, and it has become sacred to us." Instead of "discard[ing] the flag in the hour of victory," Fulton encouraged his colleagues to re-appropriate the term and "show the world that [elocutionists] are not ashamed of [their] name" (103). Following Fulton's objection, the move to include "elocutionists" in the organization name was carried.

However, the term by which the organization voted to identify itself was not the same, old term elocation that it was mid-century. As Fulton's arguments indicate, the move to keep elocation central to their profession was not a move to preserve the old associations and characterizations but a move to take advantage of an opportunity to create new associations. Elocution, once used pejoratively to denote a very narrow understanding of mechanical systems of voice training, became an umbrella term for a newly expanded discipline dedicated to the study of expression in all its facets, including everything from philosophical and psychological studies "of what man is" to the mechanical and physiological studies of voice from which the field first developed.

Harmonizing Theory of Expression: Fulton and Trueblood

The new, broader understanding of elocation is apparent in Fulton's textbook, Practical Elements of Elocution (1893), coauthored by University of Michigan professor of elocution and oratory Thomas C. Trueblood. In Practical Elements, Fulton and Trueblood explain that the purpose of elocutionary study is "to develop individuality, to correct bad habits of speech and gesture, and to make the body a fit instrument to serve the mind and soul" (3). With this purpose in mind, Fulton and Trueblood explain that the "principal element of success" is "sincerity and truth"; the speaker "must learn to feel and
then reproduce that state in the minds of others" (2). These new objectives of elocutionary study seem remarkably different when they are compared to earlier elocutionists' explanations of the purposes of their teachings. While Fulton and Trueblood describe the principal fault in most public speaking as resulting from insincerity or "the pretense to feel what we do not," in William Russell's Rush-based elocution manual, *American Elocutionist*, the principal fault is understood as "the want of a distinct and correct enunciation" (9). Fulton and Trueblood's elocution manual demonstrates the extent to which elocutionary priorities had changed. Problems in speaking were seen in terms of psychology not in terms of technical skill. No longer were elocutionists merely concerned with mechanical correctness in speech; following the influence of Delsarte in the late nineteenth century, elocutionists understood their project as extending beyond the vocal mechanisms to include the whole body, the whole person, the whole soul.

*Practical Elements of Elocution*, however, is somewhat unique; unlike most of the elocutionists influenced by Delsarte, Fulton and Trueblood remained loyal to Rush's mechanical system of voice. Instead of supplanting the older Rush-based system of elocution with a system of elocution grounded in Delsartian principles, Fulton and Trueblood attempted to "harmonize" the two systems. Defending the Rush method at the first annual meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists in 1892, Trueblood argued that "as elocution has come to mean expression by voice and action" it requires both "Rush and Delsarte to make a complete system of elocution" ("Rush" 22). *Practical Elements of Elocution* is a testament to this "complete system of elocution." The book is
divided into three sections, the first of which covers the foundational principles of Delsarte's theory of elocution— the triune nature of man and the "law of interdependence and blends"— and the foundational principles of Rush's analysis of the voice, including the anatomy and physiology of the vocal organs and the elementary elements of vocal expression, i.e. pronunciation and articulation. With this first foundational section, Fulton and Trueblood set the tone for the rest of their text, which attempts to bring into conversation Delsarte and Rush, two theorists usually considered to represent opposites in their approach to the teaching of expression.

The second section of *Practical Elements* focuses on vocal expression, in which Fulton and Trueblood read Rush's principles of voice through the lens of Delsarte's trinity of life, mind, and soul. "[I]nto this triune crucible," they write,

> let us throw the vocal elements of the Rush philosophy together with all the discoveries and statements of more recent writers and teachers, and by this experimental test we shall be able to separate the true and the false, to cast aside the dross of misstatement and false opinions and retain the golden truths of expression as found in Nature. (85 original emphasis)

The result of their experiment is summarized in a table that shows the analysis of Rush's four generic vocal elements of quality, force, pitch, and time according to the Delsartian trinity of vital, mental, and emotive states.\(^{24}\) Accordingly, Fulton and Trueblood

\(^{24}\) Originally, Rush defined five elements: quality, force, pitch, time, and abruptness. Fulton and Trueblood dismiss the aspect of abruptness as "not essential to all utterance." They argue that abruptness is "no more a vocal element than the preparatory act of inhalation or the action of the abdominal muscles," and they go on to explain that it does not "yield to the triune test to which we shall subject the four great generic vocal elements" (84).
categorize the different Rushian elements of voice as revealing either the life, mind, or soul. The eight different qualities of voice identified by Rush—normal, orotund, oral, nasal, falsetto, guttural, aspirate, and pectoral—are each defined according to the Delsartian trinity. The normal voice reveals the mental nature, while the orotund reveals a composite of the mental-vital nature, and so on.

The third section of *Practical Elements of Elocution* focuses on the elements of action and demonstrates the same desire to bring Delsartian principles into conversation with other elocutionary theories. Fulton and Trueblood position Delsarte as the "master-teacher of Action," and in their discussion of the elements of action, they describe how they attempt to "embody the main principles of his philosophy"(362). At the same time, however, their use of Delsarte to explain the elements of action does not "exclude the time-honored truths and teachings of that older system of action recorded in the voluminous pages of Dr. Gilbert Austin's 'Chironomia'" (362). As with their attempts to harmonize Rush's elements of voice with Delsarte's triune division of human nature, in their treatment of action Fulton and Trueblood also attempt to bring together different schools of thought on gesture and the use of the body in expression. For example, they use Delsarte to explain the triune divisions of the body into vital, mental, and emotive zones, but they use Austin's sphere to better explain direction and distance of movements.
Figure 6 - Delsarte and Rush Synthesized in Fulton and Trueblood's *Practical Elements of Elocution* (1893)

The amalgamation of elocutionary theories in *Practical Elements of Elocution* is unique in the extent to which it overtly brought together Rush, Delsarte, and other elocutionary schools of thought. Fulton and Trueblood were the most vocal advocates for a "harmonizing" theory of elocution; most other elocutionists of the time positioned themselves more exclusively as Delsartians or Rushians. However, Fulton and Trueblood were not the only late nineteenth-century elocutionists to recognize and borrow from the various elocutionary theories at their disposal. One of the interesting things about this period was how physiological studies of voice were often integrated into more Delsarte-based systems of elocution. For example, Alexander Graham Bell taught
his father's system of visible speech at Monroe's Boston University School of Oratory.

Henrietta Hovey, a prominent figure in the Delsarte movement, describes how from Dr. Graham Bell she obtained a "scientific knowledge of articulation of the English language" and from Delsarte, she learned the "artistic articulation" of language ("The Delsarte" 177). Likewise, other prominent Delsartians like Genevieve Stebbins and Moses True Brown give credit to and sometimes borrow from the work of vocal culturists in their own Delsarte treatises. In the section on voice in Delsarte System of Expression, Stebbins refers her students to Oskar Guttmann's Gymnastics of Voice (1882), a popular and widely circulated mechanical vocal culture text. Later she borrows tables of vowel and consonant sounds from Dr. Charles Guilmette, a prominent teacher, singer, and vocal culturalist in Boston. That Guilmette's and Guttman's physiological and mechanical expositions of vocal expression were taught alongside Delsarte's theory demonstrates the wide and comprehensive approach adopted by many elocutionists in the late nineteenth century.

Synthetic Theory of Expression: Moses True Brown

Late nineteenth-century elocutionists were very much in tune not only to the various elocutionary theories of the day, but to the entire history of their field and the various influences of classical rhetoric, art, psychology, philosophy, and theater on their field. Elocutionists at the end of the century consciously positioned themselves in conversation with their contemporaries, their predecessors, and the various other intellectuals from whom understandings of expression could be gleaned.
Moses True Brown's *Synthetic Philosophy of Expression*, for instance, brings Delsarte's theories into conversation with Charles Darwin's treatise *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) and Italian physiologist and Darwinian anthropologist Paolo Mantegazza's *Physiognomy and Expression* (1890). Using the "nomenclature of Delsarte," Brown "show[s] how the philosophy of these great discoverers [Darwin and Mantegazza] may be applied to the conscious art forms which every speaker must employ" (vii). Darwin's treatise was "a treasury of exhaustive research and thorough analysis," based on the observations Darwin made while studying in the Galapagos as well as "a comprehensive survey of the mass of material left by early physiognomists" (Brown iv). Brown describes Mantegazza's treatise as "giv[ing] in detail what Darwin has given in general." Picking up where Darwin left off, Mantegazza "presents the most critical and exact analysis of the human body and each of its expressive organs"(v). Together, Darwin and Mantegazza provide Brown with a scientific foundation upon which Brown could build his synthetic philosophy of expression, and Delsarte allowed Brown to demonstrate "how a philosophy of expression may be practically and successfully taught" (vi). In particular, Brown was able to use Darwin and Mantegazza to apply Darwinian science to the Delsartian teaching of expression.

As Brown explains, the study of human expression, which "for centuries attracted either the curious or critical attention of . . . great minds," had only recently become a "recognized science[]" (iii). Mantegazza and Darwin represented the first efforts toward the presentation of "a unity of classified knowledge" on the subject (iii). By bringing in
Delsarte's more practical study of expression, Brown saw himself as continuing Darwin and Mantegazza's efforts toward the creation of a unified body of knowledge on the study of human expression. Brown's task was to bring together the scattered knowledge of expression in one place. With Darwin, Mantegazza, and Delsarte serving as his primary sources on the subject of expression, Brown also brought into the conversation modern thinkers, such as Swedenborg, Emerson, Spencer, and Schopenhauer, as well as Greek philosophers Aristotle, Plato, Pythagorus, and Heraclitus. Brown converses with contemporary Delsartians like MacKaye and Alger, and at times he draws upon the discoveries of scientists such as Owen, Agassiz, Huxley, and Broca.

Demonstrating his wide reading in the study of expression, Brown provides detailed discussions on Delsarte's practical principles. For example, Brown elaborates upon each of Delsarte's nine laws of gesture: the laws of motion, velocity, direction and extension, reaction, form, personality, opposition, sequence (or priority), and rhythm. Although Delsarte claimed that these were "laws found in nature" and thus only descriptions of naturally occurring phenomena, for all intents and purposes the laws worked as prescriptive rules for the practice and teaching of rhetorical and dramatic action. In Brown's *Synthetic Philosophy of Expression*, however, each law is given a short essay, supported by detailed analysis and external research in science and philosophy. For instance, the law of rhythm, defined as "the measure of Time and Motion by regularly recurring impulses" is given an extensive discussion that brings in diverse support from discoveries in the natural sciences, Pythagorean philosophy, Darwinian science, literary criticism, and Greek literature and philosophy (83). Brown
begins his discussion of rhythm by demonstrating the "physical basis" of human "satisfaction in rhythmical motion," quoting from evolutionary scientist John Fiske's *Outlines in Cosmic Philosophy* (1874). Fisk maintained that "rhythm of motion is necessitated by the fact that in a multiform universe no portion of matter can move uninfluenced by some other portion," and Brown thus argues that human delight in rhythm "in dancing and in music, in song, and in the cadences of oratory," has for its basis this necessity of rhythm in a multiform universe (83). This physical basis for rhythmical expressions serves as Brown's main argument, which he pursues from a variety of angles.

Moving into a discussion of Delsartian explanations of rhythm by Alger and MacKaye, Brown adroitly dismisses naysayers who might criticize Delsarte as vague, obscure, or mystical. Delsarte's ideas, he states, are paralleled "in the utterances of Aristotle and Plato, Pythagoras and Heraclitus, and again and again reflected in the writings of Oken and Carus, Goethe and Lamarck, and by metaphysical thinkers of modern times" (84). Heraclitus, for instance, claimed "that ceaseless change . . . is the law of all things, and that in nature there is an endless flux and flow of phenomena" (85). The "physiological necessity" of rhythm is further supported by examples from literature. Citing Henry Longfellow's eight-syllable trochaic verse in "Hiawatha" and Sir Walter Scott's eight-syllable iambic verse in "The Lady of the Lake," Brown argues that "no great poet every sang the songs of the people who did not sing them to the rhythm of blood and breath" (86). These great poets responded to the natural, physiological rhythms of respiration and circulation. Like the modern scientists, ancient philosophers,
and other great thinkers Brown cites, Longfellow and Scott help Brown to demonstrate the physical basis of rhythm in expression.

Moreover by drawing upon a diverse range of sources, Brown creates a convincing argument in support of Delsarte's ninth law of gesture, and throughout *Synthetic Philosophy*, Brown does the same for Delsarte's other laws and discoveries. The result is a rich conversation about the nature of human expression— a philosophical and scientific elaboration upon Delsartian ideas. The fact that Brown proves himself to be so well-versed in the multifarious discoveries in the study of human expression (both ancient and modern) is important, because one of the criticisms lodged against Delsartians was that their contributions to elocution were superficial and that their theories and methods lacked substance. F.F. Mackaye, who was at one time the president of the National Association of Elocutionists, described Delsartism as a fad that provided the field with no new principles in elocution besides "fancies" lacking basis in truth (68-74). Delsarte's theories and Delsarte-based systems of elocution were likewise dismissed as superficial by both contemporaries and historians. In a 1960 article in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, speech historian Giles Wilkeson Gray described Delsartians as elocutionists who "would not delve into philosophies of the early writers on elocution, or who could not grasp their principles" (7). However, even a cursory read of texts like Brown's *Synthetic Philosophy of Expression* suggests that Delsartians made substantive contributions to understandings of the physical, mental, and even metaphysical aspects of human expression.
Delineating a Province of Expression: Samuel Silas Curry

Brown's synthesis of ancient and modern philosophical and scientific discoveries in the study of expression is characteristic of a general trend among elocutionists at the end of the century who, hoping to build up their profession and establish elocution as a discrete discipline, conducted wide research across disciplines and across history in order to give their newly defined field of the study of human expression a solid theoretical and historical foundation. One of the most outspoken proponents of elocution as a discrete study was Samuel Silas Curry, whose publications helped historicize the study of expression and make a case for the centrality of expression studies in a liberal education.\(^{25}\)

Curry believed the first step in forming the study of expression as a discipline was the writing of a history of the study of expression. As Curry argued in his talk at the 6th Annual Convention of the National Association of Elocutionists in 1897, "Whoever wishes to make safe progress in any department of science or art must 'hold the past firmly by the hand'" (39). In *Province of Expression* he provides a history of elocution, charting the tradition from the study of delivery in Greek and Roman oratory through to the most recent developments in Deslartian systems of expression. Through his historical account of developments in the study of expression and elocution, Curry demonstrates that he has a knowledge of elocution's classical roots, is well versed in the theories of his

\(^{25}\) Ultimately, Curry preferred the term *expression* over *elocution*, because the latter seemed to emphasize more the external, physical aspects of expression. Robb argues that to Curry, *expression* "was a much bigger and more meaningful word," and I would agree; however, as I point out above, by the end of the nineteenth century, the term *elocution* had taken on a much larger meaning itself (196).
elocutionary predecessors such as Sheridan, Walker, Austin, Rush, and Murdoch, and has a strong command of contemporary Delsartian theories.

Curry identifies four schools of elocutionary thought in the history of the study of expression— the imitative school, the mechanical school, the impulsive school, and the speculative school. Ultimately, he uses his history to demonstrate that past efforts and developments in elocutionary theory tend to focus myopically on only one aspect of expression. The imitative school focuses on the "truth . . . that impulses toward art, and especially toward expression, are awakened from observing expression in others" (Province 361). The mechanical school highlights the importance of studying "the elemental vocal actions" and "the analysis of the mechanisms of speech" (362). The impulsive school insists that "[t]he dictates of instinct . . . must ever be the final law," while Delsartians, constituting the speculative school, are "almost entirely taken up with [Delsarte's] speculations about trinities or with pantomime" (363). Noting the value of each of these perspectives, Curry argues that the advance needed in the study of expression, is a more comprehensive vision of the subject. As Curry explains,

There must be a study of all phases of expression, co-ordination of all to the exclusion of none; a study of delivery as the expression of the entire man; the manifestation of the whole soul with all its faculties and powers through the whole vocal and physical organism, with all the various agents and actions; a discrimination between what was meant to be conscious and what was meant to be unconscious, and such training should be adopted as will not aim to make all conscious. (365)
Curry advocated a comprehensive vision of elocution that emphasizes all of the truths of all the various schools of elocution— the importance of imitation in teaching expression, the importance of developing the physiological mechanisms of the voice, the importance of letting the emotions naturally lead to expressive impulses, and the importance of Delsartian emphasis on the body, the mind, and the soul. Curry also argued that in addition to this galvanization of all the schools of elocution, a comprehensive study of expression would also need a "deeper study into the fundamental principles of nature," "a broader and more careful study of art," "a more thorough study of the results of modern science," "a more definite and careful study of man," a "more thorough study of the great fundamental principles and laws of education," and "a more thorough and practical study of literature" (367-376).

Having defined this broad and comprehensive province of expression, Curry re-situated the field as central to an organic, liberal education. He spoke out against the "common idea" that elocution study is "only for a few specialists," arguing,

[I]t may be granted that work in expression has a relationship to art and that there is professional training connected with it of very great importance, yet such work is not a mere ornamental accomplishment, but belongs to universal education. It has an application to all life and the development of all character. It has a vital relation to the harmonious growth of the soul and is vitally necessary to happiness and must be a part of the development of the powers of every human being. (388)
Positioning his argument about the importance of elocution within contemporary conversations about organic and progressive education, Curry goes on to explain that regardless of how the purpose of general education is conceived, elocution – as an encompassing study of expression – should hold a central place.

Education, he explained, consisted of two fundamental aspects: "[A]ll man's faculties are concerned with taking or giving, or both" (388). These acts of taking and giving comprised the "two sides" of education, and current educators who emphasized the reception of knowledge were ignoring the very important "giving" side of education. Characterizing the study of expression as the oft-ignored "giving" half of education, Curry goes on to describe a program of education that focused not merely on the acquisition of knowledge, the reception of impressions, and the learning of values, but also on training in how to communicate or share this set of knowledge, impressions, and values with others. "The greatness of the human soul," he explains, "is seen in its possibility of reception and the possibility of revealing its possessions to others" (388-9). To educate the whole person, teachers need to attend to the soul's "possibility of revealing its possessions." Curry opined, "A mind that merely receives becomes a kind of educational sponge . . . a useless appendage to society" (389). Instead, he advocated for a process of education that concerned itself with the development and co-ordination of both receiving and giving.

In a sense, the type of expressive education that Curry advocated was a rhetorical education that not only took into consideration the teaching of knowledge but also
emphasized the importance of preparing people to use and communicate knowledge. Curry emphasized expression studies as a means towards the development of what might be considered rhetorical power. Training in expression, he states,

must in some way develop and bring into unity all the faculties concerned in expression, and must train the individual power, and bring into co-operation all the languages of man according to their intended functions, in order to reveal truthfully and adequately the possessions of the soul, so as to cause them to be truthfully realized by others. (63)

Elocutionary training was cast as a rhetorical education in expression that took into consideration "all the languages of man": verbal, vocal, and embodied. Such training considered not only the traditionally persuasive and instructive discourses of oratory and public speaking, but also emphasized forms of artistic expression. "All expression," Curry explained, "aims directly or indirectly to produce an effect upon another mind. Hence, consciously or unconsciously, every form of art has some kind of purpose" (Imagination 276). The training of the "artistic faculties" will "awaken [a] deeper love for nature and human character," "stimulate and strengthen the higher and nobler emotions of the soul," and "make the man happier and better" (Province 393). Moreover such training in expression is also "of vital importance in quickening those powers which

26 Elocutionists usually considered their art as a field separate but related to the traditional study of rhetoric. Often, they recognized the ancient rhetorical traditions to which they traced the roots of their discipline, but most considered the rhetorical theories of their own time as relating primarily to the study of writing and composition. James Murdoch, for example, defined rhetoric as "the study of words or language as the symbols of ideas," and elocution as "the study of those written symbols as the medium of the vocal expression of the thoughts or emotions which the symbols signify or represent" (118). However, while elocutionists distinguished themselves from the mainstream discipline of rhetoric, I argue that elocution in the late nineteenth century, as the new study of expression, had become a rhetorical discipline based on the study of affective and embodied modes of communication.
are most intimately concerned with the adequate comprehension of the fundamental facts
of nature and human life, and the ability to realize truth" (Province 393). Rhetorical
education in expression was a development of the whole man–body, mind, soul–with the
aims of developing awareness of internal impressions, improving the ability to externally
express feelings, thoughts, and emotions, and learning how to impress upon the minds of
others through various forms of discourse and artistic manifestations. In general,
rhetorical education in expression was seen as a complete system of education in itself.

Rhetorical Education in Expression: Charles Wesley Emerson

Another example of this comprehensive approach to rhetorical education in
expression can be found in Charles Wesley Emerson's Evolution of Expression (1888), a
four-volume outline of Emerson's program of expression education with selections for
recitation. Emerson's rhetorical education in expression begins with the premise that
"[t]he study of all forms of art . . . should be progressive" (8). Applying the "principles of
natural evolution . . . to the study of oratory," Emerson's Evolution of Expression guides
the student through sixteen stages of oratorical development. In the beginning, the
student is "taught to respond with ANIMATION to his own thought," then he or she is

27 After retiring from the ministry, Charles Wesley Emerson enrolled in Boston University where he studied
oratory with Lewis Baxter Monroe from 1872 until Monroe's death in 1879. After Monroe's death,
Emerson founded his own school and named it Monroe College of Oratory in honor of his former teacher;
in 1891 the school changed its name to the Emerson College of Oratory (See Renshaw 304). Emerson's
publications include Physical Culture (1891), Psycho Vox; Or, the Emerson System of Voice Culture
(1897), Expressive Physical Culture; Or, Philosophy of Gesture, and Evolution of Expression (1888).
Evolution of Expression, which went through 37 editions between 1888 and 1929, outlined the basis of
Emerson's theory.

28 Emerson's definition of oratory is broad, including all forms of oral speaking. As Renshaw notes,
Emerson gave his work the name "oratory," because he "wanted to elevate elocution from the level of a
parlor trick to a social art" (314). It seems he also wanted to expand the definition of oratory to include
more artistic and affective forms of speaking. His pedagogical approach is particularly aimed towards the
teaching of expression in oral interpretation of literature, public reading, and dramatic monologue.
directed to appreciate not merely "the composition as a whole," but "the thought in its
details," and so on. As the student progresses through these developmental stages in
expression, he or she also develops technical capabilities. According to Emerson, these
technical developments occur naturally—unconsciously even. For example, after being
guided to appreciate details, the student, "all unconsciously to himself [sic] . . . grow(s)
into an expression of emphasis in the form of VOLUME OF VOICE" (9 original
emphasis). Development in other technical skills, such as articulation, enunciation,
inflection, and pausing occurs in a similarly unconscious and organic way as the student
progresses through the natural stages of expressive evolution.

The overarching goal of Emerson's evolutionary approach to expression
education, however, is not merely in the technical skills but rather in the larger, holistic
developments in expression. In the final stages of the program, students are led to
discover imaginative and creative capabilities, a magnanimous capacity for sharing with
others, and an "obedience" to the laws of truth and beauty. Like Curry, Emerson uses the
language of "giving and receiving" to explain how through the evolutionary development
of expression "the mind is . . . awake[ned] to the joy of giving others that with which it
has been impressed" (11). Developing an awareness beyond personal impressions, the
student of expression discovers a desire to "give," that is, a desire to express internal
feelings and communicate internal thoughts to others. According to Emerson, this desire
to communicate leads to the cultivation of creative power; at the same time, creative
power in turn contributes further to desires to give. In the final stages of expressive
evolution, creative powers and feelings of magnanimity are closely intertwined:
The law of the mind is such that in giving it receives. Out of giving is developed the CREATIVE POWER. . . . With [creative power] is kindled into life a feeling of sympathy and oneness with the audience, a manifestation of MAGNANIMITY. The atmosphere of magnanimity develops in the orator until he seems to lose himself in his audience. Not merely does the orator whose powers have been unfolded along the lines of nature's own evolution, lose himself in his theme, – he did that long ago,– but he loses himself by blending with the thoughts, sympathies, aspirations, and purpose of his audience. (11)

The development of magnanimity, serving as one of the final stages of the natural evolution of expressive development, is of upmost importance to a speaker's overall expressive consciousness. Magnanimity represents the pinnacle of creative power when the speaker's desire to give is so strong that the speaker seems to "blend" with his audience. The speaker's magnanimous acts of expression, coupled with the realization of deep empathy with listeners, enable the speaker to discover a purpose "in seeking the good of others":

The being of his auditors is added to his own, until orator and audience are as members of one body. He feels the inspiration of leadership and PURPOSE asserts her sway. What purpose? In a lower state it has been limited to the orator's own individuality. It now finds its higher, nobler expression in seeking the good of others. It is no longer I and you, but we and us. The orator is now seeking his own good in the good of others. (11)
Seeking "his own good in the good of others," the orator discovers the ultimate stage in the evolution of expression: "obedience to the true, the beautiful and the good" (9). As the explanations of the higher levels of expressive evolution reveal, Emerson's theory of expression emphasized the relationship between speaker and listener and the overall development of an expressive consciousness. His program of expressive education also promised an overall moralizing effect, as students would learn to discover laws of truth, beauty, and goodness and realize their purpose of obedience to these laws.

Expressive Consciousness as Rhetorical Eloquence

Emerson's evolutionary approach to a rhetorical education in expression demonstrates the transformation elocutionary theory had gone through since the early 1870s when Delsarte's theories were introduced to American elocutionists. Like Curry, Brown, and Fulton and Trueblood, Emerson widened the scope of elocutionary study. No longer was elocution merely the mechanical training of the voice. To study in the new broad field of elocution was to study human nature and the psychology of the mind, to develop the ability to feel and recognize the internal sensations of the mind and soul, and to cultivate the body to become aware of and able to externally express internal sensations. In other words, elocution had become a form of training in expressive consciousness. Quintilian-like in their ambitions, late nineteenth-century elocution teachers and theorists understood their pedagogical goal as a holistic rhetorical education: the production of good men and women expressing well. Or as Henrietta Hovey described in her Delsarte treatise Yawning (1891), education in expression "aim[s] at the production of genius," that is, the production of "a self-reliant, active, and original
intellect, a magnetic nature, a personality that knows . . . [and] a physique that is a walking library of experience and inspiration” (51, 52 emphasis added). Proponents of the new study of elocution insisted that their teachings in expression had far-reaching benefits. Not only would elocution students be better able to communicate to others through the various languages of the voice and the body; they would also develop emotionally, morally, and spiritually. They would become more in tune with their emotions; they would become more aware of the universal laws of truth and beauty; and they would overall become better people.

Moreover, the brand of rhetorical education in expression that emerged at the end of the late nineteenth century introduced a new understanding of rhetorical eloquence. Delsartian-influenced elocutionists emphasized the rhetorical power of an affective mind/body/soul in tune with the impressions it receives and able to express those internal feelings, thoughts, and emotions to others. This new understanding of eloquence broadened the scope of oratory to include artistic and dramatic forms of expression. With its emphasis on emotion, spirituality, aesthetic beauty, and artistic forms of discourse, the new elocution of the late nineteenth century redefined persuasion as expressive influence and ushered in an oratorical era characterized by the artistic genres of oral interpretation, dramatic monologue, tableaux, and statuary. These new emphases, appreciations, and rhetorical genres would be particularly important to the increasing number of women taking up studies in elocution, expression, and Delsartism in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.
Chapter 2 - Delsartism as a Women’s Rhetorical Movement: Fostering Women’s Expressive Consciousness

Of late . . . the conception of elocution as an art in popular apprehension is perceptibly higher, owing to the intellectual labors of a number of gifted and conscientious artists, chiefly women.[]

. . . It is not possible to speak of all the women elocutionists whose work entitles them to recognition. The number of these rising to eminence in their profession is increasingly large.

- Joseph Dana Miller, “Women Elocutionists” (1901)

Published in *National Magazine* in 1901, Joseph Dana Miller’s article “Woman Elocutionists” claims that “women [have] made somewhat greater progress [in elocution] than men” (56). Outlining the careers of twenty-six prominent women elocutionists—both performers and educators of elocution, including among others Mary E. Blood, Ida Morey Riley, Harriet Webb, Bertha Kunz Baker, and Genevieve Stebbins—Miller makes the case that the popularity and good reputation of elocution as an art and as an academic discipline should be credited to the “intellectual labors” of women.29 As Miller suggests,
the number of women involved in the study of elocution and Delsartism in late
nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America was sizable. The twenty-six female
elocutionists in “Women Elocutionists” represent only a small selection of the
“increasingly large” number of women “rising to eminence in their profession” (55).\cite{30}
Moreover, the many women involved in elocution in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-
century America were incredibly productive. These women were not simply followers in
the new expression movement in elocution; they were trailblazers that regendered
elocution as a site of women’s rhetorical education.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Delsartism and expressive elocution had emerged as a women’s rhetorical movement, and Delsartian women regendered elocutionary education in a number of ways. This regendering of elocutionary study is notable in the work of Delsartism’s four most influential leaders—Henrietta Hovey, Genevieve Stebbins, Emily Bishop, and Hallie Quinn Brown—who each helped initiate

\cite{nancy_lee_chalfa_ruyter}

elocutionary and expressive education. Most disagreed with Webb. As Elizabeth R. Walton, an elocution teacher at Central High School in Washington, D.C., wrote, “To teach honest expression of noblest impressions is, to my mind, an honorable business—good alike for man and for woman” (“Should” 471). However, as Edgar S. Werner noted in his editorial following the publication of Webb’s interview, male elocutionists had become increasingly rare: “[T]here are schools of elocution that never have graduated a man pupil, and that do not have men in their classes, simply because men do not come” (Editorial 465).

Women’s involvement in Delsartism in late nineteenth-century America is well known. Dance historian Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter reports that of the nearly 400 active Delsartian teachers and performers she was able to locate in the United States between 1870 and 1900, about 85% were women, twenty of which were founders or principals of private schools of speech and expression (Cultivation 58). Ruyter also locates sixteen Delsartian women who wrote and published at least one book. However, Ruyter, who focuses specifically on Delsartism, does not look at women working and publishing in the more general fields of elocution; nor does she include early twentieth-century women in her study. My research of published materials in the general field of elocution—including recitation manuals and speakers—has located over eighty women authors and compilers publishing books in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States and Canada. These numbers are reflected and amplified in the membership of the National Association of Elocutionists (NAE). In 1892 when the NAE was founded, 237 of the 356 members were women. In 1905, the NAE listed 236 members, 205 of which were women. In 1906, the NAE changed its name to the National Association for the Advancements of Speech Arts; women continued to make up 75% of its members. The organization disbanded in 1917.
and popularize Delsartism as a distinctly feminine site of rhetorical study. Hovey, the first American woman to gain recognition as a Delsarte authority, regendered Delsartism through her embodiment of Delsarte principles of aesthetics and expression in her visible appearance and physical movement, and in her first and only publication, *Yawning* (1891), Hovey elaborated upon the importance of physical development as central to the student’s overall rhetorical and expressive development. Stebbins, whose publication *Delsarte System of Expression* (1885) was the first book-length treatment of Delsartism published in America, also emphasized the application of Delsartism to physical culture, and in particular, Stebbins regendered elocutionary and Delsarte training by adopting a feminine style of writing that appealed directly to female readers. Representing the second generation of women Delsartians, Stebbins’ and Hovey’s student Emily M. Bishop continued this emphasis on the feminine and on the embodied through her own system of Delsarte culture that focused in particular on women’s physical, mental, and spiritual health and overtly argued for women’s educational liberation. Finally, in the elocutionary texts of Hallie Quinn Brown—whose career as an activist, lecturer, and elocutionist earned her transatlantic fame—is realized the political and activist potential of women’s Delsartian education.

Common to Hovey’s, Stebbins’, Bishop’s, and Brown’s regendered approach to Delsartism is their emphasis on *expressive consciousness*—an embodied knowledge of the internal sensations of the mind and soul and the ability to translate those sensations through the body—as central to women’s overall educational and rhetorical development. Through their teaching of Delsarte, Hovey, Stebbins, Bishop, and Brown taught young
women to feel and recognize their own thoughts, feelings, and emotions and to become aware of and able to express internal thoughts and feelings through the body and voice. Responding to long-entrenched women’s educational traditions that were more restrictive than emancipatory and to societal mores that obliged women to remain silent, Hovey, Stebbins, Bishop, and Brown understood the value of fostering women’s expressive powers and understanding. Teaching women to express themselves both physically and vocally, women Delsartian educators saw their work as crucial to women’s preparation for the more public and political roles American women hoped to play as they entered the more progressive age of the twentieth century.

Women’s Elocutionary Education Before Delsarte

The liberatory nature of American women’s teaching of Delsarte comes into bold relief when compared to the early history of women’s elocutionary education. While the number of women involved in the teaching and theorizing of elocution at the end of the nineteenth century was unprecedentedly large, the history of women’s elocutionary education dates back to elocution’s roots in eighteenth-century Britain. The first elocutionary work written by a woman for women was Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Female Reader* (1789), published under the pseudonym Mr. Creswick. Wollstonecraft was exposed to the study of elocution while she was teaching in North London where she became acquainted with Joseph Priestly and Mrs. James Baugh (Ferguson 946).  

31 Joseph Priestly taught languages and belles lettres at Warrington Academy from 1762 to 1767. The rhetoric and oratory lectures Priestly gave at Warrington were published as *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* in 1777. James Burgh was the founder and headmaster of an academy in Stoke Newington and authored two books, *The Art of Speaking* (1762), which was one of the earliest British elocutionary textbooks published, and *Thoughts on Education* (1747). Both Priestly and Burgh were
Wollstonecraft is well known as a strong advocate for women’s education in general, but she did not see her elocutionary speaker as a stepping-stone to women’s oratorical education. _Female Reader_ sought only to teach young women to read with propriety. In the preface, Wollstonecraft makes her intentions clear:

> Females are not educated to become public speakers or players; though many young ladies are now led by fashion to exhibit their persons on a stage, sacrificing to mere vanity that diffidence and reserve which characterizes youth, and is the most graceful ornament of the sex.

But if it be allowed to be a breach of modesty for a woman to obtrude her person or talents on the public when necessity does not justify or spur her on, yet to be able to read with propriety is certainly a very desirable attainment . . . (v)

For women in the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century, speaking in public was generally considered a breach of modesty; however, as Wollstonecraft points out “Some little helps to elocution are necessary even for those who never aspire to be orators” (vi). In this way, women were exposed to elocutionary education—as training in reading not public speaking. Wollstonecraft modeled the organization of _The Female Reader_ after William Enfield’s popular _Speaker_ (1784), which was divided into seven generic

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dissenters, Protestants cut off from church and state education, and the schools in which they taught were dissenting academies, the curriculum of which emphasized more practical courses than the traditional classical curriculum of Oxford or Cambridge. In particular, dissenting educators emphasized the study of English in the vernacular, including both composition and elocution. See Thomas Miller (86-116) for a discussion of rhetorical education at dissenting academies. For more on Priestly and Burgh, see Howell 244-46, 632-47 and Haberman 114-15.
sections: narrative pieces, didactic pieces, argumentative pieces, orations, dialogues, descriptive pieces, and pathetic pieces (Ferguson 946). 32 *The Female Reader* omitted the genres of argument and oration, adding instead a section on “Devotional Pieces and Reflections on Religious Subjects.” Wollstonecraft also included a lengthy preface and a section on women’s education, entitled “Select Desultory Thoughts: Addressed to Females.” Wollstonecraft’s reader did not offer direct instruction in elocution, only pieces for recitation practice.

Another early elocutionary text by a woman for female students is Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s *The Female Speaker; or, Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse, Selected from the Best Writers, and Adapted to the use of Young Women* (1811), which went through two London editions and one Boston edition (1824). 33 Barbauld’s reader follows an organizational structure similar to Wollstonecraft’s, with six sections: “Select Sentences,” moral and didactic pieces, narrative pieces, descriptive and pathetic pieces, dialogues, and epistles. Like Wolstonecraft’s reader, Barbauld’s *Female Speaker* does not provide direct instruction in delivery, but her section of “Moral and Didactic Pieces” does give direct instruction on women’s proper conduct and duties. Though ostensibly serving the purposes of reading and elocution practice, Barbauld’s reader displays some of the same characteristics as conduct books, which, as Jane E. Rose notes, emphasize “social goals” and “prescribe[] a certain way of life for women to follow” (39). The didactic

32 *The Speaker* went through over sixty editions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
33 Active in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, Anna Laetitia Barbauld was a well-known educator, poet, literary editor, critic, and biographer, as well as a writer of influential political and social tracts. See Susan Howard’s biographical sketch of Barbauld in *Eighteenth-Century British Literary Biographers*.  

67
selections in *The Female Speaker* guide women in proper behavior, consistently reminding them, “The profession of ladies, to which the bent of their instruction should be turned, is that of daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families” (More qtd. Barbauld 38). Rather than opening up rhetorical and educational possibilities for women, Barbauld’s early nineteenth-century elocutionary text reifies women’s confined roles as dutiful mothers, wives, and daughters.

The moral didacticism of early elocution readers continues through to the mid-nineteenth century. For example, Anna and William Russell’s two elocution manuals for women, *The Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader* (1845) and *The Introduction to the Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader* (1845), include a number of didactic titles such as “Modesty,” by Lucretia M. Davidson, “The Appropriate Sphere of Woman,” by Muzzey, and “Female Studies,” by Barbauld. Unlike Barbauld’s and Wollstonecraft’s readers, which only provide selections for reading practice, *The Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader* also offer some direct instruction in elocution. As Mr. and Mrs. Russell’s describe in their preface:

> The book now offered as an aid to the education of young ladies is designed to combine the advantages of a volume of reading lessons, selected under the special influence of feminine taste and habits, and a manual of elocution, adapted to the instruction of females, in the art of reading. (3)³⁴

³⁴ These goals are also reflected in the full title, *The Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader; Containing a Selection of Reading Lessons, by Anna Russell; With Introductory Rules and Exercises in Elocution, Adapted to Female Readers, by William Russell.* The full title also indicates the division of labor in this
Co-authored by William Russell, one of the foremost teachers of the Rush school of elocution, *The Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader* adapted the rules and exercises of Rush’s vocal philosophy to women and sought to address voice concerns specific to women. For example, Anna and William Russell identify the “common faults of vocal ‘quality’ in young ladies” as “a faint, hollow, murmuring, ‘pectoral’ voice of feebleness, languor, reluctance, or negligence,” “a hard, dry barking effect,” “a nasal twang,” and “a feebly and ineffectual voice” (22-23 original emphasis). Russell and Russell’s instruction in quality specifically addresses these “common faults,” and their instruction in tone, stress, pitch, and movement (or tempo) similarly address women’s “common faults” in these areas.

However, despite these elocutionary lessons, *The Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader* was not intended for oratorical education. As Russell and Russell emphasize in their preface, their lessons are designed to aid in the “art of reading.” As Russell and Russell describe, chief among their goals is to improve women’s reading so that they may recite poetry well before the “family circle.” Indeed, Russell and Russell suggest that women’s good reading is one of the chief goals of women’s education in general:

> A liberal education should, surely, produce such results, that, when we hand to a wife, a sister, or a daughter, the page of Milton, of Shakespeare, of Young, or of Cowper, or of a writer who is, perhaps, the ornament of her own sex, and ask her to read a noble sentiment, which a passing

_..._ collaboratively produced work, and suggests that Anna Russell made fewer original contributions to the production of the textbook than her husband did. William Russell wrote the lessons; Anna Russell compiled the reading selections.
occurrence, or thought in conversation, has called up, in the family circle; her intellectual culture should tell upon her tone, and add the inspiration of the living voice to the departed bard, causing poetry to fulfill its true office, in exalting and adorning our daily life. (15)

The image of woman reading here demonstrates the limited reach of women’s elocutionary education in the mid-nineteenth century. Not only is the woman’s reading confined to her home and to the audience of her family; it appears that the choice and occasion of the reading is outside woman’s control. She is handed a passage by a male relative and told to read. The purpose of woman’s reading is merely to add interest—or “exalt[] and adorn[]” daily life.

Noticeably absent from Russell and Russell’s elocution manual—as well as from Barbauld’s speaker and Wollstonecraft’s reader—is instruction in gesture. The absence of gesture instruction in Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader could be attributed to Russell and Russell’s indebtedness to Rush, whose Philosophy of Human Voice focused entirely on the voice and did not discuss the gestural aspects of delivery. However, other Rush-based elocutionary texts such as Merritt Caldwell’s Practical Manual of Elocution (1856) and William Russell’s American Elocutionist (1851) include instruction on gesture by borrowing from Gilbert Austin’s Chironomia. In Regendering Delivery (2005), Lindal Buchanan argues gender—not elocutionary theory—determined the coverage of gesture

35 Pronoun usage in this passage betrays confusion about the audience addressed. Although Russell and Russell’s manual is ostensibly written for “young ladies,” the “we” in this passage is exclusive to men, specifically men who have wives, sisters, or daughters to whom they can hand a passage of Milton, etc. The passage also refers to women in the third person. Such pronoun use, which is consistent throughout the Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader, elides female readers even as it claims to address “young ladies” directly.
in antebellum elocution textbooks (37). Buchanan’s analysis of early nineteenth-century elocution texts reveals that reading and speaking manuals for female and mix-gendered audiences often omitted instruction in actio, or gesture. Only elocution texts for male audiences consistently include instruction on the physical aspects of delivery.36 Such an omission is not surprising considering that while men’s elocution instruction was designed to prepare them for speaking careers as lawyers, preachers, and politicians, antebellum women’s elocution instruction focused solely on reading. Instruction in actio would be considered unnecessary in an elocutionary text designed only to teach reading. Buchanan further suggests that the omission of actio from women’s antebellum elocutionary textbooks was part of a backlash against the increasing number of women who began to take up the speaking platform in nineteenth-century America. Buchanan argues that as antebellum women attempted to thwart gendered conventions and speak their minds on public issues in public venues, conservative educators resisted by further denying women access to rhetorical education in delivery. (39)

The Delsarte movement, however, refocused elocutionists’ attention to the body and the physical aspects of expression, and women were involved in this rhetorical movement from the beginning. The first private school of oratory and elocution and the early center of American Delsartism, the Boston University School of Oratory founded by Lewis B. Monroe in 1873, admitted women “to all the privileges of the school on the

36 Buchanan examines twenty-three elocution textbooks, including Russell and Russell’s Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader and Introduction to the Young Ladies’ Elocutionary Reader as well as Bailey’s The Young Ladies’ Class Book (1837), Sanders’ Young Ladies’ Reader (1855), two McGuffy’s readers (1857), Caldwell’s Practical Manual of Elocution (1856), Porter’s The Rhetorical Reader (1827), and William Russell’s American Elocutionist (1851).
same conditions as gentlemen” (“Boston University” 299). As Reverend A.S. Gardner described in an article in the Zion’s Herald on the school’s closing exercises following its first year in operation:

Let the young men of Boston, who are looking to the bar, or to the pulpit, or to the work of teaching, give this subject [elocution] the consideration it merits. And let the young women, too, cultivate the same field; for to its credit be it spoken the University of Boston includes young women as well as young men in its comprehensive plan.

Mary Adams Currier, who served as the head of the Department of Elocution at Wellesley College from 1875 to 1896, described the school’s beginnings in a paper for National Association of Elocutionists Annual Convention in 1893. According to her, not only were women included among the first few students of the School of Oratory; women’s voices initiated the first class:

The school opened with 34 members. I was present at the beginning.

After the organization, Mr. Monroe handed us a Sixth Reader,37 and, turning to the first page said: “Miss Currier will you break the ice?”

I replied: “Mr. Monroe, I could break ice, but I can’t read here.” Giving me a little encouragement, however, as only he could, I read the paragraph beginning: “Give us, oh, give us the man who sings at his work,” and then

37 Currier is probably referring to Lewis B. Monroe’s Sixth Reader (1872).
Miss Mary S. Thompson\textsuperscript{38} of Illinois, now of New York City, sitting at my side, followed, and the first school of oratory in America had come into existence.” (134)

Currier’s first-day experiences serve as an apt metaphor for women’s changing position in the study of elocution and rhetorical delivery. While timid at first and needing a “little encouragement,” women ultimately proved that they could lead the class.

Henrietta Hovey: “High Priestess” of American Delsartism

The first woman to gain recognition as a Delsarte specialist was Henrietta Hovey, who began her career as a leader in dress reform and who lectured widely to women on the evils of fitted dresses and corsets.\textsuperscript{39} Hovey helped to regender elocutionary and Delsarte education through her emphasis on the physical and embodied applications of Delsartism. As a lecturer and teacher of Delsartism for a primarily female audience of high society, Hovey’s most influential legacy was through the ways in which Hovey

\textsuperscript{38} Mary S. Thompson was involved with the Boston University School of Oratory from its founding in 1873 until its closing in 1879. Initially a pupil, she studied with Alexander Graham Bell, Guillmette, Raymond, Hudson, and Monroe. Later Thompson became an instructor and eventually chief instructor at the school. While at Monroe’s School, Thompson met Genevieve Stebbins, whom she instructed in vocal culture for a year. Stebbins, in return, instructed Thompson in Delsarte’s theories of expression. The two formed a partnership in teaching and performing that continued for fourteen years. They taught together in Boston and later New York. In 1887, they began performing the Delsarte Matinees, a series of programs designed to illustrate the expressional theories of Delsarte. The matinees, held at the Madison Square Theatre and attended mostly by fashionable society women, helped to popularize Delsartism. Thompson wrote occasionally for Werner’s magazines and gave talks at the National Association of Elocutionists Conventions. Her book, \textit{Rhythmic Gymnastics, Vocal and Physical}, was published in 1892. Unlike her Delsartian colleagues who tended to focus on the gestural aspects of Delsarte’s theories, Thompson was an expert in voice culture; this expertise is demonstrated in \textit{Rhythmic Gymnastics}. As a performer, Thompson was famous for her “bird notes.” In 1893, Thompson and Stebbins—recently divorced from Joseph A. Thompson, a relative of Mary—appear to have had a falling out and ceased their joint teaching efforts. The tension between the two Delsartians is palpable in a series of letters written in response to an interview of Thompson published in \textit{Werner’s Magazine} (1894). See “Miss Mary S. Thompson”; Stebbins’ “Simple Justice”; “Miss Thompson’s Rejoinder.”

\textsuperscript{39} Hovey, born Henrietta Knapp, was married three times and reports of her work variously refer to her as Henrietta Crane, Henrietta Russell, and Henrietta Hovey.
embodied Delsartism herself. Hovey’s striking and unique visual appearance—her every move perceived as an embodiment of Delsartian theories of expression—helped to usher in a new era of elocutionary study centered on the female embodiment of Delsarte aestheticism.

According to her husband’s biographer, Allan Houston Macdonald, Hovey was prompted to study elocution when, after one of her talks on dress reform, “a member of the audience spoke to her about the faults in her enunciation” (62). To improve her speaking, Hovey enrolled in the Boston University School of Oratory sometime after its founding in 1873; it was there she was exposed to Delsarte’s theories through Lewis B. Monroe’s classes and Steele MacKaye’s lectures. In 1878, Hovey travelled to Paris where she met with members of Delsarte’s family and studied with Delsarte’s son, Gustave. Macdonald writes that Gustave employed Hovey as an assistant and interpreter. When Hovey returned to the United States the next year, her tutelage and assistantship under Gustave gave her the credentials she needed to present herself as an authority on Delsartism. 40 Ruyter describes that in the summer of 1879 Hovey gave lectures at the National Academy of Design, and in the 1880s was reportedly teaching at normal schools in New York and other states (Drew 61). In December 1881, Edgar S. Werner, editor of The Voice, the leading elocution and speech journal of the day, interviewed Hovey and

40 Hovey’s training in Delsarte would later be questioned. In “False Delsartism,” an anonymous article published in the January 1890 issue of Werner’s Voice Magazine, Hovey’s Delsartian credentials—particularly her tutelage under Gustave—are called into question. According to the writer, Gustave “knew very little of his father’s method.” Moreover, the writer argues that the language barrier between Hovey and Gustave (Hovey knowing little French and Gustave knowing little English) would have made any instruction impossible (23). On the other hand, Macdonald claims that Hovey became Gustave’s interpreter, which suggests that Hovey must have had some fluency in French.
William R. Alger for an article on “The Delsarte Philosophy.” The article was the second of scores of articles on Delsartism to appear Werner’s magazine. "The Delsarte Philosophy” both helped establish Delsartism as a serious theory of expression for elocutionists and helped establish Hovey as one of Delsartism’s chief specialists. In a later publication of The Voice, Hovey would be described as “the most gifted Delsartian”:

   Certain disciples of Delsarte, who have taken their knowledge, 'from its near source,' pronounce Mrs. Henrietta Crane [Hovey], 'the most gifted Delsartean." She has done much to awaken an interest in Delsartism, and deserves credit for doing pioneer and original work. ("Personals" 93)

As the first American woman to establish herself as a Delsartian expert, Hovey is obviously an important figure in the late nineteenth-century women’s rhetorical movement of Delsartism and expressive elocution. Hovey introduced women to a form of aesthetic and expressive education that emphasized self-reliance, creativity, eloquence, and beauty. Hovey elaborated upon her interpretation of Delsarte’s theories in her only book-length publication, Yawning (1891), a treatise in which Hovey uses the yawn as a departure point for a discussion of the cultivation of the body's natural rhythms and movements. Hovey argues that the yawn is "nature's gymnastic" because it is simple, automatic, and pure, and because it displays all the natural laws of the body (14-15). Yawning exemplifies a “perfect gymnastic”; it uses the greatest motion with the least motive. For the better the gymnastic, the more perfectly at rest are the higher orders of nervous activity, and the

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41 The first article about Delsarte to appear in The Voice was a biographical sketch of Delsarte by F.A. Durivage, originally published in the Atlantic Monthly in 1871 and reprinted in The Voice in October 1881.
motive force the more completely supplied by the automatic processes of the
mind rather than the voluntary. (17-18)

Figure 7 - Cover of Yawning (1891)

Through such gymnastic exercise, students foster expressive consciousness and achieve a
ture education—an education “based on the harmonic interrelation of our triple nature” of
vital, mental, and moral (115). According to Hovey, education not based on this
harmonic interrelation “merely results in fitting men [sic] for a single necessity in life—
examinations; or at most in developing minds at the expense of men” (115). Instead,
Hovey argues, “The school of the future must be a place, not for acquisition [of
knowledge], but for evolution" (115).
Like Samuel Silas Curry, who argued that contemporary educators focused too much on the receiving—instead of giving—side of education, Hovey criticized contemporary educational endeavors that encouraged “artificial growth”—or education that focused on imparting external knowledge through outside sources.⁴² According to Hovey, such “artificial” education results in “a mind weakened by artificial use, which must either rely upon books forever, or depend upon the thoughts and judgments of others” (50). The kind of education Hovey proposes, on the other hand, results in a self-reliant, active, and original intellect, a magnetic nature, a personality that knows—often without being conscious how it knows, a physique that is a walking library of experience and inspiration. The intoxicating delight of the senses in such a man [sic], balanced and controlled by the equally intoxicating delight of original thought and poetical impulse, would be boundless—an existence of the same order as that of poets, artists, and all men of genius. (51)

Hovey advocated an educational approach that was couched in the Delsartian philosophy of mind, body, and soul; her philosophy of education encouraged self-reliance, creativity, and the ability to communicate. It was an educational plan aimed at the cultivation of genius. Instead of positioning the teacher as the giver and the student as the receiver of knowledge, Hovey positions the teacher as the Socratic intellectual midwife and the student as one who discovers internal powers. Hovey argues that physical education—gymnastics—serves as the path leading to such enlightenment. Hovey’s emphasis on

⁴² I discuss Samuel Silas Curry’s educational philosophy in Chapter 1.
physical exercise distinguished her approach to Delsartism from that of male colleagues such as Curry. Moreover, unlike Curry, who focused more on the rhetorical ability to express internal thoughts, feelings, and emotions, Hovey’s overarching goal of cultivating genius included not only the cultivation of expressive powers and communication skills but the realization of internal powers and the cultivation of creative powers as well.

While *Yawning* provides an illuminating elucidation of Hovey’s Delsartian theories and her overarching educational philosophy, the book—which went through only one edition—was not as influential as other Delsartian texts. Hovey’s primary influence was as a lecturer and, to a lesser extent, as a teacher. In particular, Hovey was famous for her broad application of Delsartism as a practical aestheticism that applied to physical appearance and taste. In 1884, Hovey met Edmund Russell, an actor, lecturer, and “aspiring bohemian” (Meckel 69). Hovey and Russell began lecturing together and within a year, they were married. In 1886, the Russells travelled to London, where Henrietta gained an international reputation as a Delsarte disciple and where she was

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43 Hovey probably made a mistake in choosing the title of her publication. *Yawning* often made her the object of mockery. Reviews of the book often focus myopically on Hovey’s title and on her description of the yawn as the “perfect gymnastic,” and thus miss the greater purpose of her work and the larger arguments Hovey makes about education. For example, a United States Book Company review of *Yawning* reprinted in an 1892 issue of *The Literary World*, mockingly describes, “A truly remarkable specimen of thought beaten out thin is *Yawning*, by Mrs. Henrietta Russell. . . . Yawning, she affirms, is a species of gymnastic; from this beginning, which is undeniable, she goes on to discuss more doubtful relations of yawning; if her book were not so short . . . one would often yawn, gracefully or otherwise, over it” (“English” 293).
exposed to the British aesthetic movement—a movement that directly influenced her application and teaching of Delsarte theory. As cultural historian Richard A. Meckel describes, Hovey capitalized on the attention that her unique dress and visual appearance made on her audiences. Catering to elite, upper-class society circles, Hovey lectured on the wide application of Delsarte’s principles. Ruyter cites a brochure from 1894 in which Hovey advertises a broad selection of courses: “What is Delsartism?”; “The Personal Arts” (“gesture, grace, acting, oratory, ritual and etiquette, walking, bowing, poise, breathing; declamation in singing and the art of speech”); “Delsarte and Poetry”; “Modern Movements in Painting and Decoration”; “Attitude and Expression in Painting

44 Under the slogan “Art for Art’s Sake,” the Aesthetic Movement in Britain and the United States emphasized aesthetics over politics in art and literature and aesthetics over utility in everyday items like clothes and furniture. Oscar Wilde’s American lectures on “The Decorative Arts” and “The House Beautiful” helped make the movement a transatlantic sensation. See Blanchard.
and Sculpture”; “Architecture”; “The Decorative Arts” (“the home, dress, jewels, and hair”); “The Use and Abuse of Delsarte Charts”; and “François Gustave Delsarte” (Cultivation 49). As this selection of courses reveals, Hovey’s application of Delsarte was both practical and lofty; as Hovey described, her goal was “to show people how by studying the principles of art, that they may make an art of life itself. We cannot all be poets or painters, but we can convert our daily acts into graciousness and let our conversation be with beauty” (Pendennis qtd. Meckel 71).

Society reports of Hovey’s classes describe what must have been a very striking and exotic image—the dress and bearing of Hovey as she spoke to her listeners and students:

Mrs. Russell wore a picturesquely-constructed gown of Havana brown cloth, which clung to her figure from top to toe like a jersey, and was made with a Greek free neck. The front was draped with brown velvet spotted with gold like a leopard, and the long train of velvet was hung to the front with a golden cable. (Hennequin qtd. Sanburn 81-2)

Mrs. Russell is a delicate little woman with great, blazing dark eyes and an aesthetic bang, like a halo around her fragile face. She has a sweet smile

45 Hovey was not independently wealthy and appears not to have received significant support from her husbands. Rather, the money she made as a Delsartian specialist allowed her to support herself and her children. Hovey, who bore four children but raised none, described her domestic and financial situation thusly: “I never for one minute neglected one of my boys for ‘Fame,’ but always for bread—quite a different matter. If I am less than an ideal mother, I am more nearly a good father than most mothers would or could be” (qtd. Macdonald 152). Hovey used Delsartism as a way to establish a professional identity for herself; this was common among Delsartian women. For a discussion of Delsartian women’s professionalization, see Joseph Fahey’s “Quiet Victory: The Professional Identity that Women Forged through Delsartism” (2005).
and it is the perfection of languid grace. Her gown was of classically-
draped shawls of ashes-of-rose hues. She wore a curious necklace of
Oriental workmanship and gray Suéde slippers. (Tupper qtd. Sanburn108)

. . . [S]he used to stand there in the center of the room and explain matters
with an easy flexibility as it were, which twisted itself around the
comprehension of even the most obtuse; the light would sparkle on the
gold embroidery of her gown now and then; for she had more or less the
gift of speaking with her eyes, though whether it was a natural one or
donated by Delsarte one may not say. . . . (Morphy qtd. Sanburn198)

Hovey’s visual appearance made a unique and lasting impression upon her audiences.
The descriptions of Hovey’s appearance and dress demonstrate how Hovey beautifully
modeled the principles of aesthetic Delsartism in her physical appearance. As the “fair
exponent of Delsartism,” Hovey’s unique visual form was an embodiment of
Delsartism. Importantly, Hovey’s embodiment of Delsartism was also a regendering of
Delsartism, as Hovey’s female embodiment of Delsarte principles became the
quintessential visual image of the early American Delsarte movement. Through Hovey’s
lectures, teachings, as well as her example, Delsartism became associated with a feminine
demeanor characterized not merely by beauty and femininity, but also by eloquence and
grace. This development of Delsartism as feminine eloquence would become important
to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century female students of Delsartism and
elocution. Hovey and other women Delsartians served as models of feminine eloquence that women could follow in their own oratorical development as speakers and performers.

Genevieve Stebbins: Delsarte Authority

Hovey was the first woman to gain recognition as a Delsarte specialist, and she was crucial to the initial popularization of Delsartism in America. However, Hovey’s teachings and lectures catered to an elite crowd of society women primarily in London, New York, and Boston; her influence was strong in these social circles, but her teachings did not reach popular audiences. Soon after Hovey enrolled in the Boston University School of Oratory in the 1870s, another woman, Genevieve Stebbins, began to take courses with the renowned Delsartian Steele Mackaye. Stebbins would become the most prolific and influential American Delsartian, eventually publishing six books on Delsarte expression—more than any other Delsarte specialist—and reaching a wide audience of female learners. Stebbins’ first book, *Delsarte System of Expression* was the first book-length treatment of Delsarte’s theories published in America, and as the first book published on Delsartism in America, *Delsarte System of Expression*, more than any other publication, helped to establish Delsartism as a women’s rhetorical movement. In particular, Stebbins regendered Delsartism in two primary ways: through her application of Delsarte’s theories to women’s physical culture and through her use of an intimate, conversational tone that clearly invoked a female readership.
Stebbins’ interpretation of Delsarte study revealed her own background as an independent woman with an interest in dramatic arts. Originally from San Francisco, Stebbins moved to New York in 1875 to pursue a career in theater. Taking up a career in acting would have been considered an improper move for a young woman, but Stebbins was an independent spirit with a passion for the stage. As the short biographical sketch of Stebbins in the New York School of Expression prospectus describes:

Little Genevieve grew up and while scarcely emancipated from the thralldom of short dresses, she conceived the by no means unusual design of going upon the stage. In furtherance of this plan, when scarcely sixteen, our heroine accepted an invitation to visit friends in New York,

Figure 9 - Image of Genevieve Stebbins in December 1895 issue of Werner's Magazine
who hoped in time to embark her on what they considered woman’s true sphere—a wealthy marriage.

Matrimony, however, possessed but few charms for a girl thrilling with enthusiastic ideas of Art, Oratory and Social Reform. . . . (22)

The same independence and passion would define Stebbins’ career. She studied acting with the famous actress Rose Eytinge at the Union Square Theatre and made her New York stage debut in early 1877 (Ruyter Cultivation 46). In late 1876 or early 1877, Stebbins met Steele Mackaye, who was probably just opening his School of Expression at Union Square; Stebbins began to study Delsarte expression under Mackaye’s tutelage. After a year as her teacher, Mackaye invited Stebbins to demonstrate for his lectures at the Boston University School of Oratory, where she probably also taught a course in Delsarte Expression in 1877-1878. 46 In 1878, Stebbins took a course in vocal training from Mary S. Thompson, who was then the head assistant to Monroe and vocal coach at the School of Oratory. Thompson, in turn, studied Delsarte expression from Stebbins and Mackaye; Stebbins and Thompson would continue to collaborate together as teachers and performers for the next fourteen years. In 1879, after Monroe had passed away and his School of Oratory along with it, Stebbins asked Mackaye for his permission for her to continue teaching his system of expression. He consented, giving her a ringing endorsement:

46 While a number of sources refer indirectly to Stebbins’ teaching at Monroe’s School of Oratory, the New York School of Expression prospectus is the only biographical sketch to refer specifically to her teaching appointment at the school. However, this same sketch seems to have a number of wrong dates and facts about Stebbins’ career. Specifically, it dates Stebbins’ first trip to Paris much earlier than it actually was.
I am delighted to hear that you are about to begin teaching. . . . You are the only one of my pupils now living whom I conscientiously recommend, and gladly authorize to teach what I teach myself. (qtd. Stebbins *New York* 23)

When Stebbins began teaching in the late 1870s and early 1880s, there were still very few American teachers who had knowledge of and expertise in Delsarte’s theories of expression. Mackaye was the only American to have studied with François Delsarte himself. Lewis B. Monroe and William R. Alger were early followers of Mackaye, and they were crucial to the initial dissemination of Delsarte’s theories. Mackaye reached a number of students—including Henrietta Hovey and Mary S. Thompson—through his Delsarte lectures at the Boston University School of Oratory. However, after Monroe’s death in 1879 and the subsequent closing of the Boston University School of Oratory, the direction of American Delsartism was uncertain. Mackaye and Alger were both increasingly unable to continue in their lectures and teaching, and the only extant book-length publication on Delsarte was Abbé Delaumosne’s *The Art of Oratory: System of Delsarte* (1872) in the original French; Delaumosne’s treatise, however, was considered a limited presentation Delsarte's theory. As America entered the 1880s, “The outlook [for American Delsartism] was dismal,” as Werner describes:

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47 In a review for *The Voice* magazine, Moses True Brown described Delaumosne's book as "giv[ing] . . . but one side of the many-sided Delsarte." Delaumosne's background as a priest colors his reading of Delsarte, "[h]ence, the theological color of his interpretation of the great Master of Expression." Brown generously concludes that the translation of Delaumosne's book is a great "service to teachers and lovers of the art of elocution." “That [Delaumosne] has not exhausted Delsarte is not his fault; it rather shows the breadth and depth of the ocean which he has tapped with his irrigating canal” (74).
Monroe died in 1879. Alger, the scholar, was immersed in his studies and writings. Mackaye, disgusted at the indifference and contumely shown for his art-message, turned to playwriting and invention. Charlatanry peeped out here and there, in places, too, from which better things were expected. A few teachers had procured the Abbé Delaumosne’s book on the Delsarte System, had it translated, and were doling it out to their pupils at a high price a lesson, meanwhile posing as ‘the only Simon-pure’ Delsartians. (“Delsartism” 60)

Out of this dismal situation, Stebbins, who was “gladly authorized” as a teacher of Delsarte by Steele Mackaye the only American student of Delsarte, found herself in a position to take the reigns of the Delsarte movement.48

In 1879 or 1880, Werner, who had just founded *Werner’s Magazine*, approached Stebbins and asked her to write a book on Delsarte’s system of expression. Werner describes how he recognized a need for "an exposition of the Delsarte System by an American apostle,” and “that, next to Mackaye himself, Genevieve Stebbins was the most competent person to prepare such a work” ("Delsartism" 60). Stebbins agreed to take on the challenge, and in 1881, she traveled to Paris, “spent a year in further study of [expression],” and “secur[ed] . . . such added information as was there obtainable through the good offices of Abbé Delaumosne and others” (Thompson “Delsartism” 61). In Paris, Stebbins studied acting with François-Joseph Regnier, the former president of the

48 The relationship between Stebbins and Mackaye declined in the latter years of Mackaye’s life. Mackaye’s son accused Stebbins of stealing from his father, and in her later publications, Stebbins distanced herself from Steele Mackaye’s teachings. See Percy Mackaye 269-70; Stebbins *Dynamic* 58n, 79; Stebbins *Delsarte* (1902) 395-6; Ruyter *Cultivation* 47.
Paris Conservatory (with whom Mackaye had also studied before meeting Delsarte); she sought out Delaumosne, Delsarte’s former pupil, to discuss the Delsarte system; and she studied classical statuary, as Delsarte had done, to “check[] off every law and principle of Delsarte’s opposition, sequence, and poise . . . to find a really artistic contradiction to his general formula, but in vain” (Stebbins *Delsarte* 73-75; 445-6). Upon returning from Europe, Stebbins compiled the knowledge of Delsarte she had obtained under Mackaye, as well as the knowledge she was able to acquire while studying in Paris, and published the first American book-length treatment of Delsarte’s theories, *The Delsarte System of Expression* (1885). Stebbins’ first book became "the standard work on the subject [of Delsarte]" (Werner 60). It went through six editions between 1885 and 1902; the sixth and last edition was revised and enlarged, including an additional 200 pages explicating Stebbins' evolving understanding of Delsarte theory.

In style, tone, and format, the *Delsarte System of Expression* was unlike any elocution text previously published. Its uniqueness is clear from the opening section of the introduction, in which Stebbins dramatically begins, "'Where, where, can I find the Abbé Delaumosne?'
" and proceeds to tell the story of how she came to meet Delaumosne in Paris and what he told her about Delsarte’s life and teachings (73). In the following twenty-one lessons and exercises on Delsarte’s principles of the physical body and its expression, Stebbins uses a conversational tone that establishes an intimacy between her and her reader. She begins the first lesson with a simple invitation, "Dear pupil, will you accompany me, an invisible presence by my side, as we trace our way through a course of lessons?" (83). Stebbins’ invitational, intimate, and conversational tone may be
considered a feminine style of writing—a style that consciously invokes and appeals to female readers.

As feminist scholars have demonstrated, intimacy and conversation were communicative conventions familiar to nineteenth-century female readers, and arguably, Stebbins’ uptake of a conversational and intimate style is a pedagogical strategy directed specifically to female learners. As Jane Donawerth describes, women in the western rhetorical tradition have often taken a conversational approach to their theories and practices of rhetoric. Informed by women’s experiences of being restricted to domestic spaces, women’s conversational rhetoric reveals an emphasis on collaborative and dialogic communication (*Rhetorical* xxxviii-xxxix). Such collaboration and dialogic communication is clearly emphasized in the conversational tone Stebbins uses. Moreover, Stebbins’ conversational writing style establishes a level of intimacy between reader and writer. As Anne Ruggles Gere notes in *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in Women’s Clubs, 1880-1920* (1997), women’s literacy practices often reveal a level of intimacy; the nineteenth-century clubwomen in Gere’s study engaged in literacy practices that “embodied [women’s] love, liking, or care for one another” (39). Similarly, the conversational and intimate tone of *Delsarte System of Expression* works to establish an intimate bond between writer and reader, teacher and student. In the first lesson Stebbins asks the reader to “accompany” her, to become “an invisible presence by [her] side,” and Stebbins and the reader continue through the lessons side-by-side.

The femininity of Stebbins’ writing is all the more apparent when compared to the tone and style of Delaumosne’s *Art of Oratory*, which Stebbins certainly read. The only
Delsarte publication to precede Stebbin’s *Delsarte System of Expression*, Delaumosne’s *Art of Oratory* invoked a tone, style, and audience that was distinctly masculine. In contrast to Stebbins’ invitational introduction, Delaumosne opens with a declaration to future orators:

Orators, you are called to the ministry of speech. You have fixed your choice upon the pulpit, the bar, the tribune or the stage. You will become one day, preacher, advocate, lecturer, or actor; in short, you desire to embrace the orator’s career. I applaud your design. You will enter upon the noblest and most glorious of vocations. Eloquence holds the first rank among the arts. While we award praise and glory to great musicians and painters, to great masters of sculpture and architecture, the prize of honor is decreed to great orators. (xxv)

Delaumosne clearly positions the study of Delsarte within a masculine oratorical tradition of preachers, lawyers, lecturers, and actors. Rather than collaborative and dialogic, Delaumosne’s writing is direct and imperative. Delaumosne does not invite the readers to join him; rather, the introduction of *Art of Oratory* invokes the solitary, masculine individual who sets his course and goes about his journey in oratorical training on his own.

In stark contrast, each of Stebbins’ lessons depicts an imagined encounter between her and her reader. Through these imagined encounters, Stebbins creates an instructional text that closely resembles the experience of a private lesson. To read Stebbins’ *Delsarte System of Expression* is to develop an imagined friendship with Stebbins. In the first
lesson on flexibility and relaxation, Stebbins demonstrates a "decomposing" exercise and asks her student to feel her limp hand:

[Flexibility] is acquired by diligent practice of the decomposing exercises, as witness: I withdraw my will-power from fingers, then hand. Touch it. Do not shudder. Do you feel as if a dead thing had struck your living palm? (83)

In lesson three, after greeting her student with a fan and commenting on the warm weather, Stebbins spots a rainbow outside her studio window and uses this discovery as a departure point for a talk about Delsarte's principle of trinity:

Good morning. Will you have a fan? It is much too warm for gymnastics. You shall show me your prowess later. For the present sit in this chair, by the open window. The air has been freshened by the shower. Look! A rainbow! It comes aptly to illustrate my talk. (107)

In the next lesson, the seasons have changed and Stebbins greets her student with a small bouquet of goldenrod:

Good day. Will you have this bunch of goldenrod? Let me fasten it in your dress, an autumn greeting. I have come from a walk through the fields, and purple aster, and red sumac, and goldenrod look up to the grey-tinted sky. Have you made much progress in your work as nature has in hers? (135)

In lesson five, Stebbins takes her student on a walk to Madison Square:
. . . do not lay off your hat; we will go to school in the woods, faire l' école buissonniere, as they say in la belle France. How keen is the autumnal air! . . This is Madison Square. . . . We are out for a walking-lesson. For the last few moments I have been observing you intently, you unconscious.

Are you brave enough to stand the fire of criticism? (155)

In each of these scenes, Stebbins emphasizes the surrounding natural world; she paints a picturesque, romanticized scene of learning. The natural elements – rainbows, summer heat, autumn flowers– serve as departure points for Stebbins' lessons on Delsarte. Additionally, Stebbins' narrations of these private lessons always emphasize embodied interactions with the environment and the physical contact between student and teacher. Reading through each lesson, the private learner is led to imagine touching Stebbins' limp hand, feeling the heat in Stebbins' studio, and breathing in the cool autumn breeze on their walk to Madison Square. Stebbins often has an object for her pupil to receive or gaze upon: a fan, some goldenrods, a rainbow, etc. These props add to the
verisimilitude of the scene and further contribute to the reader's engagement with the lesson.  

Stebbins' attention to the dramatic details—the dialogue, the *mise en scene*—betray her theatrical background. More important, though, is the ways in which Stebbins’ dramatic and conversational style would have appealed to female readers. The *Delsarte System of Expression* invokes a female readership in clear and obvious ways. Stebbins' imagined audience is another woman with whom Stebbins can talk about the weather and on whose dress Stebbins can pin a bunch of goldenrod blooms. Nearly every detail of the construction of these lessons— from the flowers, to the rainbows, to the conversational style—assumes a female readership.

Stebbins’ *System of Expression* was well received and instantly considered an “authoritative” Delsarte text. The texts’ feminine style and specific appeals to female readers helped to launch Delsartism as a women’s rhetorical movement. However, Stebbins’ approach to expressive education was often questioned by her male colleagues. Specifically, American Delsartians long desired for a written Delsarte treatise by Steele

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49 After Lesson Five—or about 87 pages into *Delsarte System of Expression* (1887)—an imagined conflict interrupts the intimate lessons, and Stebbins and the reader must continue their study of Delsarte via mail correspondence. The situation is outlined in a letter from Stebbins to her imagined student:

Dearest:

The clock struck one, your hour, but you came not; instead rat-tat-tat, a messenger, a telegram: 'Am called away; will explain by letter;' and to-day your letter—such a blue one!—our chats and studies must cease for the present, unless I can teach by letter. I will send you concise summaries of the laws to be apprehended, the gymnastic to the by essayed,—more I cannot promise. Inclosed [sic] find the lessons. Write me of your progress.

Your teacher and friend,

THE AUTHOR (87)

Although this letter marks an abrupt change in Stebbins’ tone as she discontinues her conversational lessons and moves into a more straightforward style of instruction, the letter also emphasizes Stebbins’ awareness of the life situations of her adult female students, whose domestic responsibilities might often interrupt their courses in Delsarte and elocution.
Mackaye. As the only American to work directly with Delsarte and as a student who described himself as Delsarte’s favorite pupil, Mackaye was believed to hold the key to Delsarte’s theories. Even after the publication of Stebbins’ text, Werner’s publication of the comprehensive *Delsarte System of Oratory*, and the publication of Moses True Brown’s *Synthetic Philosophy of Expression*, as well as the appearance of numerous other articles, lectures, and demonstrations of Delsarte expression, elocutionists and American Delsarte followers continued to pressure Mackaye for a publication elucidating his knowledge of Delsarte’s theories. And after Mackaye’s death in 1894, Delsarte enthusiasts pondered and mourned what secret knowledge Mackaye took with him to the grave.⁵⁰

Such questions only undermined Stebbins’ work and the work of the many other Delsartians who had published and studied extensively. Through later publications and subsequent editions of *Delsarte System of Expression*, Stebbins elaborated upon and defended her teaching and theories; specifically, Stebbins called into question any notion of “authentic” Delsarte.⁵¹ As Stebbins facetiously describes in the sixth, enlarged edition of *Delsarte System of Expression* (1902),

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⁵⁰ In *Province of Expression* (1891), Curry writes, “Mr. Steele Mackaye is thoroughly competent to give the world an outline of the system of Delsarte, but he has allowed himself to be engrossed with other things, and neglected to give the world an adequate presentation of the method of the master who so loved and honored him” (337). In a letter to *Werner’s Voice Magazine* in August 1892, an anonymous writer similarly criticized Mackaye for withholding Delsartian knowledge: “Just here we would call upon Mr. Steele MacKaye to take an active stand. He owes it to Delsarte, as well as to himself, to come out form the apparent indifference in which he has too long remained” (241). And in a letter to *Werner’s Voice Magazine*, entitled “Delsarte Secretiveness,” Moses True Blood urged Mackaye to “speak out or lose the respect of the earnest men and women of our profession” (381).

⁵¹ The first edition of Stebbins’ *Delsarte System of Expression* consisted only of an introduction and twenty-one lessons, included in which were a number of “aesthetic gymnastics” or physical exercises designed to promote Delsartian principles of movement and bearing. In subsequent editions, Stebbins
The revelation of the Delsarte cabala has not yet come. This universal solvent of ‘all things pertaining to men,’ still remains concealed, like the alchemical enigma of the mystics, behind the abracadabra of its hierophant, MacKaye . . . The truth of the whole matter is, no such mystery exists. There is absolutely nothing more to reveal than what already has been given to the world. I was too well acquainted with Mr. MacKaye not to know that if he had possessed any great secret he would have cashed its value to the public long ago. I studied with him continuously for two years. In six months he had given me all that he himself knew, including all that he had received from Delsarte; and that the last eighteen months of my study were filled with all sorts of variations and repetitions of the same knowledge. He candidly told me so, and

continued to add upon her original material. The second edition—published after Stebbins’ second trip to Paris during which time she met Delsarte’s widow and obtained some of Delsarte’s unpublished manuscripts—includes an address by Delsarte given at the Philotechnic Society of Paris. Later editions would also include extra chapters on the theory and practice of the Delsarte system, pantomime, physical culture, and statue posing, as well as illustrations of Greek statuary. These subsequent editions of *Delsarte System of Expression* as well as Stebbins’ later publications demonstrate her evolving understanding of Delsarte’s theories and help distinguish her work from other Delsarte specialists.

The exercises and lessons in the first edition of Stebbins’ *Delsarte System of Expression* are largely indebted to Mackaye, who was the first to turn Delsarte’s theories into physical exercises. Specifically, Stebbins borrowed and derived from Mackaye’s concepts of “decomposing” (or relaxing) exercises, his emphasis on equilibrium (or poise), his “gamuts of expression” (or formulas for expression of different emotions), and his exercises for different parts of the body (Ruyter “Intellectual” 382). Later in her career, Stebbins distances herself from Mackaye’s teachings. In the sixth enlarged and revised edition of *Delsarte System of Expression*, she explains the extent of her influence from Mackaye and describes her gymnastic exercises as primarily her own system. “Delsarte,” Stebbins describes, “did not elaborate any gymnastic system,” and the exercises Mackaye gave her were “were very few, very simple, and in no wise [sic] capable of developing the human organism in a physical sense” (400). Stebbins describes her system of Delsarte physical culture as “composed of three widely different elements”: “The so-called esthetic gymnastics of Delsarte’s training”; the “Swedish and Ling System”; and the “ceremonial forms of Oriental Prayer” (401). See also Ruyter’s “The Intellectual World of Genevieve Stebbins.”
further stated that I had exhausted the subject so far as he was concerned. Consequently, for any one continually drum up the same old mystery-sensation is an insult to present-day intelligence. (396)

The controversy surrounding Mackaye and his “refusal” to publish can be attributed to a gendered bias against Stebbins and her women followers. American elocutionists such as Curry and Alger wanted “authentic” Delsarte, to which they believed Mackaye had access, and they assumed, optimistically, that this authentic Delsarte held the keys to the universe. As Alger described, “[Delsarte’s theory] is something that is as high as the zenith, as deep as the nadir, and as boundless as immensity. It begins with God, it descends to nothing, and turns and reascends to god, and interprets everything in between” (qtd. Stebbins 392). Stebbins’ book—which assumed a conversational, inviting, and feminine tone and which consciously invoked a female audience—must have looked very different from the type of Delsarte text male elocutionists and Delsartians expected of “authentic” Delsarte.52

Stebbins defends her interpretations of Delsarte and dismisses the quest for authenticity by pointing to the importance of her and other American Delsartians’ original contributions to the study of expression:

52 The quest for the authentic Delsarte is evident as well in Claude L. Shaver’s 1937 dissertation “The Delsarte System of Expression as Seen Through the Notes of Steele Mackaye.” Shaver presents Emily M. Bishop’s Americanized Delsarte Culture as a quintessential example of the “misapplication and misunderstanding” of Delsarte’s theories and upholds Mackaye as the only Delsartian with the credentials to author an authorized system of Delsarte. Shaver writes, “In all [the] welter of unauthorized books, misunderstandings, distortions and quackeries, only one man was considered able to give an adequate formulation of Delsarte’s principles. This man was Steele MacKaye . . .” (4).
Practical Delsartism is nothing more or less than an evolution of
[Delsarte’s] system in accordance with American ideas and requirements;
and in the process of formulation many other thinkers probably have
contributed quite as much to it as did Delsarte himself. His name has
become identified with it chiefly because his thought constituted the
foundation. The rest has been added from time to time, like the stones of
an edifice obtained from widely different sources . . . To me it matters
very little what Delsarte may or may not have taught any particular pupil.

(398-99)

Much to the chagrin of many elocutionary men, Stebbins—not Mackaye—emerged as the
leader of the Delsarte movement, and Stebbins was not content to stick with a strict
interpretation of the Delsarte theory handed down to her by Mackaye; rather, she saw
Delsarte as a starting point from which to elaborate her own
system for teaching women
to use and understand the import of their bodies as expressive instruments.

As the first American to publish a book on Delsarte’s theories, Stebbins helped to
establish Delartism as a mode of women’s rhetorical education. Her students included
some of the most influential elocutionists and Delsartians of the day.53 As Elsie M.
Wilbor, assistant editor of Werner’s Magazine, describes in “Delsarte Methods: A
Glimpse at the Work of Mrs. Genevieve Stebbins Thompson,” Stebbins’ classes were

53 Stebbins claimed among her students, S.S. Curry and his wife Anna Baright Curry, who opened the
School of Expression in Boston in 1895; Frances Stuart Parker, who was an assistant teacher for Monroe
and later Raymond at the Boston University School of Oratory and eventually a teacher of elocution and
expression at the Cook County Normal School in Chicago; Florence Fowle Adams, author of Gesture and
Pantomimic Action (1892), Laura J. Tisdale, Director of the School of Oratory and Dramatic Art at Chicago
Musical College, and Mary Adams Currier, head of the Department of Elocution at Wellesley College.
intellectual communities of women students devoted to mental, moral, and spiritual development:

. . . I find myself in a drawing-room, surrounded by a group of ladies, most of whom are of middle age. There is an intellectual atmosphere that marks the circle as being one of thinkers rather than of doers of the word; a circle that might aptly select for its motto, ‘Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.’ It is the philosophical class. Women . . . need rousing. Why should men amuse themselves at the expense of the few women who, realizing their condition, strive to change it? Is it humorous to see a blind man groping his way through the streets? Let woman study philosophy, theosophy, moral law, or anything she will, so that she is taken outside of herself. She may make mistakes in the beginning; who does not? Mere fashion does not lead to spirituality . . . (Wilbor 30)

Through her classes, it seems, Stebbins left a feminist legacy of Delsartian teaching, and her pedagogical model of building intellectual communities of women was taken up by her followers.

Emily M. Bishop: Delsarte for Liberating Women

Following Stebbins’ initial publication of Delsarte System of Expression and her further delineation of Delsarte-based exercises for physical culture, the study of Delsartian aesthetic gymnastics became a particularly popular form of expressive
education for women. Stebbins and her followers viewed physical education as an important, emancipating form of education for women’s physical as well as mental and spiritual development. The liberating aspects of this form of expression education are especially clear in the work of Emily M. Bishop, whose teachings, lectures and writings helped promulgate American Delsartism at the national level.

Bishop began studying Delsarte expression around the year 1880 with “an enthusiastic teacher-artist, Frances Chamberlain Streeter” (Bishop Appendix i). Bishop probably also studied Delsartism with Stebbins, Hovey, and Mackaye. As Ruyter notes, Bishop taught at times in Brooklyn and Canada. Early in her career, Bishop served as the superintendent of public schools of Rapid City, South Dakota, and was the first woman to serve as school superintendent in the Dakotas (Willard and Livermore 86). In the 1890s, Bishop lived in Washington, D.C., where she gave many lectures and “drawing room talks” on her work in physical culture and Delsarte (Tupper A). Towards the end of her life, Bishop became involved in the Women’s Democratic League; her obituary in the New York Times described that she spoke at meetings on behalf of President Woodrow Wilson.

54 I further examine women’s study and teaching of physical culture in Chapter 3.
55 There is no extant biographical information on Frances Chamberlain Streeter.
56 Bishop makes no mention of having studied with Stebbins, Hovey, or Mackaye. However, Stebbins claims that Bishop was her student in the New York School of Expression Prospectus (1893). Also in a biographical sketch of Bishop by Belle C. La Follette in an 1896 society report in the Milwaukee Journal, Bishop is described as having studied with Stebbins, Hovey, and Mackaye. That same report also describes the establishment of an Emily Bishop League in Madison, Wisconsin. With La Follette (a noted suffragist who later became one of the founders of the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom in 1918) as its president, the league was devoted to Bishop’s theories of physical culture and Americanized Delsartism.
57 For more biographical information on Bishop, see Ruyter Cultivation, Tupper, and Willard and Livermore.
Bishop’s primary influence was as a Delsartian lecturer and teacher at the Chautauqua Institute in New York, which was a unique context for Bishop’s development of a Delsarte system based on the principle of teaching women to liberate their bodies and minds. Founded by Lewis Miller and John Heyl Vincent in 1874, the original Chautauqua summer session of 1874 was a nondenominational Biblical and religious educational retreat for Sunday school teachers. In the following years the Chautauqua assembly would grow and broaden to include courses on various subjects; the assembly became a summer venue for a “bewildering variety of activities in education, religion, discussion of public issues, music, art, theater, sports, hobbies, and
clubs” (Morrison vii). From the beginning Chautauqua was steeped in principles of
democratic education and social justice. As founder Lewis Miller described in 1886,
America was “in the midst of great problems and struggles,—the right of the people to
deal with the commonly accepted national questions, such as temperance, and Sabbath
observance, the rights of property, the rights of labor, the rights of trade, the rights of
money, the rights of women,” and he understood the Chautauqua assemblies as a way to
prepare men and women to participate in these great “national questions” (vi).

It was within this context of democratic education that Bishop began teaching
Delsarte physical training and expression in 1888 (Wilbor “Chautauqua” 194). Bishop’s
early Delsarte classes focused only on Delsartian physical culture. As Elsie M. Wilbor
reported in Werner’s Voice Magazine in 1890, Bishop was initially contractually
obligated to focus only on the “physical gymnastic part” of Delsarte (194). However,
Bishop was able to expand her Delsarte teachings when in 1894, Chautauqua established
a School of Expression headed by Bishop and the elocutionist S.H. Clark of the
University of Chicago. Bishop, having moved from the School of Physical Education to
the School of Expression, was able to teach a wide scope of Delsartism, including
“Gymnastics, Analysis and Interpretation, Gesture, and Characterization” (“The
Chautauqua System” 511). According to a description of the School of Expression in an
1895 edition of The Chautauquan, the program emphasized Delsarte philosophy as
central to its pedagogical mission:

The fundamental idea [of the School of Expression’s program of study]
will be to develop individuality and to teach each pupil to discover for
himself [sic] the underlying principles of science. The student is trained to see that elocution is not an art of rules and maxims. His imagination is aroused through the study of literature and he is taught that true reading is interpretation, is the mastery of the power to understand, to feel, to express. This training calls into requisition the Delsarte Philosophy which is taught by Mrs. Bishop. (“The Chautauqua” 511)

The new program was an immediate success with an enrollment of over two-hundred and fifty pupils in its first year (“The Chautauqua” 511).

Prompted by the success of her Delsarte classes at Chautauqua, Bishop published Americanized Delsarte Culture (1892), a handbook outlining her practical course on Delsartism; the book became incredibly popular and went through nine editions between 1892 and 1901. As Bishop describes in the original preface, she wrote the book because “Demand creates supply”: “[Americanized Delsarte Culture] is written because of the repeated requests made by those who study with me for a book that shall contain the ‘whys and hows and wherefores’ of my preliminary course of practical instruction” (vii). Like Hovey and Stebbins, Bishop emphasizes the practical application of Delsate’s theories to physical culture—and she uses the term Americanized Delsarte Culture to distinguish her approach from the more theoretical or specialized applications of Delsarte. “By Americanized Delsarte Culture,” writes Bishop, “is meant the Delsarte art of expression broadened so that it may be of general benefit to all” (original emphasis vii). Bishop claimed that “[t]he first instinct of the American mind is to popularize and

58 Later editions of Americanized Delsarte Culture were published under the title Self-Expression and Health: Americanized Delsarte Culture.
make practical whatever seems good and true,” and her teaching of Americanized Delsarte Culture resulted from that same instinct. Bishop’s own experience with Delsarte training began with “instruction . . . along dramatic lines,” but as she continued to study she developed the belief that “expression meant all that man [sic] is or does—all art, all action, all life” (Appendix ii). In other words, Delsarte’s theories were not for the professional actor or speaker alone; they had a broad application for those of all walks of life. In particular, Bishop—whose classes generally consisted of “grandmothers, mothers, and daughters—with an occasional gentleman”—emphasized the benefit of Delsartism for women in achieving self-improvement in the areas of health, grace, expression, and art (viii).

In each of these areas—health, grace, expression, and art—Bishop positions her system of Delsartian education as a form of educational liberation for women. Bishop decries against “conventionality,” particularly those social conventions which confine and repress women’s expressive natures:

Conventionality has much to answer for, not the least part of which is the enslavement of women to its false standards of culture. Society has said, and some fashionable ‘Finishing (?) Schools for Young Ladies’ still say, that culture consists in repression, not expression; that it admits of no enthusiasm, no spontaneity of expression, no show of feeling—these are ‘bad form’ not to say ‘vulgar.’

On the contrary, Bishop argues that “enthusiasm,” “spontaneity of expression, and “show of feeling” are not “vulgar” but rather natural displays that are valuable to one’s overall
development of expressive consciousness. Moreover, such natural displays are healthy, and Bishop suggests that the repression of the so-called “vulgar” forms of expression leads to serious consequences for women’s mental health:

Such teaching [of conventionality] robs people of their greatest attractiveness; namely, individuality and naturalness. It dwarfs the mind by inculcating narrow and artificial views, and lays the foundation for much future suffering—as repression involves an extravagant expenditure of nerve-force. The repression of an emotion consumes more nerve-force than the expression of the same emotion would require. (184-5)

In response to such repressive education, Bishop claims that Delsarte’s teachings—his philosophy and the development of physical culture according to his theories of embodied expression—could help women free themselves from “conventionality” and learn to express themselves.

Unlike her predecessors who took a deficit model approach to the teaching of elocution (through their emphasis on faults in pronunciations, faults in articulation, etc.), Bishop’s elocutionary pedagogy was based on the “gospel of ‘Do.’” In an interview for Werner’s Magazine in 1899, Bishop describes herself as a “great believer in the gospel of ‘Do’ and a great doubter of the doctrine of ‘Don’t’ (“Bodily” 93). Describing her typical approach to a general class of beginners at Chautauqua, Bishop explains, “The first aim always is to get a good poise of the body, but I do not talk much about this at first, or ever about the mechanical adjustment of the body that constitutes a good poise, because that tends to develop self-consciousness. So we begin by doing” (92-3). Instead of talking
about how to stand or how not to stand, Bishop leads the class of beginners through a variety of exercises and concludes by asking students to use the embodied knowledge gained through those exercises to “analyze the expression of a normal and desirable poise” (93).

As Bishop explains in *Americanized Delsarte Culture*, her gymnastic exercises are intended for practice not as a prescribed mode of movement; the overarching goal is to liberate the pupil from conventions of bodily movement. Responding to the misapplication of Delsarte physical culture, Bishop argues, “There is no Delsarte walk, no Delsarte standing position, no Delsarte way to sit down, no Delsarte way of doing anything. The only way we seek is Nature’s way” (*Americanized* 107-8). As a case in point, Bishop critiques social conventions denoting how a woman should walk:

[Some] may declare that the woman who swings her arms [when she walks] appears masculine—‘strong-minded’; they may say that it is more ‘ladylike’ to keep the arms pinioned to the sides. Society is full of conventional constraint, or affectation in physical expression; we need to free ourselves from such bondage if we would be simple, earnest and sincere. A conventionalized woman is as uninteresting and expressionless, compared with her emancipated physically free sister, as is a conventionalized flower in a dado design compared with the natural flower growing in graceful freedom. (111)

This “graceful freedom” is a central objective of Bishop’s system of Delsarte. As Jane Donawerth notes, Bishop’s emphasis on women’s bodily freedom was also “a
means of resisting gender ideologies” (*Conversational* 118). By tackling the bodily conventions that restricted women, Bishop confronted entrenched gendered conventions that were both outmoded and unhealthy. Moreover, Bishop clearly envisioned her system of Americanized Delsarte culture as a crucial element in women’s preparation for the roles they might be called to play in “woman’s era.” As Bishop writes in “Delsarte for Women,” an article published in *The Chautauquan* in 1890, “America is woman’s country . . . Unquestionably it is true that this age, this country, and these opportunities are on woman’s side to-day as never before.” With woman’s new “great privileges,” Bishop explains, come “great responsibilities.” Woman’s “high position demands correspondingly high powers of performance” (749). Bishop argues that in order to meet the demands of her new responsibilities and higher positions in society women will need to demonstrate that they are morally, intellectually, and *physically* adept.

**Hallie Quinn Brown: Delsarte for the Activist Public Speaker**

As Bishop implies, Delsarte study served as beneficial training for American women’s more public and political roles at the turn-of-the-century—particularly as women began to take up the speaking platform as activists in reform causes such as temperance, suffrage, and equal rights. The close relationship between women’s Delsartism and women’s activism is particularly evident in the career and teachings of Hallie Quinn Brown, an African American elocutionist, lecturer, activist, and educator. Brown’s speaking career served as a model of Delsartian eloquence in action and her elocution manuals taught Delsarte-based elocution as part of a broader training in public speaking and activist education.
Described as “one of the best elocutionists before the public,” Brown was most well known by her contemporaries for her elocutionary accomplishments upon the speaking platform (qtd. McFarlin 75). In the 1880s, Brown toured widely across the United States as a member of the Wilberforce Concert Company (later the Stewart Concert Company), giving lectures and recitations in support of her alma mater, Wilberforce University. In 1894, Brown began a European lecture tour that took her to

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59 For more descriptions and praises of Brown’s elocutionary powers, see “A Casket of Laurels Won By Miss Hallie Quinn Brown, of Wilberforce” in Noted Negro Women (234-36) and “A Casket of Laurels Won By Miss Hallie Quinn Brown, of Wilberforce” in the introductory section of Bits and Odds (10-12). See also the reviews of Brown’s performances in The Bangor Daily Whig (“Local Matters”), The St. Paul Daily News (“Elocutionary Entertainment”), The New York Age (“Miss Hallie”), The Milwaukee Sentinel (“Amusement Notes”), and The Leavenworth Herald (Bruce).
Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and France; and in 1897 and 1899, Brown was presented to Queen Victoria (Strom). Through her speaking engagements, Brown was able to raise awareness about the cause of “racial uplift.” According to *Who’s Who in the Lyceum* (1906), Brown’s lecture topics included “The Progress of Negro Education and Advancement in America Since the Emancipation”; “The Status of the Afro-American Women Before and Since the War”; “Songs and Sorrows for the Negro Race”; “The Life of Frederick Douglass, Slave, Freeman, Orator, Editor, and Emancipator”; “Negro Folk-Lore and Folk-Song”; And “My Visit to Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle” (Wright 72). Brown’s activist work would continue in the later years of her life when she helped found the National Association of Colored Women, for which she served as president in the early 1920s. Brown was also a member of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and supported the temperance cause in both Britain and the United States.60

Reviews of Brown’s lectures and recitations often suggest the Delsartian background that informed Brown’s elocutionary practice. Esteemed for both her “natural” presence on the platform, as well as for her incredible physical abilities as an elocutionist, Brown demonstrated the fruits of a Delsartian cultivation of expressive consciousness. Exemplifying what Bishop called “[s]eek[ing] Nature’s way,” Brown is described as “discarding the rigid rules of the books and follow[ing] nature” (Bishop 108; Majors 232). In reviews, critics laud Brown’s “perfect control of the muscles of her throat,” her “sweet and flexible voice,” her “keen eye,” her “features of great mobility,”

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60 For more biographical information on Hallie Quinn Brown, see Davis, Majors, McFarlin, Strom, and Wright.
and her overall “graceful” manner (qtd. Majors 233-35). As a reviewer for Xenia, Ohio newspaper *The Republican* described:

[Brown] is capable of touching every chord of emotion, equally effective in pathos and humor. The intonations of her voice are as exquisite as those of an eolian [sic] harp, and as melodious music of itself, and in dramatic fervor and power of dramatic expression Miss Brown is inimitable. (qtd. Majors 235-6)

When Brown stepped onto the speaking platform, she demonstrated her embodied knowledge of emotions and feelings and was ability to translate those sensations through her bodily and vocal expressions to great effect.

Brown was probably first exposed to Delsarte’s theories through her training under Peter Robertson, with whom Brown studied from 1874 to 1878 while she was living in Dayton, Ohio. Robertson was a student of Lewis B. Monroe’s at the Boston School of Oratory. His elocution manual *Robertson’s Manual of Elocution and Philosophy of Expression* (1880) is described in *Publisher’s Weekly* as “based upon the Delsarte method, that of the late Professor Monroe of Boston, and of other prominent instructors” (“Robertson” 29). Through her studies with Robertson, Brown learned of

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61 In the preface of *Manual of Elocution*, Robertson acknowledges “special indebtedness to the Delsarte Philosophy of Expression, to the very superior instruction of the late Prof. L.B. Monroe of Boston, Prof. A.L. Butterfield of the Bell School of Vocal Physiology, the late Dr. Guilmette of the Boston School of Vocal Technology, and to Prof. F. Sargent of Harvard University.” In the lessons and exercises that follow Robertson blends his broad background in elocutionary training, including not only the knowledge he obtained of Delsarte under Monroe’s tutelage, but also his training in visible speech, vocal physiology, and the Rush school of voice instruction. In Brown’s *Elocution and Physical Culture*, in which Brown also blends Delsartian theories of expression with physiological studies of the voice, Robertson’s influence is very clear. A later edition of Robertson’s manual was published under the title *Outlines of Elocution and Philosophy of Expression.*
the importance of Delsartism as it applied to her speaking and educational career.

However Brown’s first exposure to rhetorical and elocutionary instruction was not in the Delsarte school; rather, her first elocutionary lessons were received while she was a student at Wilberforce University, where she studied elocution with Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, the president of the university.  As Brown described in her unpublished autobiography, “Bishop Payne, in the classroom and at home, guided me in speech, taught me to be articulate, how to pronounce, to modulate, taught me how to read” (qtd. McFarlin 73). Brown’s tutelage under Payne helped spark a lifelong passion in the studies of speaking and expression. As Brown would describe in 1881, “Having my friends say I had a little talent for ‘elocuting,’ I was determined to direct my endeavors in that line” (qtd. McFarlin 74). Brown graduated from Wilberforce University in 1873, and as salutatorian of her class, she gave her first public speech (McFarlin 73).

In 1886, Brown graduated from the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, and in 1890, Brown received an honorary M.S. from Wilberforce. In 1893, Brown was appointed as a professor of elocution at Wilberforce, where she honed her own Delsartian approach to elocutionary education.

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62 Citing Brown’s unpublished autobiography, “As the Mantle Falls,” McFarlin dates Brown’s first elocution lessons much earlier, at the age of eight on the family farm in Chatham, Ontario, where she would “deliver . . . address[es] to the cows, the sheep, and the birds” (73). The same story appears in the short sketch of Brown in the introductory material to Bits and Odds (7).

63 In his memoir, Recollections of Seventy Years, Payne, who as president of Wilberforce University was the first African American to hold the position of university president in the United States, describes his first exposure to rhetorical and elocutionary training as a young student enrolled in the Minor’s Moralist Society, where The Columbian Orator was the primary text in teaching the art of speaking (15). Payne may have also received training in pulpit elocution and oratory when he was enrolled in the Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary from 1835-1838. See Cromwell’s biographical sketch of Payne in The Negro in American History.

64 See “C.L.S.C. Graduates” and Wright.
Brown’s system of Delsartian elocution is elaborated in her elocution manual, *Elocution and Physical Culture* (c. 1910), in which Brown weaves elements of classical rhetoric from Cicero and elements of voice culture and science into her explication of Delsarte’s theories of expression. Brown’s terminology—for example, *rising, falling,* and *circumflex* inflections; and the *motor, vibrating element,* and *resonators* of the voice—reveal her broad background in elocutionary study. However, Delsartism is the foundation of Brown’s elocutionary theory, and it appears that Brown was also well read in American Delsartism. As Donawerth notes, Brown appears to draw heavily from Delaumosne’s *Delsarte System of Oratory*; many of the Delsarte quotations Brown uses appear to have been lifted from Delaumosne. Several quotations may have come from Robertson’s elocution manual. Brown was also obviously familiar with Stebbins’ work.

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65 Brown specifically acknowledges her indebtedness to Guttman and Delsarte in the Preface: “The works of Delsarte, the master-teacher, and Guttman’s *Gymnastics of the Voice* have been consulted and a complete list of authors can be given to any student who wishes to inquire more thoroughly into this, the Arts of Arts” (176).

66 In Lesson Ten, Brown refers to the three different kind of inflection: “upward or rising,” “downward or falling,” and “compound or circumflex” (183). These terms, rising, falling, and circumflex, were first introduced by John Walker in *Melody of Speaking* (1787), and were used widely among a number of nineteenth-century American elocutionists, including Frank Townsend Southwick in *Primer of Elocution and Action* (1890) and the *McGuffey’s Readers.* In Lesson Six, Brown describes the instrument of the voice as consisting of three parts: “The Motor, represented by the chest cavity, or air reservoir; The Vibrating Element, represented by the larynx, or sounding-reed,” and “The Resonators, represented by the pharynx and mouth, or resonance-box” (181). This theory of the vocal apparatus is drawn from British elocutionary and vocal physiologists Lennox Browne and Emil Behnke.

67 See Donawerth’s footnotes to *Elocution and Physical Culture* in *Rhetorical Women Before 1900,* fn. 4, 9, 12, 18, 22, 27, 31, and 37 (193-194).

68 In particular, the following quotations appear in both Brown and Robertson: “All art must be preceded by a certain mechanical expertness,” from Goethe; “Gesture is a natural language. It is the language of the heart; the commentator of speech,” from Delsarte, and “Action is the language of the body, and should harmonize with the spirit within,” from Cicero (Robertson 5 and 7; Brown 176 and 177).
For example, Brown’s fourteenth lesson on color draws from Stebbins’ *Delsarte System of Expression*.69

Synthesizing an array of Delsartian and elocutionary sources, Brown creates her own system of Delsarte. In particular, Brown’s system of Delsarte was distinct from Hovey’s, Stebbins’, Bishop’s, and other American Delsartians’ in the way it focused specifically on the art of speaking. Given Brown’s background as a public speaker, lecturer, and reader, it is not surprising that her approach to Delsartism focuses on preparation for public speaking. Moreover, Brown, whose elocutionary students were African American men and women, understood Delsartian elocutionary study as an empowering form of education that would prepare her students “to use their skills in the cause of African American civil rights” (Donawerth *Conversational* 123). Pointing to the power of speech, Brown writes,

\[\ldots\text{To excel in the use of speech is the highest of human arts. It enables man [sic] to govern whole nations and to enchant while he governs}\]

\[\text{The aristocracy of eloquence is supreme and in the land of the free can never be suppressed; it is pride of peace and the glory of war. It rides on the wings of the breeze and thunders in the storm. (186)}\]

In short, excellence in speaking was an incredible power, and in her Delsartian system of elocutionary training, Brown worked to impart that power to her students.

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69 Robertson also discusses color in his *Manual of Elocution and Philosophy*. Perhaps this discussion of color as it relates to Delsartism came originally from Monroe, who taught both Robertson and Stebbins. Brown’s discussion of color seems more in line with Stebbins’ discussion. Both Brown and Stebbins adopt a spiritual tone by beginning their expositions on color with a quote from the Koran.
As Donawerth describes, Brown’s system of Delsartian elocution is “direct[ed] . . . toward the classical end of public speaking” (*Conversational* 122). However, even though Brown draws from classical rhetors such as Cicero, she regenders that classical oratorical tradition. Rather than the classical oratorical goal of persuasion, Brown emphasizes the speaker’s embodied, expressive influence. In part Brown’s emphasis on expression over persuasion is influenced by Delsarte’s emphasis on the affective, and in part, Brown’s emphasis on expression demonstrates her application of Delsarte’s theories of expression toward her own understanding of expression in public speaking. As Brown explains in the preface to *Bits and Odds* (c. 1880), a short elocutionary compilation of pieces for recitation and practice, the realm of classical oratory is “limited.” Oratory is confined to mere persuasion—“to convince the listener at will while he has his ear” (5).
But the elocutionist's field is "broader": the elocutionist "giv[es] forth those thoughts and feelings he has created in his mind, suggested by the expression of another, and caus[es] the listener on the other hand to start the kindred chords vibrating in unison with his own" (5). Similarly, in *Elocution and Physical Culture*, Brown describes, “The soul is often moved with feeling. We touch the strings of our harp and run through the whole gamut of expression.” (186). As Brown suggests, the elocutionist moves the speaker through the “vibrations” of feelings. That is, through the elocutionist’s embodied expression he or she affects the listener in a similarly embodied way—“the kindred chords vibrating in unison.”

Brown regenders public speaking as an affective and embodied experience shared between speaker and audience. In a way, this expressive characterization of public speaking is similar to what Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin (1995) have described as "invitational rhetoric"—rhetoric that “constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and to see it as the rhetor does” (5)—or in this case, an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and *feel* it as the rhetor does. Foss and Griffin’s invitational rhetoric is a regendered rhetoric that redresses the patriarchal bias of traditional Western notions of rhetoric as persuasion. Instead of emphasizing “persuasion, influence, and power,” as traditional definitions of rhetoric do, invitational rhetoric rests upon a “commitment to the creation of relationships of equality,” “a recognition of the immanent value of all beings,” and an allowance of “individuals to make their own decisions” (4). Similarly, Brown’s understanding of the value of public speaking eschews the classical emphasis on persuasion and rests instead on an embodied
understanding of sympathy and mutual understanding. Rather than *convincing* the audience, the elocutionist *gives* thoughts and feelings that encourage mutual feeling and thinking between speaker and listener.

Moreover, Brown regenders public speaking by emphasizing that instead of positioning herself as superior to her audience as one does in the classical, patriarchal rhetorical tradition the speaker must have sympathy with her audience as well as sympathy for “h[er] fellow man [or woman].” This emphasis on sympathy places the Delsartian study of elocution as a centerpiece in the student’s activist education. As Susan Kates describes in *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education, 1885-1937* (2001), Brown’s Delsartian pedagogy emphasizes that the art of public speaking is always to be considered in service of a greater cause, namely the greater good of the community. As Brown explains, the study of Delsartian elocution teaches students to use their intellect and powers of expression in service to their moral and social obligations:

> . . . intellect is not the highest gift to man. The business of intellect is simply to know. Above and back of that stands character—the soul that directs and impels both mind and body. Elocution teaches the student that he [sic] is to cultivate these higher powers; that he is to quicken his sense of obligation to himself, to his fellow man. (“First Lessons in Elocution” qtd. Kates 70-71).

Brown’s system of Delsartian elocution pays special attention to the activist potential inherent in one’s development of expressive consciousness. As the novice speaker masters her understanding of the thoughts and feelings within and her ability to express
those thoughts and feelings through her body and voice, she would also develop a sense of the moral obligation that accompanies the powers of speech.  

Women’s Delsartian Legacy

Brown’s application of Delsartian elocution to activist education and political rhetoric serves as the first in a long tradition of women who would use their Delsartian training as they made their entry onto the speaking platform to argue on behalf of social reform. Moreover, as Brown suggests, training in Delsartian elocution not only empowers students to speak out on behalf of their “fellow man [or woman]”; such training obliges the student to do so. Brown’s emphasis on the activist obligations of elocutionary education demonstrates the greatest potential of expressive consciousness. At the very least, the development of expressive consciousness would grant the speaker a keen awareness of her internal thoughts and feelings, an embodied ability to express those thoughts and feelings, and a power to make those thoughts and feelings felt by an audience. Such abilities would prove incredibly worthwhile to the novice woman speaker making her way to the speaking platform for the first time. As Emily Bishop suggests, woman’s recently acquired “high position” necessitates “correspondingly high powers of performance” (“Delsarte” 749). In other words, a woman’s ability to make an impact on society is dependent upon her development of expressive and rhetorical abilities. However, in Brown’s emphasis on the elocutionist’s “obligation” to her fellow

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70 This evolution in expression is similar to the developmental stages Charles Wesley Emerson describes in *Evolution of Expression* (1888), in which feelings of magnanimity are among the final stages of expressive development (11). However, Emerson does not seem to emphasize the activist or political potential of such development of expressive consciousness. See my analysis of Wesley’s *Evolution of Expression* in Chapter 1.
men and women, there is the sense that one’s desire to serve others and one’s
development of expressive consciousness are interdependent. In order to reform society
to make it better and more equal, women need expressive powers; in turn, by developing
those expressive powers, women develop a heightened understanding of the need to make
society better and more equal.

While the activist obligation concomitant with the development of expressive
consciousness is most explicit in Brown’s—and to a slightly lesser extent, Bishop’s—
elocutionary teachings, the relation between elocutionary study and activism is implicit as
well in Hovey’s and Stebbins’ work and writings. In their own careers, Hovey and
Stebbins demonstrate that the study of Delsartian elocution served as a gateway to further
activism and education. For example, Hovey fell into the study of elocution and Delsarte
through her work as a lecturer on women’s dress reform. Prompted by a desire to correct
her “faults in her enunciation” so that she might improve her lectures, Bishop entered the
Boston University School of Oratory where she discovered Delsartism and was
introduced to a wider range of women’s causes beyond women’s liberation from corsets
and tight dresses (Macdonald 62). Likewise, in many ways Stebbins—described as “a
girl thrilling with enthusiastic ideas of Art, Oratory and Social Reform”—used
Delsartism as a departure point for teaching women a broader range of topics on
philosophy, theology, and metaphysics (Stebbins New York 22).

Hovey’s, Stebbins’, Bishop’s, and Brown’s teaching of Delsarte was in itself a
form of activism on behalf of women. By teaching young women to realize their
expressive potential, Delsartian women responded to a long entrenched elocutionary
tradition that limited women’s rhetorical potential to the domestic sphere. This limited and limiting tradition of women’s elocutionary education was exemplified in the elocution readers and manuals of Wollstonecraft, Barbauld, and Anna and William Russell, which assumed that only men spoke in public while women merely read to their families. Hovey, Stebbins, Bishop, and Brown regendered these elocutionary and oratorical traditions. Serving as feminine embodiments of Delsarte and appealing specifically to female learners in their teachings and writings, Hovey, Stebbins, Bishop, and Brown established Delsartism as a site of women’s rhetorical practice and education. Their systems of Delsarte served as forms of rhetorical education designed to liberate women from oppressive gendered conventions of bodily expression, and their emphasis on the embodied, affective, and sympathetic as powerful rhetorical tools regendered classical understandings of rhetoric by shifting the emphasis from patriarchic persuasion to feminine, expressive influence.

In the footsteps of these four leaders, a number of women elocution teachers, theorists, and practitioners would emerge. One particular way women elocutionists carried out the tradition established by Hovey, Stebbins, Bishop, and Brown was through the development of Delsartian systems of physical culture. This canon of women elocutionists made Delsartian physical culture central to women’s expressive training, and in the next chapter, I examine the ways in which women elocutionists’ systems of physical culture worked to regender the rhetorical body and traditionally masculine understandings of embodied eloquence.
Chapter 3 - Rhetorical Bodies and Womanly Eloquence: Regendering the Public Speaker Through Physical Culture

[Americans] added, they devised, they evolved from the few gestures given by the French master a whole system of movements which they called by his name, and which has become very popular in young ladies' seminaries and young ladies' clubs. The name of Delsarte has been so strongly associated with this system, that to most people the word 'Delsarte' without the word 'gymnastics' would not mean anything. (561)

-Adéle Woodward "Delsarte's Daughter in America" (1893)

Following the introduction of Francois Delsarte's theories to the United States in the early 1870s, the body – its health, cultivation, and appearance – assumed a central role in elocutionary theory and teaching. Influenced by Delsarte's emphasis on the relation between body, mind, and soul in embodied expression, American elocutionists stressed the cultivation of the physical body as a prerequisite for good expression. The study of physical culture – gymnastics, exercises, and other forms of physical training – became a large and important subset of elocutionary study with Delsarte-based systems of physical culture leading the way. Late nineteenth-century elocutionists, especially women elocutionists, maintained that physical culture exercises would improve physical

71 In Werner's Directory of Elocutionists, Readers, Lecturers, and Other Public Instructors and Entertainers (1878), Adéle Woodward is listed as a "Recitationist and Elocution Teacher in English, French, and German" in New York (381). Her article "Delsarte's Daughter in America" appears in Edgar S. Werner's compendium of Delsarte literature, Delsarte System of Expression (1893).
strength, ability, and flexibility; relieve tension, stress, and anxiety; and most importantly, cultivate the body as a graceful and affective medium of expression.

In *Reformers and Visionaries: The Americanization of the Art of Dance* (1979), dance historian Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter describes the rise of Delsartian-influenced programs of physical culture as the second major phase in American Delsartism. Unlike the first phase, which was closely aligned with the work of Steele Mackaye and the "professional training of speakers and actors," the second phase of American Delsartism, arising in the early 1880s, emphasized the application of Delsarte theories to physical culture "for the general public" and "became particularly popular among women" (18). During this second phase Delsartism was so closely aligned with physical culture that, as Adèle Woodward comments in her 1893 article "Delsarte's Daughter in America," the name of Delsarte had became practically synonymous with systems of women's gymnastics.

Although Delsarte-influenced elocutionists took up physical culture as a means to develop the body's ability to express and perform, the American physical culture movement did not originate as a subset of elocutionary or Delsartian study. As cultural historian Harvey Green describes in *Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society* (1986), American interest in gymnastics, calisthenics, physical education, and sports began as early as the 1830s. Early advocates of physical culture included, among others, Charles Follen, a German immigrant who brought German gymnastics to Harvard in 1826; Edward Hitchcock, who established the first college program of physical education at Amherst in 1830; and Catherine Beecher, who
During the postbellum era, the movement gained momentum with Dioclesian Lewis's "new gymnastics," a German- and Swedish-influenced exercise program that used wands, clubs, and dumbbells. Dio Lewis's system of gymnastics was designed for all genders and ages, but it was touted as especially beneficial to women.

From the beginning, the physical culture movement in America specifically advocated women's physical education and health. As Green explains, the "organized physical activity that occurred in the United States between 1830 and 1850 was concentrated in colleges and academies, especially in those for young women" (91). Calisthenics – defined by Hitchcock as the "classical name for female gymnastics" – were designed initially for young women only and ultimately for both sexes (241). Programs of calisthenics were included in the curricula at Emma Willard's school in Troy, New York beginning in 1821; Catherine Beecher's school in Hartford, Connecticut beginning in 1824; and Mount Holyoke since its founding in 1837 (Green 91). The practice of calisthenics incorporated light, easy movements into rhythmical drills. Sometimes dumbbells or Indian clubs were incorporated, but heavy weights and equipment were discouraged (Todd 90). These exercises were not designed to be strenuous; instead calisthenics would give women "freshness and fairness, and a rosy glow," as Hitchcock argued in *Dyspepsia Forestalled and Resisted* (1830) (241).
After the introduction of Delsarte's theories to America in the early 1870s, elocutionists joined the burgeoning physical culture movement. While both men and women elocutionists produced physical culture systems and texts, this area of elocutionary and Delsartian study was dominated by women. Influenced by Delsarte’s emphasis on the correlation between thoughts, feelings, and expressions, and his tri-part analysis of the body into mental, moral, and vital zones, late nineteenth-century women elocutionists applied Delsartism to a practical system of physical exercises and gymnastics. Women's application of Delsarte to physical culture is not surprising given the long precedence of calisthenics and exercise in women's educational curricula. However, the physical exercises created by Delsarte-influenced elocutionists were different from earlier systems of women's exercises. These exercises were given names like "aesthetic physical culture," "Delsartian physical culture," "psycho-physical culture," and "harmonic gymnastics," and promised more than just physical benefits. The new programs of physical culture created by Delsarte-influenced women were aimed at the development of the body for expression.

For example, Marion Lowell, author of *Harmonic Gymnastics and Pantomimic Expression* (1894), emphasizes that her system of gymnastics aims to "perfectly fit" the body "to meet all the demands of expression, both in nature and in art" (7). Similarly, in
her succinctly titled manual *Physical Culture* (1892), Mrs. John Bailey stresses the cultivation of "a perfect body under perfect control," because "all we express in this world of the mind and soul, must be by through the activity of the body" (12). Women elocutionists like Lowell and Bailey emphasize expression as the ultimate goal of physical culture study. Their exercise programs teach the relation between internal impressions and the external expression. Usually such programs of physical culture begin with exercises designed to develop balance, or “harmonic poise” through a series of movements that shift the weight of the body from side to side. Then through “decomposing” exercises—in which the student surrenders control of the body, allowing it to relax, go limp, and become freed of “every other agent of expression”—students develop flexibility and the “physical basis of perfect ease” (Lowell 8). Through recomposing exercises, “each and every agent of expression” is trained “to obey instinctively and unconsciously those laws of nature which give precision and harmony of action” (Lowell 8). Finally, through pantomimic exercises, students learn gestures, attitudes, and bearings that express specific ideas, emotions, intentions, states, and characterizations. Each of the exercises in these harmonic or Delsartian physical culture programs works to cultivate the expressive instrument of the body. With an emphasis on expression of thoughts and feelings, these systems of exercises turned physical culture into a rhetorical study, and thus provided women a form of bodily rhetorical education.

During the decades between 1880 and 1910 when the discipline of rhetoric was still primarily male-dominated, Delsarte's theories and the study of physical culture served as sites where women elocutionists could contribute to the theorizing of rhetorical
delivery and the rhetorical body. As an examination of the discussions of women's bodies and exercises reveals, women's work in physical culture contributes to a feminine ideal of bodily eloquence that sharply diverges from traditionally masculine notions of delivery and the rhetorical body. In their physical culture texts, late nineteenth-century women elocution theorists and teachers invoke a primarily female audience and design exercises to help female students cultivate their bodies as vehicles of expressive influence in rhetorical and dramatic performance. Furthermore, women promoted physical culture exercises as a form of female empowerment—a means to literally strengthen women's bodies and minds.  

The Body in Rhetorical Scholarship

While feminist historians of rhetoric have made great strides in the recovery of the contributions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women rhetors, most of the women who taught and wrote about physical culture during this same period have been overlooked. Of the women elocutionists discussed in this chapter, the only familiar name for most readers will be Genevieve Stebbins, whose work in physical culture has been recuperated through its inclusion in Jane Donawerth's *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900* (2002). Outside of rhetorical history, the work of Stebbins and other late nineteenth-century women physical culturists has been regarded as influential to the development of modern dance; some of the most extensive treatment of turn-of-the-

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74 My analysis of women’s work in physical culture focuses primarily on women-authored physical culture books; however, women’s work in this area can also be found in a number of parlor rhetorics, which covered a wide range of elocutionary and oratorical instruction including physical culture and usually addressed a wider audience than texts devoted solely to physical culture. For an examination of representations of gender in the parlor rhetoric tradition, see Nan Johnson’s *Gender and Rhetorical Space* (2002).
twentieth-century physical culture has been produced by feminist scholars in dance studies. 75 Indeed, the emphasis on movement and the body in women's physical culture may seem more appropriately defined as a dance study rather than a rhetorical study. As Donawerth describes, Genevieve Stebbins and the other turn-of-the-century women elocutionists who wrote about physical culture, took elocution "in the direction of physical education, pantomime, and dance, minimizing the spoken word" (196). However, women's emphasis on the cultivation of the body over the cultivation of spoken or written rhetorical practices does not make their work any less rhetorical. Rather, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women elocutionists' theories and programs of physical culture bring to the fore the importance of the body in rhetorical performance.

Feminist scholars have only begun to investigate the role of the body in nineteenth-century women's rhetoric. As Carol Mattingly notes in Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America (2002), feminist scholars examining women's rhetorical practice "have paid surprisingly little attention to the body, [which is] perhaps the greatest barrier women speaking faced due to the culture and material reality of their bodies" (135). Moreover, even when scholars do notice "women's bodies on the rhetorical landscape, they . . . value[] those bodies according to existing standards; that is, they have measured women rhetors' worth by their ability to negotiate the trails forged by men" (Mattingly 2). Over the past decade, scholarship such as Mattingly's study of the rhetorical role of nineteenth-century women's dress and Lindal

75 See, for example, Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter's The Cultivation of Mind and Body in American Delsartism (1999) and Judy Burns' "The Culture of Nobility/The Nobility of Self-Cultivation" in Moving Words: Re-Writing Dance (1996).
Buchanan's study of women's delivery in *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors* (2005), have helped to highlight the important role the gendered body played in nineteenth-century women's rhetorical performance.

As Buchanan demonstrates through her examination of feminine styles of delivery, the politics of location and the presence of women's bodies in public rhetorical performance proved to be the most difficult obstacles for nineteenth-century women rhetors to tackle. Recognizing the role of the body in nineteenth-century women's rhetorical performance, however, requires a shift in the ways feminist scholars understand women's rhetorics and the barriers women faced when taking up the speaking platform. Buchanan points out that "[r]hetorical scholars have favored metaphors of voice when discussing women's challenges, speaking in terms of their struggles to ‘express’ their views publicly, to ‘address’ mixed-sex audiences, to obtain a ‘hearing’ from legislators or authorities” (37). However, such metaphors are ill-fitting, considering that women’s “disembodied or domestically bound voices became acceptable long before their public bodies did” (37). Instead of metaphors of voice, Buchanan calls on feminist scholars to reconsider women's rhetoric using metaphors of the body. Such a reconsideration leads to a new set of inquiries:

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76 In *Regendering Delivery*, Buchanan discusses the various styles of “feminine” delivery in early nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric. Included among the feminine styles of delivery are “surrogate delivery,” whereby a woman gives her speech to a credible man to deliver; delivering discourses in “feminized,” private spaces rather than in public; and using feminine genres, such as correspondence and conversation. It is telling that many of the feminine styles of delivery Buchanan describes preclude public speaking altogether. Other strategies Buchanan describes as feminine styles of delivery that do not necessarily preclude women’s public speaking are the emphasis of traditional feminine roles and the strategy of delivering a “speech” by reading aloud while seated in front of the audience. (77-90)
Where, for example, does the woman rhetor discover a public location in which to stand and then speak? What corporeal stances, movements, gestures, postures, and expressions are available or off limits to her? Which bodily states and appearances can or cannot be acknowledged by her or her audience? How does she employ the visual rhetoric of physical form and fashion to compliment the discursive act? (Buchanan 39)

Buchanan's *Regendering Delivery* and Mattingly's *Appropriate[ing] Dress* help to offer answers to some of the questions Buchanan raises. As my analysis demonstrates, women's physical culture texts offer feminist historians of rhetoric a glimpse into how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women answered these questions themselves.

A Masculine Tradition of Bodily Eloquence

Traditionally, the rhetorical body has been characterized as masculine. 77 In the third book of *De Oratore*, Cicero emphasizes a "bold and manly action of body," and this recommendation served as a mainstay of rhetorical delivery that persisted well into the nineteenth century. Allusions to Ciceronian manly action were particularly common in nineteenth-century American elocutionary texts, as elocutionary men defined oratorical strengths in terms of masculinity and oratorical weaknesses in terms of femininity. For example, in *Practical Manual of Elocution (1845)* Merritt Caldwell describes "the manly

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77 In the past five years, rhetorical scholars have brought to our attention the very important role of the masculine ideal body in rhetoric's origins in ancient Athens. For example, see Debra Hawhee's *Bodily Arts: Rhetorics and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (2004) and James Fredal's *Rhetorical Action in Ancient Athens: Persuasive Artistry from Solon to Demosthenes* (2006). Though arguably much work is still to be done to examine the role of the body within the rhetorical tradition—especially in tracing the treatment of the body in the long history of rhetoric that follows its classical beginnings—Hawhee’s and Fredal's works are helpful in thinking about the indispensable role of the male body in early Greek rhetoric.
attitude of the body, which neither inclines nor stoops, with the head in an erect and natural position, . . . as the very symbol of dignity” (294-5 emphasis added). Similarly, Warren P. Edgarton's *New York Speaker* (1860) warns against "feeble and girlish movements of the arms, instead of manly action" (44 original emphasis). In *American Elocutionist* (1846), William Russell, quoting Gilbert Austin, asserts that "there must be a manly and free exertion of the muscles of the whole body, the general consent of which is indispensable to graceful action" (213). Even in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Delsarte-influenced elocutionist Frank Townsend Southwick upholds "manly bearing" not only as the quintessential indicator of oratorical dignity but moreover as an overall reflection of moral character:

The body is the outward manifestation of the soul within and faithfully indicates every emotion, however slight. . . . Every disagreeable or evil passion is registered upon the organism, until the frequent scowl or sneer becomes a permanent disfigurement of the face, or the slouchy, careless carriage of the body becomes a habit, and finally, a bearing, which is a true index of the lazy or careless spirit within. On the other hand, a happy

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78 Edgerton, who served as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War, was a lecturer and teacher of elocution. His *New York Speaker* went through several editions between 1857 and 1868. In addition to compiling *The New York Speaker*, Edgerton edited of *The Western Orator* (1900).

79 Russell's quotation of Austin demonstrates the highly citational and self-referential nature that characterized much of the work of nineteenth-century elocution. Austin himself was heavily indebted to the classical rhetorical tradition, and he quoted extensively from Cicero, Quintilian, and the *Ad Herennium*. In turn, Austin's work was often alluded to and quoted directly in American elocution texts. Caldwell's *Practical Manual of Elocution*, Andrew Comstock's *Comstock's Elocution* (1808), and George Vanderhoff's *The Art of Elocution* (1846) quote at length from Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806). Similarly, American elocutionists often borrowed from each other. For example, Caldwell's description of "the manly attitude of the body . . . as the very symbol of dignity" shows up again, unattributed, in John Cervigos Zachos' *Analytic Elocution* (1846).
disposition or a truly brave spirit shows itself in the open countenance or manly bearing. (73)

As the examples from Caldwell, Edgerton, Russell, and Southwick clearly indicate, the ideal oratorical body of the American elocution movement is that which is manly in terms of attitude, movement, and bearing. This masculine ideal is defined by a presence of manly dignity and is revealing of a "truly brave spirit."

Further examples of this masculine bodily tradition in the American elocution movement are found in the models of oratorical excellence upheld by prominent elocutionists. In the nineteenth century orators such Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Henry Ward Beecher, and Wendell Phillips became canonized for their manly eloquence; these figures were both admired and idolized by American elocutionists. For example, in "Wendell Phillips – as a Man and as an Orator," John Wesley Churchill, a public reader and professor of public speaking at Andover, commends Phillips' gentlemanly presence on the platform. "Whenever Phillips spoke his audience felt that there was not only a man behind his speech, but a gentleman," writes Churchill. Phillips' movements are characterized by "the easy deliberation of a gentleman in his drawing-room," his attitude demonstrated a "union of firmness and repose, the perfect economy of muscular effort," and his voice "possessed a carrying power that penetrated to every part of any large audience-room" (4). Phillips' power and force as an orator are attributed to this easy, gentlemanly presence on the platform.

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80 Originally published as Primary of Elocution and Action in 1890, Southwick's Elocution and Action went through five editions between 1890 and 1928. Southwick, who served as the head of the Department of Elocution and Dramatic Art at the Grand Conservatory of Music of the City of New York, also authored Steps to Oratory; A School Speaker (1900) and How to Recite; A School Speaker (1900).
Churchill maintains, "God organized Wendell Phillips for 'the mystery of commanding' multitudes." Phillips' movements, attitude, bearing, and voice were the embodiment of eloquence. As Churchill describes, Phillips "was not merely eloquent, he was eloquence" (4 emphasis added).

Other similar examples of manly oratorical eloquence abound in elocutionary writings. Profiles of great orators and preachers were regular features in Edgar S. Werner's series of elocutionary magazines. In another example of Churchill's profiles of oratorical men, Henry Ward Beecher's oratorical career is praised in terms of his manly delivery, his ideas, and the longevity of his career:

In force and volume of manhood, in fulness [sic], richness, and brilliancy of ideas, in a career of forty years of uninterrupted service in such a variety of fields as lecturer, philanthropist, patriot and preacher, and all this united with a matchless gift of eloquence, he was preëminently the Christian orator of the English-speaking preacher, and the fore-most private citizen of the Republic. (184)

As in Churchill's profile of Phillips, Beecher's oratorical abilities are described in terms of their forceful effects on audiences. However, while Phillips is described as having a gentlemanly and powerful presence, Beecher is described as an oratorical soldier waging "warfare" on "behalf of intellectual, religious and political liberty." Beecher "wielded the

81 For further examples of orator profiles see Anderson’s "Gladstone as an Orator" (1885); Kramer’s articles on “Pulpit Oratory,” (1886), “Bishop Bascom,” (1886), and “Rev. Henry Ward Beecher” (1887); "Cicero on Oratory" (1885); "Henry Clay as Orator. I-II" (1885);"Bismarck's Oratory" (1885) "George Whitefield: His Oratory and its Effects" (1888); and Rev. H.A. Cleveland,’s “Wendell Phillips and his Oratory” (1891).
weapon of oratory with the splendid excellences of insight, sincerity, sympathy, simplicity and strength" (184).

Churchill's profiles of Phillips and Beecher provide an interesting counterpoint; they exemplify two different styles of oratorical delivery. Phillips was the "gentleman," and Beecher was the soldier. However, even though these two orators serve as contrasts in style, they are both lauded for their embodiments of masculinity. Phillips' and Beecher's oratorical delivery demonstrate that ideals of bodily eloquence could have variations in terms of style, character, and overall presence; they also demonstrate that masculinity could be embodied in various ways. However even though definitions of masculinity and understandings of masculine embodiment and movement were somewhat fluid, it is clear that masculinity, in some form, was the desired ideal. Feminine eloquence would have been an unfamiliar – even oxymoronic – concept for many nineteenth-century elocutionists. To be eloquent was to be masculine.

While Churchill’s profiles of Phillips and Beecher in *The Voice* primarily addressed a specialized audience of elocution teachers and public readers, the same gendered assumptions Churchill makes about eloquence were echoed in public discussions and popular representations of oratorical performance. In particular, masculine ideals of bodily eloquence were promulgated to the general public through the wide circulation of histories and collections of American oratory in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Collections of American oratory such as Alexander Johnston’s *American Orations: Studies in American Political History* (1896), *Masterpieces of Oratory* (1900), Guy Charleton Lee’s *The World’s Orators* (1901), and Chauncey M.
Depew’s *Masterpieces of Eloquence* (1902) established canons of American speeches and speakers based on the male statesman exemplar and rarely acknowledged the oratorical accomplishments of nineteenth-century women (Johnson 146-172). Through the repetition of male names in their tables of contents, male faces and bodies in their illustrations, and descriptions of masculine eloquence in their introductory, critical, and biographical remarks, these canonical collections reified the notion that to be eloquent was to be masculine. Canon authors explicitly describe their publications as collections of great men. In the preface to *Best American Orations* (1910), editor John R. Howard compares the great orators in his compilation to the “giants” of ancient times and “the mighty old men of old” (iii). Linking the major figures of oratorical history to the soldiers of history’s great battles, Howard begins his discussion of the American oratorical tradition by stating that “every great national crisis [e.g. revolution, territorial expansion, civil war] seems to have developed the strong men for its needs” (iii). Like “heroes of battle,” orators were “strong men” who fought for the nation’s interests. Such representations of orators and oratory helped to make popular the assumption that eloquence was a masculine quality. It was against such an assumption that women physical culturists worked to emphasize female speakers, female bodies, and feminine principles of expression.

**Women's Physical Culture and New Bodily Ideals**

When women began to take up the study of physical culture in the late nineteenth century, masculine ideals of bodily eloquence were firmly entrenched in popular assumptions about standards of oratorical performance and delivery. The masculine
imperative served as an obvious problem for women speakers and elocutionists.

Traditional models of eloquence were not available to women. In order to be eloquent, a woman would have to embody masculinity; however, this would have been unacceptable for most nineteenth-century audiences. The problem is summed up in a paper given by Elizabeth Mansfield Irving at the Seventh Convention of the National Association of Elocutionists in 1898:

If women readers attempt to imitate men . . . in almost every case they will make their work coarse, often to offensiveness. The same rule holds good here as when a woman enters a business or profession that has been deemed the province of men. If she attempts to put on mannish airs, we get the monstrosity so well known as 'New Woman,' and failure must be her ultimate goal. Womanly women the world over, have not only been the admiration of men, but also of women. Woman's crown of glory is her womanly attributes. (232)\(^{82}\)

While Irving's critique of the "New Woman" seems to reveal conservative assumptions about gender, the problem she elaborates on is a rhetorical one. If nineteenth-century women were to take up the platform, they had to be able to do so in a manner that would be acceptable in terms of nineteenth-century gender ideologies. To put on "mannish airs" or act according to traditionally masculine definitions of eloquence might offend.

\(^{82}\) Irving received a Master of Elocution from the National School of Elocution and Oratory in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In *The Ohio Blue Book; or Who's Who in the Buckeye State* (1896), she is listed as a public reader and teacher of dramatic art based in Toledo, Ohio (Van Tassell 189). She served as the treasurer of the National Association of Elocutionists from 1890-91 and the treasurer of the National Speech Arts Association in 1913.
audiences; a style of delivery that preserved the female speaker's "womanly attributes" would be more admirable and rhetorically efficacious. As Nan Johnson describes in *Gender and Rhetorical Space* (2002), the ideological climate of the nineteenth century was such that “[w]omen speakers could be successful only to the degree that they were able to perform essentialist feminine identity in some recognizable way” (120). Like Irving, who urged female speakers to deploy “womanly attributes” (not “mannish airs”), women speakers such as Frances Willard, Mary A. Livermore, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton relied on an ethos of femininity that drew upon their domestic roles and duties as wives, mothers, and “noble maids.”

While in practice women were compelled to appropriate femininity when they took up the speaking platform, most of the dominant elocutionary texts of the time assumed a male readership and did not offer instruction in womanly or feminine styles of delivery. Women elocutionists who created systems of physical culture, however, invoked a primarily female readership for whom instruction in feminine eloquence was necessary. As Emily M. Bishop describes in *Americanized Delsarte Culture* (1892), her Delsarte physical culture classes were "usually composed of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters – with an occasional gentleman" (viii). Physical culture programs promised to develop eloquence in expression, but instead of assuming male bodies and manly eloquence, as most of the male elocutionary authors and teachers of the time did, women's physical culture texts assume female bodies and redefine eloquence according to more feminine values.
In contrast to the masculine eloquent ideals promulgated in male-authored elocutionary texts, women's systems of physical culture introduced bodily ideals based on feminine qualities such as emotional expression, beauty, and grace. Eleanor Georgen's *The Delsarte System of Physical Culture* (1893) serves a representative example of the regendering of bodily ideals in women's physical culture texts. Though not the most widely circulated physical culture text of its kind, Georgen's *Delsarte System* clearly lays out the primary objectives of her course of exercises – objectives echoed by many of her female physical culture colleagues. These objectives included both the physical benefits of health, strength, youthfulness, and the relief of nervousness or tension, as well as the rhetorical benefits of developed affective sensibilities and beauty in embodied expression. In her description of the latter rhetorical objectives of her physical culture program, Georgen works toward a definition of feminine bodily eloquence. "[I]n giving us perfect control of our bodies," Georgen explains, her system of culture "arouses within us a keener sensibility" (n.p.). The "keener sensibility" is one of the defining features of Georgen's understanding of bodily eloquence:

The body becomes alive to the feeling within, and the soul awakens. The mind first grasps an idea, which is then conveyed to the emotional center, the breast, the home of the heart; the heart in turn should mirror the sentiment, and the face should awaken to the thought or emotion within. All action should radiate from the center. The body is swayed according to the strength of emotion, until the latter, seeking a wider outlet, flows
into the extremities and becomes a gesture – the only true gesture . . .

(n.p.)

Though Georgen's description of this bodily ideal does not explicitly refer to "womanly attributes," her emphasis on emotional sensibilities and affective expression suggest feminine values. The type of "keener sensibilities," Georgen describes could very well have been called "feminine sensibilities." Women, who at that time were believed to have more sensitive nervous systems than men, were considered both more emotional than and morally superior to men. Women therefore would be better able to access the "emotional center" and to let their body be "swayed" by the feeling of emotion.\(^{83}\)

Moreover, the surrender to emotion Georgen describes would have been considered more appropriate for women than men. Georgen's emphasis on the speaker's emotional sensibilities is in direct opposition to masculine eloquence. The oratorical eloquence of Wendell Phillips and Henry Ward Beecher, for example, is described in terms of their command over an audience. Beecher's style of delivery was full of "force and volume of manhood"; he "wielded the weapon of oratory" against his ideological foes (184). Similarly, Phillips possessed "the mystery of commanding' multitudes." Rather than demonstrating "keener sensibilities," and letting their expressions "radiate" from the emotional center of the heart, orators like Phillips and Beecher demonstrated

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\(^{83}\) Such assumptions were considered to have a scientific basis. In a June 1895 article for *Popular Science*, "The Psychology of Women," G.T.W. Patrick explains the scientific beliefs of the time: "One of the most marked differences between man and woman is the greater excitability of the nerve centers in the latter. Woman possess in a higher degree than man the fundamental property of all nervous tissue, irritability or response to any stimulus. The vasomotor system is particularly excitable, and this fact is in immediate connection with her emotional life. That woman is more emotional than man is only another way of stating the same fact" (216-7).
manly eloquence through their command over listeners and the suppression of their own passions. Phillips never "indulged" in "[t]he dramatic expression of emotion"; "[t]here were no tears in [his] beautiful voice." Rather, Phillips "was a nature full of tenderness, but not of pathos. . . . His action was characterized by a manly force, unstudied grace, significance, and just precision." The characteristics that defined Phillips' masculine eloquence – "manly force, unstudied grace, significance, and just precision"– suggest a stoic command over the body. The manly orator, demonstrating persuasive force over his audience, has control of his emotions and uses his body to gesture in a natural yet "precis[e]" and "significan[t]" way.

The ideal bodily eloquence described by Georgen also requires a command over the body, but instead of controlling emotions, the speaker desires instead to cultivate the body to express those emotions better. Additionally, the speaker must cultivate her body to express emotions in the beautiful way that nature intended. As Georgen describes, exercises can give "even an ugly" body the ability to become beautiful through its cultivation of bodily expression:

By exercising the facial muscles we teach the countenance to express and the eyes to glow with the intelligence of the thought within; and by the same process the fingers become sensitive to feeling, giving delicacy to the touch and symmetry to even an ugly hand. For through this art we learn . . . to give life and elasticity to movements; consequently, the hand will give expression to the emotions, and surely there is nothing more
beautiful than an expressive hand. It is far more to be desired than one that merely possesses the outlines of symmetry. (n.p.)

Georgen's description seems to assume a female body. The hand, in particular, has seemingly feminine characteristics: It is sensitive, delicate, beautiful, and expressive. Georgen extrapolates from this example of the beautiful, expressive hand to describe the movement and gesture of the whole body: "[N]ot only should the arms and hands gesticulate, but the lower limbs as well, by being in full sympathy with every other active part." Here Georgen outlines an ideal of bodily movement that adheres to the feminine qualities of sensitivity, delicacy, beauty, and expressiveness.

Further examples of feminine bodily ideals similar to those in Georgen's *Delsarte Physical Culture* can be found in other Delsartean women's physical culture texts. Like Georgen's ideal hand, other women physical culturists highlight specific examples of femininity and characteristics of expressiveness, beauty, and grace in their definitions of bodily ideals. For example, in *Delsartean Physical Culture* (1891), Carrica Le Favre encourages the development of "supple muscle" that is better suited to the expression of emotions.84 Dismissing the "hard and tense" – and implicitly masculine – muscular form of the "professional gymnast," Le Favre instead encourages her students to develop the more feminine, "elastic muscle, to give suppleness and expressiveness" (original

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84 Le Favre served as the first president of the American Delsarte Association. In addition to *Delsartean Physical Culture* (1891), which was reprinted as *Physical Culture, Founded on Delsarte Principles* in 1892, Le Favre also authored a number of self-improvement texts, including *Mother's Help and Child's Friend* (1890) and *The Royal Road to Beauty, Health and Higher Development, as Based on a Vegetarian Diet and the Proper Habits of Life* (1892). Carrica Le Favre also published under the name Caroline Williams Le Favre.
emphasis 59). Le Favre's description of muscle development emphasizes a sort of femininity in the muscular tone of the body. Elastic, supple muscle tone characterizes Le Favre's notion of the ideal rhetorical body. "The body that best serves an enlightened race," she explains, "is not the one brain-starved and bound by a tense, hard muscle, nor the one loaded with superfluous tissue, but one well clothed with supple muscle" (59-60). Further, she argues that muscle tissue has a natural proclivity for expression; the cultivation of muscular tissues should enhance their natural expressive abilities. She explains that muscles are "full of life, vitality, action"; they are "capable of receptivity, conductivity [sic] and expressiveness" (64). Proper cultivation of these muscles should include exercises that are "freeing, training and inspiring" (64). These kinds of exercises promise to cultivate the ideal body with supple muscle and expressive ability.

Genevieve Stebbins promotes a notion of "the beautiful in strength" that, like Le Favre, supports the cultivation of bodily strength for the purposes of feminine beauty and expressiveness. In Dynamic Breathing and Harmonic Gymnastics (1892), Stebbins describes that her exercises are "aesthetic, giving a graceful control of the body." Unlike "[s]trongly-developed athletes," who "are never beautiful and seldom graceful," the model of bodily eloquence Stebbins suggests is characterized by “flexible action, in lines of changing curve” (97). The flexible, graceful, and beautiful action Stebbins describes features curved and spiral movements that mimic the shape of the female body. Flexible,
curved movement “is what distinguishes the beautiful from the merely strong,” Stebbins claims (97). Rather than the development of brute strength, Stebbins "insist[s] on the beautiful in strength and the graceful action of every voluntary muscle.” As the physical culture student progresses, her movements evolve from angular to circular to spiral movements, “because nature, in her natural development, is first angular, then circular, and finally, spiral; consequently, always beautiful” (97 original emphasis).

As Stebbins’ description of “beauty in strength” demonstrates, the bodily ideals in women’s physical culture texts privilege feminine characteristics. Along with Georgen and Le Favre, Stebbins regenders the traditionally masculine rhetorical body according to the feminine qualities of beauty, grace, flexibility, and sensitivity, and the feminine movements of curved and spiral motion. Moreover, as Georgen clearly shows, women physical culturists call on female students to cultivate their perceived moral superiority and feminine sensibilities as expressive assets. In short, women’s physical culture texts reclaim the feminine as a valuable rhetorical tool in embodied expression.
The bodily ideals described in Georgen's, Le Favre's, Stebbins' and other women's physical culture texts regender the traditionally masculine understandings of eloquence and the ideal rhetorical body. This revision of bodily eloquence is even clearer in the visual illustrations of gestures and poses included in women's physical culture texts. Demonstrating a significant move towards a more feminine model of eloquence for women to follow, women's physical culture texts provide a prolific collection of feminine images and models of rhetorical bodies.
By the final decades of the late nineteenth century, the use of visuals to teach gesture was a well entrenched convention in elocution manuals; however, not surprisingly, the visual tradition in nineteenth-century elocution that preceded women’s work in physical culture privileged the male orator. Setting the trend for visual treatments of gesture in elocutionary texts, Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806) includes 122 illustrations of figures demonstrating various positions and gestures for oratorical

![Figures from William Russell's American Elocutionist (1844)](image)

Figure 14 - Figures from William Russell's *American Elocutionist* (1844)

performance. Only eleven of these illustrations are of women. Variations of Austin’s figures appear in subsequent nineteenth-century American elocution manuals, which continue to privilege masculine bodies. For example, William Russell’s *American

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86 Ten out of the eleven illustrations of women in Austin’s *Chironomia* demonstrate dramatic action instead of oratorical action. These illustrations of dramatic gestures seem out of place considering that Austin warns orators to avoid the action of drama. As Philippa Spoel describes in "The Bodily Science of Austin's *Chironomia,*" "Austin cannot resist including representations of dramatic, whether male or female. . . . [H]e admires the grand passions of theatrical delivery but considers them inappropriate, even dangerous, for aspiring public speakers" (25). Of course in the early nineteenth century, women speakers of any kind—dramatic or oratorical—h inhabited similarly "inappropriate, even dangerous” positions (Spoel 25).
Elocutionist includes fifty-four Austin-inspired images of oratorical gestures, none of which are of women. Similarly, Merritt Caldwell’s Practical Manual of Elocution includes 100 images of gestures, faults in countenance, and oratorical and dramatic attitudes. Many of Caldwell’s images are close replicas of Austin’s figures, including Austin’s eleven images of women.

If included at all, illustrations of women in male-authored elocution texts tend to place women in inactive positions with a limited range of motion. Austin-influenced instruction in gesture like that found in Caldwell’s Practical Manual of Elocution name “reposed” as the only “female position” in oratorical action (299). In this position, “the elbows are nearly resting on the hips and one hand holds the wrist of the other” (Caldwell 299). Such a position suggests that women’s movement – and speaking – should be
enclosed and inhibited. In fact, in both Caldwell’s and Austin’s illustrations of this “female position” of oratorical action, the woman does not appear to be speaking at all; feminine oratorical action is portrayed as silent and still.

Figure 16 - “Madame Récamier in Sargent’s "The Silent Art: A Study of Pantomime and Action" (1890)

After Delsarte’s theories of the body and expression were introduced to American elocutionists in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, many of the references to Austin’s gestures gave way to emphases on models of expression in art, performance, and life. However even in Delsarte-influenced manuals of expression, male elocutionists continue to privilege masculine bodies in their visual depictions of oratorical gesture. Franklin H. Sargent, a prominent and influential American Delsartian, focuses his instruction on expressive, pantomimic action based on Delsarte’s theories of expression. Similar to women elocutionists who taught physical culture as a means towards developing affective and expressive bodily movements and attitudes, Sargent maintains,
“Consistent physical practices . . . must have an emotional intention as well as a physical one” (“Silent” 96). However, while his descriptions of bodily eloquence are similar to the emotive eloquence defined in women’s physical culture texts, Sargent upholds the masculine tradition through his visual illustrations. In his eleven-part series, “The Silent Art: A Study of Pantomime and Action” published in Werner’s Voice Magazine in 1890, Sargent brings in sketches of classical, Renaissance, and romantic sculpture and painting, including sculptures of Greco-Roman wrestlers, warriors, and gladiators, and Leonardo Da Vinci’s painting “The Last Supper.” In keeping with the Delsarte tradition, these images exemplify the height of expressive action. Only two of Sargent’s illustrations prominently feature women: sketches of David’s “Madame Récamier” and Sir Frederick Leighton’s “Summer Moon.” In sharp contrast to the action and movement depicted in the sculptures of warriors and gladiators, in both of these illustrations of female figures the women are either reclining or asleep. Like the “reposed” women in Austin’s Chironomia and Caldwell’s Practical Manual of Elocution, the images of women in Sargent’s pantomimic instruction suggest that the ideal forms of feminine oratorical or dramatic action are actually passivity and inaction.
Visualizing Feminine Eloquence

Women’s physical culture texts work against this long entrenched visual tradition of masculine rhetorical bodies by incorporating copious illustrations of women. While male-authored elocution texts feature numerous illustrations of male figures with few or no illustrations of female figures, women’s physical culture texts reverse this trend; their texts feature primarily illustrations of women with few or no illustrations of men. For example, in the sixth, enlarged and revised edition of *Delsarte System of Expression* (1902), Genevieve Stebbins includes thirty-two images of Greco-Roman statues, seventeen of which are of women. Similarly, Julia Thomas and Anna Gregory Thomas’ *Psycho-Physical Culture* (1892) includes forty-four drawings of women performing various physical culture exercises and poses – and no images of men. The twenty-one illustrations in Mabel Jenness’ *Comprehensive Physical Culture* (1892) are also all women, and so are all five of the illustrations in Carrica LeFavre’s *Delsartean Physical*
Culture (1891). Mary Tucker Magill’s Pantomimes; or Wordless Poems (originally published in 1882) includes thirty-six photographs, twenty-three of which are of women; the other thirteen feature both a man and a woman. Eleanor Georgen’s The Delsarte System of Physical Culture (1893) has a total of 253 illustrations of women and six photographs of women demonstrating statue poses. Georgen includes four illustrations of men, and these are included only to demonstrate different gendered conventions for sitting and bowing or curtseying. In one sense the overwhelming majority of women figures in these physical culture texts demonstrates one of the ways women elocutionists appealed to a female readership. The images also create a visual culture of women’s rhetorical bodies. They are literal illustrations of women’s embodied eloquence and work towards a definition of a once unfamiliar and oxymoronic concept of feminine eloquence.

Stebbins, for instance, draws on a Greco-Roman tradition of eloquence by including photographs of ancient Greek statues. Like the illustrations in Sargent’s study of pantomime, “Silent Art,” the figures in Stebbins’ Delsarte System of Expression serve as models of eloquence and expression. Some of the images she includes, such as the
statues of Apollo and Augustus Caesar, suggest the traditionally masculine Greco-Roman oratorical tradition. However, the majority of the images in Stebbins’ text are of women. By including images of such strong female figures as Diana, Fortuna, and Minerva alongside the more traditionally masculine figures, Stebbins reclaims the female figures of Greek and Roman mythology as a part of feminine tradition of expressive eloquence.

For example, the statue of Minerva of Velletri presents a woman, not reclined as in the paintings in Southwick’s text, but in an active pose. As Karl Friederichs described in his *Hand-book of Greek and Roman Sculpture* (1884), “The goddess [as depicted in the statue of Minerva of Velletri] is not presented in the solemn and impressive quiet of abstract divinity. The arms have an energetic motion, and the head has a decided turn” (73). In fact, given her attitude, the gestures of her arms, and the direction of her gaze it

Figure 19 - Minerva of Velletri from Stebbins’ *Delsarte System of Expression* (1902)
seems Minerva could be giving an oratorical address. The Greek marble statues are held up as the “the highest pinnacle[s] of art” for their artistic expression, and the forms of human expression carved into these stone figures serve as models for the individual to follow in his or her pursuit of expressive eloquence. In short, the statues “reveal[] the laws of expression” (Stebbins 370). As Stebbins describes, “[E]ach outline of form and poise, each changing line of facial expression, from brow to curving lip, reveals the grand idea embodied within, as eloquently as the fiery tongues of inspiration spoke out from the Apostles of old” (370). From Greek statues, Stebbins extrapolates a new definition of eloquence, a definition grounded in the Delsartian understanding of the correlation between internal thoughts and feelings and external expression. Stebbins’ inclusion of illustrations of both male and female statues figures suggests that her definition of eloquence is not confined to masculine ideals.

Exercises for Expression

Stebbins’ Greek statues of female and male eloquent figures provide a visual illustration of regendered eloquence. The illustrations in other women’s physical culture texts offer a similar visual argument for feminine eloquence. However, while Stebbins uses ancient Greek statues as visual models of expression, more often the illustrations in women’s physical culture texts demonstrate various physical exercises for the development of expressive ability. These exercises can be divided into two general categories: cultivation exercises and dramatic poses. Dramatic posing, also called pantomime, taught the expression of specific emotions such as sorrow, devotion, or fear
through visual illustrations designed for imitation. Usually such exercises would be 
practiced with musical accompaniment or a reading of dramatic monologue or poetry.

Though pantomime was often taken up as a performance genre itself, in physical 
culture texts it was considered a form of elocutionary training that would prepare the 
student for performance. Women physical culturists believed that the expressive skills 
developed in dramatic posing would transfer to eloquent embodied expression in other 
areas, including public speaking. As Magill describes in *Pantomimes; or Wordless Poems*, her pantomimic exercises “give ease to those muscles which we use in elocation, 
and] open up to the student the idea of their importance in every branch of the study, 
from conversation, – its foundation-stone, – through reading and recitation, up to the 
height of oratory” (8). Magill further elaborates:

All know the story of the great Cicero and his teacher Roscius, the actor; 
that it was a long discussion with them[,] which could best express feeling, 
– voice or action. In these exercises we take the side of Roscius, and see 
what we can do with our subject without the aid of the vocal organs. My 
object in this . . . is by excluding this palpable medium, and throwing upon 
the face and body the entire weight of expression, to give to the world of 
students an idea of the power of representation which lies in their frames,

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87 In *Werner's Directory of Elocutionists, Readers, Lecturers and Other Instructors and Entertainers* (1887), Magill’s *Pantomimes* is listed under “Works bearing especially upon oratory and public speaking” (251). Magill was a graduate of the University of Virginia, and she taught at Valley Female Seminary in Winchester, Virginia. It is unclear where she received her elocutionary education, and *Pantomimes* is Magill’s only published elocutionary text. Better known were her conservative textbooks on Virginia history and her short stories and novels, which reveal an apologist attitude to the Old South (Bayliss). Magill’s conservative stance on Civil War history and progressive attitude about women’s physical education is similar to other women elocutionists’ seemingly irreconcilable adoption of both progressive and conservative ideas on gender and race.
to show them that, however important the voice and memory may be, facial expression and movement must be studied in order to make a perfect whole,—the whole being must respond in order to make the elocutionary effort a success. (15)

![Figure 20 - "Affection," "Fear" and "Sorrow" from Magill's Pantomimes; or Wordless Poems (1882)](image)

Magill’s exercises include a sequence of successive poses for each of the following expressions: expectation, affection, anger or hatred, sorrow, joy, fear, religious devotion, and farewell. The illustrations of these exercises at first do not seem to demonstrate eloquence. The women in the photographs are not speaking. Like the “reposing” female figures in male-authored elocutionary texts, the female figures in Magill’s pantomimic exercises are silent. However, unlike earlier representations of women in elocution texts, the women in these images display a wide gamut of movement. Further, when considering the educational context in which Magill imagined her pantomimes would be practiced, it is clear that these poses are not merely silent performances of dramatic
action. Rather, these exercises are part of a physical culture program designed to
cultivate the body as an expressive medium. As Magill describes, her goal is to train the
“whole being to respond” to internal thoughts and feelings (15). Like Georgen, Magill
hopes to teach her students to become more in tune with their “keener abilities”
(Georgen). Considered in this light, the illustrations present females bodies practicing
and developing expressive eloquence.

It is not surprising that Magill’s images look quite different from the masculine
models of eloquence in male-authored elocutionary texts. The illustrations of pantomimic
exercises in Magill’s Pantomimes demonstrate a regendered eloquence; these exercises
assume female bodies, and they promote an affective and dramatic style of bodily
expression. Unlike the restrained emotions of the ideal body in the masculine oratorical
tradition, the regendered feminine rhetorical body allows internal thoughts, feelings, and
emotions to show freely in embodied expression.

Women’s physical culture texts like Magill’s Pantomimes create a visual tradition
of feminine eloquence through illustrations of women in dramatic poses. Like dramatic
poses, cultivation exercises promised to cultivate the body for expression. Cultivation
exercises and their illustrations in women’s physical culture texts serve as further
evidence of the regendering of the rhetorical body and traditional notions of embodied
eloquence. While dramatic poses could be used for both practice and performance,
cultivation exercises were only practiced in preparation for performance. Unlike the
illustrations in elocution texts, which usually demonstrate particular oratorical attitudes
and gestures to be learned and eventually used in performance, illustrations of cultivation
exercises were not of women demonstrating the action of oratorical performance. This is an important distinction to note when looking at the images in women’s physical culture texts. However, while the images are not of women speaking, they still help to portray a form of feminine eloquence. While male-authored elocution texts such as Russell’s or Caldwell’s use a pedagogy of imitation – students examine and study the illustrations and attempt to imitate them in practice and in performance – women’s physical culture texts approach the teaching of rhetorical action and bodily eloquence using general principles of expression. Instead of presenting the student with models to imitate, women physical culturists lead students through various exercises designed to cultivate bodily eloquence. So while the illustrations do not depict women speaking, they do depict women performing various exercises designed to prepare them for speaking.

Cultivations exercises are more similar to calisthenics and other non-locutionary programs of physical exercises than pantomimic exercises. Like calisthenics, exercises for cultivation involved repetitive movements designed to improve strength and flexibility. However, unlike more traditional exercises, elocutionary physical culture exercises sought to cultivate the correlation between mind, body, and soul. These exercises included breathing exercises, relaxing or “decomposing” exercises, and energizing exercises, as well as exercises for specific movements of the arms, legs, hands, torso, and so on. Cultivating exercises were designed to develop the tri-partite expression of the moral, mental, and vital natures. In short, these exercises taught students to put Delsartean principles of body and expression into practice. According to Delsarte’s theories, the three natures of moral, mental, and vital corresponded to specific
zones of the body and specific bodily movements. For example, Delsartians considered
the chest the moral seat of the body; exercises that strengthened and improved the
flexibility of the chest were seen as valuable to moral expression as well as overall moral
development. Women physical culturists promised that their exercises based on Delsarte
principles, if practiced diligently, would make the body a better medium of expression
through the balanced development of the whole body as the vehicle through which the
three internal natures of moral, mental, and vital are expressed.

Georgen’s *Delsarte System of Physical Culture*, for instance, teaches exercises for
poise, relaxation, “controlling movements,” walking, transitions, and oppositions. In her
illustrations of these exercises, Georgen attempts to show each movement of each
exercise. For example, the “General Expansive Exercise,” one of the “controlling
movements” exercises, is divided into eight movements, a series of expanding and
contracting movements designed to “promote . . . greater freedom and activity of the
body and extremities” (42). The learner is instructed to begin by “stand[ing] in easy
poise, with the weight upon the backward leg and the other leg advanced slightly” (42).
Then with weight on the advanced leg, she “expand[s] the chest, raise[s] the head, and
throw[s] the arms back, with the palms facing forward” (43). Following this expansive
movement, the learner is then instructed to “sink slowly back” letting the head lower and
the chest contract slightly. This basic alternating movement between expansion and
contraction is repeated twice more, each time with more exaggeration. As Georgen
describes, “[t]he movements should be so guaged [sic] that each will be more expanded
or contracted than the previous one, until the body and extremities have reached their
widest range of expression” (45). Georgen promises that, if practiced “faithfully,” this exercise will “relieve the body of all tendency to contraction” and promote “full, expansive flexible movement of the chest and free, expansive action of the limbs and neck” (45,46).

As both Georgen’s illustrations and her textual descriptions demonstrate, the primary goal of this particular exercise – and of her physical culture program in general – is the development of bodily freedom, flexibility, and expansion. Her general expansion
exercise is characteristic of many of the exercises featured in Delsartian women’s physical culture texts. Exercises designed to give freedom and strength to the torso, the moral center of the body, were perceived as particularly important for the development of expressive ability and of the “keener sensibilities” Georgen refers to in her preface. Unlike the instruction in earlier male-authored elocution texts, these exercises encouraged women to develop a large range of motion and freedom of movement. Moreover, the illustrations of this exercise provide a visual counterargument to the “reposed” and reclining women in male-authored elocution texts.

Illustrations of chest exercises in women’s physical culture texts are particularly striking because they show women in confident, powerful, commanding postures. Like Georgen’s general expansion exercise, the two illustrations of Carrica Le Favre's chest exercise in Delsartean Physical Culture demonstrate the type of exercise used to develop what Stebbins describes as “the beautiful in strength”; the illustrations also serve as apt and rather striking images of feminine eloquence. That is, the illustrations show women using expansive and freeing movements to exercise their bodies in preparation for the expression of their thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

For the chest exercise, LeFavre instructs the learner,

draw abdomen well out of sight and expand chest; throw head back and face up, simultaneously raise bent arms to the level of the shoulders and place finger-tips upon the chest at a point between the breasts on the sternum; look up to the sky and inhale while sweeping the arms and hands
up . . . and down to the sides; exhale while sweeping hands to chest again by the same heart-shaped circle. (72-73)

Le Favre describes this chest exercise as "the greatest health giving exercise I can offer," because it leads not merely to physical culture but "true culture," which she defines as the combination of "physical, moral, and mental effort united in harmonious action" (75). As Le Favre explains, "the higher attributes such as health, honor, dignity, courage, ideality, etc., are indicated by well developed shoulders and chest," and her chest exercise "lift[s] not only your thoughts to a high attitude but your physical conditions as well" (70, 75).

"True culture" involves not merely physical development but moral and expressive development as well. LeFavre’s exercises strengthen the mind and body as well as moral virtues. Like Quintilian who defines the orator as a “good man skilled in
speaking,” LeFavre positions the development of “higher attributes” as directly related to skill in expression. The illustrations of this exercise suggests that “true culture” is a sort of feminine eloquence. Similar to Stebbins’ explanation of “beauty in strength” or Georgen’s emphasis on developing the “keener sensibilities,” the bodily ideals presented in the illustrations of Georgen’s chest exercise privilege feminine characteristics of beauty, grace, flexibility, and sensitivity, and the exercise encourages the development of feminine moral superiority and feminine sensibilities as expressive assets. This is an exercise for the good woman skilled in expression.

The development of “true culture” was not confined to chest exercises; for most women elocutionists, including LeFavre, “true culture” was the ultimate goal of their overall programs of physical culture. Serving as another example of women’s physical culture that regenders eloquence and the rhetorical body is Thomas and Thomas Psycho-Physical Culture.88 Like Georgen, Stebbins, LeFavre, and other women physical culturists, Thomas and Thomas define their exercises as a program designed to develop the mind-body connection in expression. Specifically, Thomas and Thomas define their program of psycho-physical culture “as those exercises or movements of the body excited and sustained by soul-force, and directed by, without taxing, mental activity” (23). The Thomas sisters took up the study of physical culture when they became “aware that in

88 In 1876, Julia and Anna Gregory Thomas founded a Conservatory of Elocution, Acting, and Physical Culture, where “young ladies were taught how to dress in accordance with the rules of health and not of fashion, and how to develop physical perfection” (“Miss Julia”). They later opened schools in Newport, Rhode Island and Ocean Grove, New York. In addition, Julia Thomas regularly gave lectures at women’s schools, clubs, and literary societies on topics such as dress reform, temperance, women’s education, elocution, and physical culture. A selection of Julia Thomas’ lectures and writings were published posthumously in Miscellaneous Writings of Julia Thomas (1890) after Thomas died suddenly of pneumonia in December of 1889.
order to train the voice, the whole body must first be put into the best possible condition” (23). Thomas and Thomas position “soul-force,” “mental-activity,” and the cultivation of the “whole body” as foundational to elocutionary training, and their descriptions and illustrations of psycho-physical exercises demonstrate the preparation and training that must precede the actual speaking address.

Figure 23 - Psycho-Physical Pose" from Thomas and Thomas' *Psycho-Physical Culture*

For example, Thomas and Thomas devise a series of 140 exercises, which they called *address exercises*. These exercises are designed "to give, by the balance of movements, elasticity and perfect psychic control of the body" (40). Each of the address exercises begins from the neutral position of “psycho-physical pose,” a position Thomas and Thomas describe as “the attitude of the body controlled by the soul” (30). From the psycho-physical pose, the student is led through a series of repetitive movements.
whereby the feet move forward, backward, and to the side, and the weight of the body is shifted back and forth from left foot to right foot. Next the student is led through a series of “equilibrium poise movements” that bring in movements of the arms and the rest of the body. For instance, in the first series of equilibrium poise movements, the student is instructed: “Psycho-Physical Pose, right foot forward; arms rhythmic; eyes looking upward, then poise body forward very slowly until resting on the ball of the right foot and on the toes of the left foot” (44 original emphasis). As Thomas and Thomas’ instructions and illustrations demonstrate, these address exercises not only call on the student to use the physical skills of balance, strength, and flexibility, but they also encourage an emotive quality of movement through rhythmic, slow motions, and the upward position of the gaze.

![Figure 24 - Equilibrium Pose Movements: First Series (Thomas and Thomas)](image-url)
Thomas and Thomas promise that their address exercises will give “strength and health” and “more importantly . . . graceful bearing, a cultured, polite manner, and refined deportment” (40). While the Thomas sisters emphasize the cultivation of deportment, the name of this set of exercises – address – refers both to one's deportment and bearing as well as a public address itself. These exercises promise a general self-improvement that leads to improved eloquence. Thomas and Thomas explain, "When exercise is taken regularly and in due proportion, a grateful sense of activity and happiness prevails, and we feel ourselves fit for every duty both mental and bodily" (25).

Elsewhere in *Psycho-Physical Culture* Thomas and Thomas emphasize that one of these “mental and bodily” duties involves the ability to express and speak one’s mind. In a chapter entitled “Relation of Elocution to a Complete American Education,” the Thomas sisters lament education that “promot[es] . . . earnest, vigorous thought, apart from its expression or transmission to others” (120). They further elaborate:

> We are, doubtless, all well acquainted with men and women who are little less than ‘walking cyclopedias;' whose education has been most liberal, and whose knowledge, both in sciences and literature, is deep and profound, yet whose faculties for imparting what they know have never been developed. (122)

As teachers of elocution and physical culture, Thomas and Thomas promise to help students cultivate those “faculties for imparting” knowledge. The exercises in *Psycho-Physical Culture* give students the ability "to turn their resources of knowledge to account” and “to make their powerful minds felt by others" (122). Through the other
forty images and the numerous other exercises described, Thomas and Thomas provide their female students a means towards giving their bodies and their overall deportment a refinement that will help them to "make their powerful minds felt by others." As such, their images appear to be the images of women training their bodies to become more rhetorically efficacious.

Rhetorical Bodies and Women’s Progress

As Thomas and Thomas suggest, their program of physical culture serves as part of broader rhetorical education that prepared students – specifically female students – to be able to speak their minds, express their emotions, and share their knowledge with others. Like Georgen, Stebbins, Magill, LeFavre, and many other women elocutionists who developed programs of physical culture, Thomas and Thomas emphasize women’s rhetorical education and elocutionary training while at the same time reclaiming feminine ideals as part of an embodied, expressive eloquence. Through the re-consideration of the ideal rhetorical body, the inclusion of visual depictions of feminine eloquence, and programs of exercises for the development of bodily expression, late nineteenth-century women’s physical culture texts regender the long-entrenched masculinity of elocutionary and oratorical traditions. While they encouraged the attainment of genteel femininity, women who taught and wrote about physical culture imagined this femininity as serving the emancipation of womanhood and the spread of moral reform. Rather than viewing women's physical strength, health, and beauty as merely superficial properties, women elocutionists connected the development of these physical qualities to a deeper intellectual and practical improvement of the self. Moreover, women elocutionists
believed these exercises in physical expression contributed to the broadening of woman's sphere of influence. As Emily Bishop explains in *Self-Expression and Health: Americanized Delsarte Culture* (1895), these exercises were not merely for the development of appearance. Though they promised grace and beauty, women physical culturists understood these traits as serving larger purposes. Bishop writes,

. . . bodily grace is misunderstood and its value not appreciated. It is commonly thought to be mere prettiness of movement – a superficial accomplishment – but of no use whatever to practical people. . . . Grace is as useful as it is beautiful. (31)

Bishop maintains that there are practical reasons for developing grace. Grace improves and preserves health; grace "denotes strength instead of weakness" (32). Moreover, Bishop claims that through the “self-knowledge and self-discipline” gained through the study of physical culture, “women gain habitual, easy control of their bodies,” an accomplishment Bishop describes as "an important emancipation" for women.

"[P]hysical control," writes Bishop, "gives a sense of repose and power to the mind" (35). Specifically, such control can help women overcome their "feel[ings] of trepidation when they are to read a paper at a literary society, or to give a five minutes' talk at the 'Club" (34). More generally, Bishop maintains that woman's physical training and knowledge affords her better ways of expressing herself artistically, gives her better health, and makes her more successful professionally and socially (33-35). As Bishop argues, physical culture is a valuable source of self-improvement for women that gives them a
sense of confidence and poise that would help them in their endeavors in the public world.

Similarly, in *Thomas Psycho-Physical Culture*, Julia and Anna Gregory Thomas connect women's self-improvement to a broader program of social reform. While at times their discussion of the need for women's physical culture assumes a conservative gender ideology that privileges women's physical attributes and affirms the notion of a separate feminine sphere, Thomas and Thomas also describe access to the kind of self-improvement afforded through physical training as an important step in woman's progress. They censure the "barbarian" belief that "woman should be kept in ignorance of the physiology and anatomy of the human body, and the laws of her being" (10).

Thomas and Thomas argue that woman has a right to gain knowledge about her body; it is "a right to a knowledge of all that pertains to her physical birth, life, and death" (10). Such knowledge, moreover, is not for the purposes of self-improvement alone; rather, "upon this knowledge and its practical application hinges the moral as well as the physical well-being of the race" (10). Thomas and Thomas believed that their system of exercises, if placed in the hands of women, could alleviate a perceived neglect of physical and moral education in schools and homes. Addressing this educational deficiency, they believed, would lead ultimately to the betterment of the nation. "In pleading for the girls and women," Thomas and Thomas write, "[we are] pleading for the nation, and for a higher code of morality" (4). Woman "is an immense power," they explain, and "we want her to be educated in, and her sympathies enlisted for, this subject [of physical training]"

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89 For example, Thomas and Thomas describe physical culture as "preeminently [women’s] sphere, first as mothers, or nurses, then as teachers" (5).
(7). Thomas and Thomas go on to describe that there is “an inexorable law [that]
connects progress and the elevation of women. . . . Any attempt to deny the supreme
importance of woman's higher development and larger usefulness is an impediment to the
advancement of a people or nation, and it is a retrogressive rather than progressive
movement” (10). Positioning themselves and their work as part of a progressive
movement of "woman's higher development and larger influence," Thomas and Thomas
place the progress of civilization (past and future) in women's hands.

As Bishop and Thomas and Thomas demonstrate, the study of physical culture
was understood as foundational to women's progress both in terms of women's access to
individual self-improvement and self-knowledge and in terms of their potential as actors
and speakers in an enlarged sphere of influence. Women’s physical culture programs
were essentially programs of rhetorical education that focused on the development of
rhetorical bodies. Physical culture was not only a matter of cultivating an attractive or
healthy body. Rather, physical culture was seen as part of an overall development in
terms of moral improvement as well as in terms of expressive ability – and both of these
developments were believed to have far-reaching consequences.
Chapter 4 - Women’s Compilations of Recitations, Dialogues, and Tableaux: Building Feminist Rhetorics for the Twentieth Century

[The compiler has] endeavored to meet a great variety of wants. There are dramatic selections of the highest order for the professional and amateur reciter; there are selections for all sorts of occasions—the platform, drawing room, Sunday school, temperance meetings, labor meetings, reform clubs, anniversaries; there are school declamations and even a few things for very little children. It makes as a whole a valuable class drill book in elocution and is eminently suited for school work. (v)

– Anna Randall-Diehl, *Elocutionary Studies and New Recitations* (1898)

One of the most predominant and visible aspects of the American elocution movement was the prolific publication of elocution speakers, elocution reciters, and other compilations for elocutionary performance. Like most elocutionary compilations of its time, Anna Randall-Diehl’s *Elocutionary Studies and New Recitations* (1898) proposes to “meet a great variety of wants”; it includes “selections of the highest order” appropriate for both the “professional” and the “amateur” for “all sorts of occasions.” Notable in Randall-Diehl’s compilation is her appeal to women reformers through the inclusion of “temperance meetings, labor meetings, [and] reform clubs” among her list of suitable occasions. Elocutionary compilations were an especially productive and valuable site for women’s rhetorical education and practice. Moreover, women were prolific publishers of elocutionary compilations, and the compilations they produced served as a stepping-stone
for women’s rise to the speaking platform. Beyond the very basic pedagogical value of providing women with opportunities for oratorical training, compilations for elocution performance also helped to create new genres of public speaking and performing women could use and develop into feminist rhetorics of reform.

The elocution compilation genre has most often been noted for its promotion of conservative gender ideologies. Through her analysis of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century elocution readers in *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors* (2005), Lindal Buchanan reveals how these texts defined women’s gender roles according to the cult of true womanhood. Similarly in *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life 1866-1910* (2002), Nan Johnson demonstrates the conservative gender ideology at work in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century compilations. However, when the range of gendered representations in compilations edited by women is taken into consideration, it becomes evident that elocutionary compilations did more than reinscribe conservative gender ideologies. Published at the dawning of the progressive era, late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century compilations reflect the complex and unstable gender ideologies of the time. Women elocutionists who compiled elocutionary collections participated in cultural debates over “the woman question” through their selections of pieces featuring strong female characters. Women compilers of elocutionary collections did not directly argue against a separate spheres model of gender—indeed, the female characters in their recitations and tableaux often reified women’s traditional roles as wives and mothers—however, women compilers’ selection of material promoted a celebration of womanhood and encouraged an expanded
notion of woman’s sphere. In particular, the dramatic and sentimental rhetorical genres in elocutionary compilations called on novice women elocutionists to perform a womanhood ethos in which traditional notions of true womanhood were linked to a more progressive understanding of woman’s obligations that extended beyond domestic duties and into public and political arenas.

By encouraging the performance of womanhood ethos, the pieces in woman-authored elocutionary compilations contributed to the foundational womanhood argument that served as the basis of much of the feminist rhetorics for temperance, suffrage, and other women’s reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As feminist rhetorical scholars such as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Bonnie J. Dow, and Carol Mattingly have noted, feminist arguments based on a womanhood ethos gained popularity during the late nineteenth century and helped to make the causes of woman suffrage, equal rights, and temperance palatable to conservative and progressive women alike.90 This foundational womanhood ethical appeal is clearly laid out in the elocutionary readers and speakers women compilers published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These texts celebrated womanhood, encouraged the

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90 As Dow notes in “The ‘Womanhood’ Rationale in the Woman Suffrage Rhetoric of Frances Willard,” suffrage arguments based on notions of true womanhood gained popularity in the 1890s. By the final stages of the movement, womanhood arguments were the dominant rhetorical trope, and they “figured significantly in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment” (298). The turn to womanhood and woman’s perceived moral superiorities seems to have been developed initially within the rhetoric of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which as Campbell explains, argued for woman suffrage on the basis that “woman’s distinctive influence should be extended outside the home via the vote” (6). The WCTU was, as Mattingly describes, “a celebration of women, dedicated to improving the image of and conditions for women” (40). Through the celebration of women, the WCTU was able to argue for women and eventually for women’s franchise.
performance of strong female characters, and argued—sometimes implicitly, sometimes overtly—for women’s rights.

Gender Ideologies in Flux

The womanhood argument served as an efficacious rhetorical strategy for women’s rights during a time in which gender ideologies were in flux. As products of their time, turn-of-the-twentieth-century elocutionary compilations reveal a striking ideological tension about women’s roles. Some compilations espouse a conservative gender ideology; other compilations work to resist such ideologies. Sometimes this ideological battle took place within the pages of a single text—or a single selection. In their elocutionary compilations, women editors choose pieces that explore a range of possible roles and proper behaviors for women—from True Women to New Woman. In choosing such pieces, women compilers engaged in the ongoing debate over “the woman question.” Moreover, women compilers’ selections encouraged the novice woman elocutionist to explore for herself her changing role in society.

A striking example of the unstable ideological nature of these compilation texts is “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal,” a poem by Will Carelton, included in Grace Faxon’s *Popular Recitations and How to Recite Them: A Collection of the Best Selections for Recitation, Including Several Pantomimes, with Complete Directions for Their Delivery* (1909).91 “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal” recounts the heroic actions of a young colonial

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91 Grace B. Faxon studied drama in Boston and New York, but after her family objected to a career in theater she quit acting and devoted herself to writing and teaching. In addition to *Popular Recitations*, Faxon compiled forty-four recitation compilations and teacher’s resource books, including *Practical Selections from Twenty Years of Normal Instructor and Primary Plans* (1912) and *Pieces and Plays for Lincoln’s Birthday* (1913); she also published a number of short stories for adults and children and articles
woman during the American Revolution. Faxon describes the piece as a “patriotic, narrative poem . . . suited to any patriotic occasion or to any social entertainment,” noting that while the poem “is generally given by a girl, . . . there is no reason why a boy should not recite it” (51). From the beginning, this poem argues for the acknowledgment of women’s historical contributions. The title suggests a comparison to Paul Revere, and in the first stanza, the speaker makes this comparison explicit:

Paul Revere was a rider bold—
Well has his valorous deed been told;
Sheridan’s ride was a glorious one,—
Often it has been dwelt upon;
But why should men do all the deeds
On which the love of patriot feeds?
Hearken to me, while I reveal
The dashing ride of Jennie M’Neal. (Faxon 52)

In this opening stanza, the speaker acknowledges the masculine histories of Revere and Sheridan as “well . . . told” and “dwelt upon.” The stories of these great men are familiar, but as the next two lines imply—“But why should men do all the deeds / On which the love of patriot feeds?”—the great deeds of women are often unacknowledged or even forgotten. In case the import of this question is lost on the novice elocutionist, Faxon instructs the reader, “[l]ook at the audience with questioning eyes as you ask [this] for teachers’ magazines. Faxon served on the editorial board of New York School Journal and was the editor-in-chief of the leading elocutionary journal Werner’s Magazine for two years. An active clubwoman and women’s rights advocate, Faxon was a member of the New York Woman’s Press Club, The Professional Woman’s League, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. (Howe and Graves 294-5)
question. . . ‘Men’ is emphatic and there should be a pause after it. A gesture may be employed as you ask this question, if you choose” (52). The emphasis on this question through body and eye contact is important to the delivery of the poem, as the question serves as the guiding inquiry of the tale. The question is one of the few moments when Faxon instructs the reader to look directly at the audience. In the following stanzas, the story of M’Neal’s courageous night ride to warn a patriot colonel of fast-approaching British troopers, demonstrates that it is not just the men who “do all the deeds / On which the love of patriots feed.”

M’Neal serves as a model of heroism. She is not the fainting, coquettish, domestically-bound female figure so common in other sentimental verse. She is described as having a “sweetness of . . . heart”, but this more feminine attribute does not surrender her to domestic or maternal duties; instead the speaker emphasizes M’Neal’s strong nerve, her aim with a gun, and her quick heed to the call of duty:

. . . while her friends who knew her well
The sweetness of her heart could tell,
A gun that hung on the kitchen wall
Looked solemnly quick to heed her call;
And they who were evil-minded knew
Her nerve was strong and her aim was true.
So all kind words and acts did deal
To generous, black-eyed Jennie M’Neal. (57)
The first nine stanzas of “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal” serve as a feminist revisionist history of the American Revolutionary War; the story of M’Neal supplements the figure of Paul Revere with a female character of equal stature. However in the last stanza, “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal” takes a problematic turn. When the British troops arrive at the patriot colonel’s house, they find only M’Neal. Instead of further pursuing the fugitive patriot, the British captain pursues M’Neal, but not as one would initially expect. The captain is so taken by M’Neal’s womanly bravery that he asks her to marry him:

Of womankind I must crown you queen;  
So brave a girl I have never seen:  
Wear this gold ring as your valor’s due;  
And when peace comes I will come for you. (58).

Jennie responds that she is already promised to another man—“a lad in Putnam’s corps,” to whom she has “promis’d . . . to be true as steel.” The scene strategically sidesteps a potential act of violence against M’Neal. “I will come for you,” could be read as either the captain’s matrimonial promise or as a more insidious threat. However, M’Neal manages to elide both by verbally committing herself to her lover, with her faithfulness to the patriot “lad” figuring synecdochally as a much greater allegiance to the patriot cause.

For nineteenth and early twentieth-century readers, this test of loyalty—the captain’s proposal—would probably further demonstrate M’Neal’s high character. The introduction of matrimonial and romantic themes would also reposition the heroine back into what was for contemporary women readers a more familiar domestic space. M’Neal
is described in rather masculine terms in the early part of the poem—with her gun, black-eyes, and determination—but the final stanza gives Jennie a rather feminine cast. Faxon describes that M’Neal’s response to the captain’s proposal should be “coquettish[].” Faxon instructs the reader, “play with the sides of your dress as you may give her answer. Look up at [the captain] under downcast eyes. . . Throw head up on next to last line and speak with all womanliness” (59). In Faxon’s interpretation, M’Neal’s momentary “coquettish” behavior quickly gives way to “womanliness”—suggesting that perhaps M’Neal’s blushing girlishness in the final stanza is only an act.

The ideological tensions that emerge in “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal” seem to be symptomatic of ongoing and much contested debates over women’s proper roles and duties that arose and preoccupied the nation during much of the latter decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. Serving as another example of the complex ideological debate taking place within the subtext of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century elocutionary compilations is Marie Irish’s *Tableaux and Scenic Readings: Original Tableaux, Pantomimes, Illustrated Songs and Scenic Readings, Suitable for All Ages* (1906). As the title indicates, Irish’s compilation covers a variety of different elocutionary genre including forty-seven different pieces on literary, sentimental, and holiday subjects. ⁹² Though these pieces serve primarily to entertain, they also demonstrate the tremendous cultural changes taking place as America entered the twentieth century, and they specifically highlight changes in women’s roles

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⁹² Irish was an incredibly prolific compiler, serving as editor or co-editor of over one hundred elocutionary compilations, including *Good Things for Washington’s and Lincoln’s Birthdays* (1914) and *The Days We Celebrate* (1904). Many of her works are for juvenile audiences.
and lives. Selections such as “In Aunt Jane’s Day,” “A Modern Maud Muller,” and “Old Maid and Girl Bachelor,” center around the comparison of older and younger generations of women. In the reading, “In Aunt Jane’s Day,” the speaker reminisces about the “days when Aunt Jane was young.” When Jane was young, “Little girls used to work and study and sew; /They never went off with their brothers to play,” and young women “thought it was wiser to learn to be cooks / Than bother ‘bout Latin and such stuff in books” (9, 10). According to Irish’s stage directions, as the elocutionist recites “In Aunt Jane’s Day,” actors perform tableaux of the of Aunt Jane’s life: In the first scene, “A little girl in plain, old-fashioned dress, very prim and neat, sits stiffly in a high-backed chair working on a cross-stitch pattern” (9). In the second scene, “A young lady in plain dark dress, white collar and cuffs and a little white cap sits by a wheel spinning” (10). Through “old-fashioned” costume and props such as spinning wheels and high-backed chairs, Irish further emphasizes the changes in American domestic life since Aunt Jane’s childhood. Similarly, in the staging of “A Modern Maud Miller,” a poem about an unhappy young wife, Irish’s directions for props, costume, and setting juxtapose old and modern: Maud “sits on a cock of hay, kodak in hand [sic],” wearing “a white or light colored suit and a large white hat” (15). In this scenic poem, Maud is the wife of “a fop with an automobile,” who “married Maud for her heavy dower, /And then neglected her many an hour” (18). Maud daydreams about “what might have been” if she had settled down with a farmer in the country instead pursuing her modern life in town with a man who cares more for money than her (18).
Though both pieces adopt a nostalgic tone that happily looks back on a simpler and implicitly better time, the message to women about proper roles, duties, and behaviors is unclear. For instance, though “Modern Maud Miller” clearly laments the rustic life of times past, the poem appears to be more a critique of modern man than modern woman. Similarly, “In Aunt Jane’s Day” largely celebrates the days of yesteryear, but the poem also suggests that it was harder for older generations of young women, who lived sheltered lives closely monitored by “stern parent eye” (10). Though the speaker admires the discipline of the young women of Aunt Jane’s generation, the last two lines suggest that the speaker is rather glad those days are gone: “Ah, gone are these days whose praises we’ve sung— / May they never return—days when Aunt Jane was
young!” (11) This turn at the end of “In Aunt Jane’s Day” casts the previous nostalgic lines in an ironic light.

Rather than making a clear argument about modern woman or providing a direct lesson to women about their roles, the pieces in Irish’s compilation instead explore the generational divide between “Aunt Jane” and “Modern Maud.” Another selection from Tableaux and Scenic Readings, the tableau, “Old Maid and Girl Bachelorette,” displays a scene in which old meets new:

Old maid wears corkscrew curls at side of face, a queer, much-trimmed bonnet, old-style dress and shawl, cotton gloves and glasses with steel bows. The girl bachelor wears a trim tailored suit, white standing collar and mannish tie, mannish-looking hat, nose glasses with chain. They stand looking at each other, the old maid with hands uplifted and horrified expression on face, the girl bachelor smiling superciliously, head held high.

The “horrified” expression of the old maid clearly indicates a disdain for woman’s new role as a “bachelorette,” and the modern woman with her “supercilious” smile feels equally disdainful of the old maid. Both women are equally absurd caricatures: the old maid with her “queer, much-trimmed bonnet” and the girl with her “mannish” attire. Both also represent unmarried women, and implicit to the tableau is a critique of unmarried women in general. However, central to the tableau is the interaction between the two characters. More than simply presenting to women a lesson about proper behavior and roles, the tableau explores the juxtaposition of old and new woman. As an
elocutionary compilation with the goal of providing a range of selections amenable to a widespread, middle class audience, Irish’s *Tableaux and Scenic Readings* demonstrates how women elocutionists broached the subject of women’s changing roles without offending or alienating audience members. Like “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal,” the portrayal and performance of female characters in Irish’s *Tableaux and Scenic Reading* demonstrate the unstable gender ideology of the time. The total contents of these compilations make clear that “the woman question” was very much a part of the cultural zeitgeist. Indeed, elocutionary compilations prompted women to literally act out this question in their parlors, schools, and communities.

The Feminist Epideictic in Women’s Elocution Speakers

Woman-authored elocutionary compilations also include selections that focus on strong female characters and that celebrate the historical and patriotic contributions of women. These selections in women’s compilations serve as a feminist epideictic that works to resist traditionally masculine historical narratives and to redefine women’s roles according to a larger sphere of influence and power. For example, while “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal” ends on a problematic note, a further examination of the contents of Faxon’s *Popular Recitations* reveals that celebrations of folkloric and historic women was a common theme among its selections. Faxon’s compilation includes thirty-three selections of poetry, tableaux, and prose recitation, which cover a range of topics including domestic and romantic themes, temperance poetry, humorous monologues, and religious tableaux. Seven of the selections in *Popular Recitations* celebrate patriotic or heroic acts, and four of these seven specifically celebrate heroic or patriotic acts by
women. As the biography of Faxon in *Representative Women of New England* (1904) describes, she was known for a “keen interest in all that pertains to the advancement of her sex”; she “believ[ed] in equal suffrage, and her constant theme in writing [was] ‘Woman's Loyalty to Woman’” (Howe and Graves 295). This theme of “Woman’s Loyalty to Woman” was also true of the selections she chose for *Popular Recitations*. In addition to “The Ride of Jennie M’Neal,” Faxon also includes “Kate Shelley,” by Eugene J. Hall and “Barbara Frietchie,” by John Greenleaf Whittier; both of these selections continue to raise the question “why should men do all the deeds [?]” (Faxon 52).

In “Kate Shelley,” described by Faxon as a “narrative poem descriptive of an heroic act,” Shelley, a woman who shows “grit” and “the strength of a man,” stops a train from colliding with another car derailed by a storm (125, 129). In the final lines of the poem, the speaker extols her audience to celebrate women’s feats of bravery:

*Ah! noble Kate Shelley, your mission is done;
Your deed that dark night will not fade from our gaze;
An endless renown you have worthily won;
Let the nation be just, and accord you its praise,
Let your name, let your fame, and your courage declare
What a woman can do, and a woman can dare!”* (132 original emphasis)

Similarly, “Barbara Frietchie” celebrates the eponymous heroine, a loyal Unionist of “four-score years and ten,” who dared to wave the union flag in the face of Stonewall Jackson as he marched through Fredrick, Maryland. The poem ends with a call for the reader to pay tribute to Frietchie for her brave and deeply symbolic act:
Honor to her! and let a tear
Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall’s bier.

Over Barbara Frietchie’s grave,
Flag of Freedom and Union, wave! (168)

Faxon offers specific instructions for delivering the final stanza of “Barbara Frietchie.” She instructs the reader to “make a sweeping gesture over shoulder” to emphasize the first line “Honor to her!” Then Faxon tells the reader to “soften to a tone of gentleness, and bring [the] hand slowly down at low front, head drooping.” In the next line, the reader should raise her head and “[g]ive value to ‘grave.’ Let the hand be carried to and fro in front of body on line two, at chest level. Bring out ‘wave’” (168). The pathetic rendering of the poem’s conclusion emphasizes the importance of a sincere commemoration of Frietchie’s brave and daring act. The flag waving over her grave memorializes Frietchie as a true patriot and hero.

“The Ride of Jennie M’Neal,” “Kate Shelley,” and “Barbara Frietchie” are epideictic pieces intended for patriotic celebrations and commemorations of national history and national heroes. As Faxon describes, these poems are suited to “any patriotic occasion” (51). The purpose of epideictic rhetoric is often understood not as persuasion but as celebration or amplification. That is, epideictic rhetoric usually amplify
audiences' already-held beliefs instead of persuading the audience to adopt new beliefs. However, Faxon’s poems celebrating women have persuasive value as well. Faxon chooses not to include poems or poetry commemorating the usual patriot subjects of Washington or Lincoln. Aside from her inclusion of “American Revolution,” a speech by Patrick Henry, Faxon celebrates America’s past through heroic narratives about lesser-known female patriots. As epideictic pieces, these poems recognize the accomplishments of three American heroes; read together, the poems also serve as a persuasive argument for the acknowledgement of women’s historical contributions. Faxon’s focus on women resists the traditionally masculine narrative of American history. These poems raise questions—often overtly—about why women’s accomplishments are so often forgotten or ignored.

The questions raised about women’s unacknowledged accomplishments in the pieces in Faxon’s *Popular Recitations* are echoed in several other women’s compilations. In *Elocutionary Studies and New Recitations*, Randall-Diehl, who was not only an influential elocutionist but also an influential clubwoman and reformer, includes two poems that question the silence surrounding women’s contributions to history and attempt to recuperate women’s service from historical obscurity. Some of the pieces in

94 As Perelmann and Olbrechts-Tyteca explain, “[E]pideictic discourse sets out to increase the intensity of adherence to certain values which might not be contested . . . The speaker tries to establish a sense of communion centered around particular values recognized by the audience, and to this end he [sic] uses the whole range of means available to the rhetorician for purposes of amplification and enhancement” (51).

95 One other exception is “How He Saved St. Michael’s,” by Mary A. P. Stansbury. In this piece, an unknown hero saves the church of St. Michael’s from a fire. In the final stanza, it is revealed that this anonymous hero is a Black man and a slave. This selection seems typical of Faxon, who consistently chooses pieces that celebrate unacknowledged heroes that resist the tradition of white male American patriotism. This poem, which also appears in *Bits and Odds*, was a piece for which Hallie Quinn Brown was noted for performing. See *Bits and Odds* 10-11, and 16-17.
Elocutionary Studies and New Recitations are pieces that Randall-Diehl performed when she lectured on behalf of temperance and woman’s rights. For example, Randall-Diehl recited Helen M. Cooke’s “The Flag at Half-Mast” at the International Council of Women in Washington, D.C. in 1888. Cooke’s poem ironically mourns the unacknowledged sacrifices and contributions of women. Looking out her window, the speaker discovers that all the flags are hung at half-mast, but instead of lamenting the death of the man for which the flags have been lowered, the speaker protests women’s exclusion from this act of memorialization. The flags will never be flown at half-mast to commemorate her or any other woman:

I sat and watched the flags to-day
Some fluttering near, some faraway;
I saw them shrink and cling, as if
They could not float for weight of grief;
And then the soothing April wind
Just kissed their hems with touch so kind,

96 Randall-Diehl was one of the first women to publish in the field of elocution. Her first publication Elocution: Theoretical and Practical went through twenty-four editions published between 1869 and 1974. Elocutionary Studies and New Recitations went through eight editions between 1887 and 1898. Randall-Diehl wrote and compiled over forty books, including The Eureka Collection of Recitations and Readings (1885) and A Practical Delsarte Primer (1890). She also served as editor for the American Shakespeare Magazine and The Quarterly Elocutionist, a serial publication containing selections for elocutionary recitation. Although her first publication demonstrates indebtedness to the Rush system, Randall-Diehl later became a strong proponent of the Delsarte system. In 1871, she traveled to France to study with Francois Delsarte, but he passed away before she arrived (Randall-Diehl “Discussion” 74). In addition to her elocutionary work, Randall-Diehl was also an active clubwoman and the founder of The Fortnightly Shakespeare Club in New York (“Mrs. Anna Randall-Diehl, Obituary”). Announcements in local papers reveal Randall-Diehl’s busy lecture schedule. See “Readings and Recitations,” “Public Reading,” “Busy Woman,” “Sorosis and Ambrosia,” “Mrs. Anna Randall Diehl,” and “Mrs. Diehl To-Night.” As Helen M. Cooke reported in the Chicago Inter Ocean in 1878, “Mrs. Anna Randall-Diehl [is] the busiest of many women.”
They floated out, and I could see

They all were hung half-mast! “Ah me!

Some man is gone! Never,” I said,

“Were flags half-mast for woman dead.”

In Randall-Diehl’s interpretation of this first stanza, “the pathos culminates” in the eighth line on “Ah me!” In the next line, “Some man is gone’ is given carelessly as if the speaker were not interested in knowing whom” (21). Though the headnotes explain that this poem was written when the flags were flown at half-mast for Peter Cooper, a beloved philanthropist and New York City alderman, the poem itself never mentions for whom the flags are lowered; that detail is beside the point. This poem laments not the death of a
man, but the unrecognized contributions of women. Randall-Diehl instructs the reader to drive home the argument of this poem—a decidedly feminist argument—through proper delivery. The reader is instructed to give a “strong downward slide” to the word “Never,” and to emphasize “half-mast” and “woman” as the “words of value in the last line” (21).

When Randall-Diehl read this poem before the International Council of Women, she described an encounter she had with the mayor of New York City in which she asked him if the flags could be hung at half-mast to memorialize the death of Catherine Woods, a philanthropist of note:

Just a year ago Miss Wolfe, one of the greatest philanthropists in this country, was about to be buried. I went to the mayor of the city of New York and respectfully asked him if he would allow the flag to float at half mast on the City Hall on the day of her burial. He said it could not be done. I said: ‘Did not the flags hang at half mast when Peter Cooper lay dead?’ ‘Oh yes,’ said the mayor, ‘but Peter Cooper had been an alderman.’ Then said I: ‘The flags floated at half mast for Peter Cooper the alderman and not for Peter Cooper the great philanthropist.’ He admitted this to be so. Then said I: ‘If Jaehne and the other boodle aldermen who are now at Sing Sing were to die, the flags on the City Hall would have to float at half mast for them?’ And Mr. Hewitt laughingly said that he supposed the friends would have a right to ask it. (National Woman 315)
Randall-Diehl’s story reveals the inequity nineteenth-century women faced: The half-mast flag is reserved for memorializing the passing of government figures, but women are denied work in government or military, and their philanthropic or other contributions cannot be given such a memorial as Peter Cooper’s.

Randall-Diehl’s inclusion of “Flags at Half Mast” provides an example of one of the ways women elocutionists incorporated progressive, feminist arguments into their elocutionary compilations. The inclusion of Cooke’s poem emphasizes the fact that women’s service to community and nation is usually unrecognized. While the poems in Faxon’s compilation demonstrate the ways in which women achieve greatness and do good acts outside the private sphere, the inclusion of Cooke’s poem points to the numerous women who have been forgotten and whose service is unacknowledged. Moreover, “Flags at Half Mast” points to the need for a feminist epideictic tradition that celebrates women.

Similar questions and concerns about forgotten women and women’s unacknowledged service are again raised in “Women of the War,” another selection in Randall-Diehl’s *Elocutionary Studies*. This poem by Annie Thomas highlights the part taken by women during the Civil War. Thomas’ poem begins with an acknowledgement of the usual heroes of the war—the brave men who died and fought for their country:

All praise all honor to the valiant men
Who, casting fortune by, and risking life,
Left home and loved ones—all that life holds dear,
To fight for country or for country die. (73)
These “valiant men” deserve “thankful words,” “loud and clear praises,” and “notes of love”; however, while the celebration and honoring of Civil War veterans is important, Thomas’ poem specifically makes the point that women’s service during the war is equally deserving of celebration and honor:

Others there are who bore no minor part
In the dread conflict of our civil strife;
Who bravely, with tongue and pen, aye, and with sword,
Defended right as only woman may. (73)

During the Civil War, women encouraged their sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers “with brave hearts and loving, hopeful words” (73). Moreover, women took on complete responsibility for the home and family: They “toiled alone at home, / Bearing the double burden on them thrown” (73). Thomas’ poem also specifically acknowledges the service of women who worked in hospitals and cared for wounded soldiers:

Who in the hospital with gentle hand
Bound up the bleeding wound—cooled the parched lip;
With aching brow, night after night kept watch,
Tenderly nursing the dying back to life. (73)

The accomplishments described in “Women of the War” position the woman within the domestic sphere. Women’s service is described in terms of domestic duties: Women take care of the home, raise the children, and comfort, nurse, and encourage their men-folk. While Thomas’ poem does not resist woman’s traditionally domestic role, the poem does provide a woman-centered counter-narrative to the typically masculine narrative of Civil
War history. Civil War women “bore no minor part /In the dread conflict of our civil strife,” and as the poem implies, women’s contributions on the homefront and in hospitals deserve to be part of the historical record just as much as the battles themselves.

As Randall-Diehl’s inclusion of Thomas’ poem demonstrates, sometimes the pieces in woman-authored compilations celebrate woman’s sphere itself. However, such celebrations—and seeming reifications—of woman’s sphere did not necessarily make the overall message anti-feminist. Rather, the selections in Faxon’s and Randall-Diehl’s compilations provided novice female elocutionists opportunities to rethink their duties and their possibilities as women. The selections in these late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century compilations do not dismantle the separate sphere model, yet they do offer a progressive revision of the scope and range of the feminine sphere. While the selections in women’s elocutionary compilations remind young women that their primary duties were to the home, selections in Faxon’s and Randall-Diehl’s early twentieth-century compilations also bring this quieted, unrecognized womanly ideal into question at the same time.

Poems like “Flags at Half Mast” demonstrate the need for a feminist epideictic; poems like “Kate Shelley” show young elocutionists “[w]hat a woman can do, and a woman can dare!” The epideictic rhetoric of womanhood evident in woman-authored compilations was important not merely for the celebration of and argument for

97 In comparison, early and midcentury elocutionary compilations emphasize a women’s good work is rewarded in heaven, not through historical fame or recognition. As A. Lewis describes in “Woman,” a selection from Anna and William Russell’s *Introduction to the Young Ladies Elocutionary Reader* (1845), “Man performs the public toils of life, and participates in the honours of the world and the recompense of fame; but woman, who has formed man for his high density, and whose virtues and amiable qualities constitute the refinement of society, has no share in such rewards. . . . [H]istory could not do justice to her merits; she must be satisfied with the living admiration of her excellence on earth, and the everlasting remuneration of her virtues in heaven” (250-251).
women’s achievements; these pieces helped to build a foundational womanhood argument that served as the basis of much of the feminist rhetorics for temperance, suffrage, and other women’s reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Performing Womanhood and Extending Her Sphere

The development of a feminist rhetoric based on a womanhood ethos becomes even more pronounced in elocutionary selections that call on novice women speakers—not simply to narrate the lives of great women—but to perform those women. Turn-of-the twentieth-century compilations by Rachel Shoemaker and Sarah Lovina Stocking continue the tradition of feminist epideictic. The selections in Shoemaker’s and Stocking’s compilations include performance and dramatic genres—dialogues, pantomimes, and tableaux—that introduce the novice elocutionist to a range of strong female characters from recent and ancient history, and Greek and Roman mythology, and the Bible. Dialogues, pantomimes, and tableaux require the performance and characterization of important women. Shoemaker and Stocking emphasize the performative aspect of their pieces, providing instruction in stage design, costume design, lighting, and blocking in their introductions and stage notes. As Stocking instructs, “all appointments of the stage should be as artistically arranged as possible” (ii). Stocking suggests performers use a platform that is “at least three feet high and large enough to hold all characters without being crowded”; the platform should use a “large screen for the back” and a “colored tarlatan or netting in front of the stage” (ii). More importantly, Stocking emphasizes, “appropriate costumes are very necessary to the perfect success of
tableaux” and other dramatic genres (ii). Stocking encourages novice performers to consult illustrated histories, illustrated Bibles, and the Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary to determine the appropriate period dress. Using these resources, along with “muslins, flannels and chintz, colored tarletans [sic], [and] gilt paper,” women performers transform themselves into admirable queens, reformers, and Biblical heroines (ii).

![Cover of Choice Dialogues (1888)](image)

The womanly models in Stocking’s and Shoemaker’s compilations exemplify some of the traditional notions of true womanhood: these women are loyal and duteous to their family and their home, and they display the piety and purity of True Woman. However, the female characters and historical figures in these compilations also broaden the traditional feminine sphere of action and duty. These female exemplars make history,
argue for reform, and fight in revolutions. Through the performance of these personae, women elocutionists and elocution students learn a broad range of womanly behaviors. For example, in “Ten Famous Women,” a dialogue by Elizabeth Lloyd included in Rachel Shoemaker’s *Choice Dialogues* (1888), women portray such historical characters as Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Florence Nightingale. These women represent a range of different kinds of accomplishments—from Nightingale who cared for wounded soldiers to Joan of Arc who fought as a soldier. Each woman exemplar is introduced with the wave of a wand by Calliope, the goddess of history, who stands center stage, “attired in a flowing robe, with loose drapery across the chest” (37). As Shoemaker’s stage directions describe, at Calliope’s feet are “five or six good-sized volumes,” which presumably represent the historical record she resides over, and as Calliope motions for each of the ten famous women to come forward and introduce herself, each woman is symbolically inducted into that record:

[The Goddess of History] may be seated with five or six good volumes at her feet. In her left hand a partly unrolled manuscript; in her right hand a wand, which she waves to bring forward the different persons represented.

The other ten should be dressed to imitate the characters they portray.

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98 Rachel Shoemaker and her husband, J.W. Shoemaker, opened the National School of Elocution and Oratory in 1875 in Philadelphia. When Mr. Shoemaker died in 1880, Rachel became the president of the school. The short biography of her in *Woman of the Century* (1893) describes, “[Shoemaker] has taught thousands of students and has read in many cities including Philadelphia, New York, Cincinnati and Minneapolis in the United States and Toronto, Hamilton and Montreal in Canada” (655). In addition to *Choice Dialogues*, Shoemaker also published numerous elocutionary texts, including *Delsartean Pantomimes* (1891) and *Advanced Elocution* (1910).
They should stand in a group or semi-circle, and each one as she speaks should step a little to the front, and remain there until the others have recited the verse about her, after which she may return to her place. (37)

Lloyd’s script features ten short biographical sketches that summarize the life and highlight the principal accomplishments of each woman. Joan of Arc describes how she “began to see visions and dream dreams; and God revealed to me that it was my mission to lead the armies of my sovereign and free my country from the enemy” (38). Queen Elizabeth declares, “Mine was not the mere semblance of glory, for in reality, as well as in name, I lived and died a queen” (39). Following each sketch the other actors, as if a Greek chorus, recite a verse in unison to explain the significance of each woman’s accomplishments. For example, after Harriet Beecher Stowe introduces herself, the other actors conclude, “When a deed is done for freedom, through the broad earth’s aching breast, / Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to west” (41). After Queen Elizabeth’s introduction, the chorus chants:

Men say that women cannot rule,

That hers is only to obey;

But unto thee men bent the knee

And England owned thy legal sway. (39)

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99 Elizabeth Lloyd, a Quaker, was an educator and minister in the Society of Friends. Reports in the Friends Intelligencer reveal that she was active in temperance reform, that she served on the executive committee of the Association of Friends to Promote the Education of the Colored People in the South, and that she supported women’s suffrage (Atkinson and Lloyd (1887); “Meetings” (1889); “The Conferences” (1894)). Lloyd was also a regular contributor to the Friends Intelligencer. In 1892, she wrote a six-part series covering the World’s Fair in Chicago. Later, she became an editor of the Friends Intelligencer.
The inclusion of Lloyd’s play as a selection in Shoemaker’s *Choice Dialogues* carries on the feminist epideictic tradition evident in Faxon’s and Randall-Diehl’s elocutionary compilations. Women leaders are celebrated for their leadership and historical contributions. Moreover, women like Queen Elizabeth were rulers of men, and through the performance of these historical characters, novice women elocutionists learn to conduct themselves as women to be reckoned with.

However, the women in “Ten Famous Women” exemplify a brand of femininity that also harkens back to the ideals of true womanhood. Even though these women were powerful leaders who made significant contributions to their communities and their countries, they never neglected their perceived womanly duties to home and family. For example, the character of Lucretia Mott describes her rhetorical accomplishments in tandem with her loyalty to her family:

. . . I spoke often and earnestly in behalf of peace, women’s rights, and the abolition of slavery. I was often in the midst of mobs and violence, but no one ever did me harm, and I lived to see the chains fall from every slave in my native land. But although engaged in public duties, I never forgot that a woman’s first thought should be for her home and her family; and now, when I am no longer in their midst, children and children’s children hold my memory dear. (40)

Lloyd’s sketch pays tribute to Mott’s accomplishments: Mott spoke bravely for what she believed often in spite of threats of physical violence. However, in addition to her historical legacy, Mott’s legacy also lives on in her family through her “children and
children’s children” (40). Mott’s story teaches that while women can and should speak out on issues that are important to them, women’s loyalty to their duties at home will earn her a familial legacy (of children and grandchildren) that is as important as any historical or public fame.

The preservation and exemplification of woman’s duties as mother and homemaker are central to the celebration of womanhood in Lloyd’s “Ten Famous Women.” The nod to true womanhood was an important rhetorical move for late nineteenth-century audiences, who would have taken seriously women’s duties as mothers and wives. However, Mott and the other numerous women portrayed in Lloyd’s pageant seem to represent a new ideal of womanhood—an ideal that bridges the older traditional notions of feminine duty with a more progressive understanding of woman’s obligations that extend from and beyond her sphere of the home and the domestic. “Ten Famous Women” celebrates the gender redefining actions and motives of women like Joan of Arc, Lucretia Mott, and Florence Nightingale, while at the same time the dialogue celebrates woman’s sphere itself. The final stanzas of “Ten Famous Women” offer two parting lessons: “hold fast your womanhood” and “woman’s sphere is wide”:

The lesson of our lives is this—

That woman’s sphere is wide;

That what by women has been done,

By women may be tried.

You may not win a noble name
Such honor falls to few;
Whatever work lies next your hand,
That work God means for you.

Then do it wisely, do it well;
Be brave and pure and good;
And, great or small your part in life,
Hold fast your womanhood. (43-44)

The final directive to “[h]old fast your womanhood” might seem to refer to a gender ideology in which women were restricted to domestic and maternal responsibilities. However, the other final lines of “Ten Famous Women” emphasize the wide range of women’s work: “woman’s sphere is wide”; “what by women has been done/ By women may be tried.” Women are instructed to take up the work they are called to do—“whatever work lies next your hand.” Rather than invoking the traditional virtues of true womanhood—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—Lloyd, offering a subtle yet important revision of womanhood, instructs women to “[b]e brave and pure and good.” In Lloyd’s revision of womanhood, all the superior qualities of woman—her innate goodness and purity—are combined with the more empowering quality of bravery. Notably, submissiveness is dropped from the equation of

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100 Not coincidentally, these last lines echo Frances Willard’s advice to women speakers: “Womanliness first—afterward what you will” (qtd. Mattingly 65).
101 Barbara Welter identifies piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity as the “cardinal virtues” of True Womanhood, as defined by the expectations of women in the early nineteenth century. As Welter notes, these virtues define women according to their roles as mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives (152).
womankind; submissiveness was clearly not a quality embodied in the female exemplars of Queen Elizabeth, Joan of Arc, or Lucretia Mott. Redefined according to the qualities of goodness, purity, and bravery, womanhood is re-envisioned; to “hold fast your womanhood” becomes a call to feminine empowerment.

The inclusion of Lloyd’s dialogue in Choice Dialogues provided audiences and actors alike with lessons in a new understanding of womanhood and womanly behavior. The women exemplars model leadership skills, idealist fervor, a passion for justice, as well as the more traditionally womanly skills of mothering and nurturing. The female actors, in particular, would gain valuable rhetorical lessons from their performance of these characters. Actors act and dress “to imitate the characters they portray” (37). Lloyd instructs the actors, “To get a good idea of the proper costumes, consult history and portraits” (38). Through the research and performance of these characters, woman actors would not only learn about these models of womanly excellence; their performances required that they learn how to perform that excellence themselves. In their efforts to embody these women and to imagine and recreate their physical appearance and affect, the actors would gain lessons in womanly ethos and delivery. For example, the performance of a character like Lucretia Mott would have taught the novice woman speaker lessons in ethos-formation based on a balance of progressive ideals and traditionally womanly behavior.
The selections in woman-authored elocution compilations provided ample opportunity for women to hone the performance of womanhood ethos. Sarah Stocking’s *School and Parlor Tableaux* (1883) includes a number of tableaux featuring historical and biblical female exemplars, and hosts of other feminine models: Esther, Sheba, Queen Elizabeth, Martha Washington, Queen Margaret, “Liberty and her Handmaidens,” and “A Concourse of Goddesses.”

The directions for these tableaux pay special attention to

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102 In addition to *School and Parlour Tableaux*, Stocking published two other elocutionary compilations, *Shadow Pictures, Pantomimes, Charades, and Tableaux* (1884) and *Columbian Entertainments* (1893). A fourth publication, *A Scheme for Historical Study, From the Birth of Christ to the Sixteenth Century* (1889) is a syllabus designed for “the use of private classes and literary clubs” (Preface). In *A Scheme for Historical Study*, Stocking demonstrates an interest in women’s history that is echoed in *School and Parlour Tableaux*. While *Scheme* does not focus entirely on women’s contributions, Stocking does include...
the physical appearance, dress, and attitude of the women. Queen Elizabeth is “dressed in dark velvet or satin—made after the style in which Elizabeth is universally represented—red hair, dressed high, with the enormous head dress; high ruff, etc.” (9). The Queen of Sheba “stands before [Solomon] dressed in a rich robe of satin or velvet, her hair braided low upon her forehead—a crown of diamonds, and from her crown falls a heavy veil reaching in folds to her feet” (7). While the attention paid to costume and jewelry may betray a preoccupation with feminine beauty and physical appearance, donning such queenly dress is intended to be empowering for the novice female actor or elocutionist. These tableaux depict the heights of womanhood—womanhood defined according to woman’s goodness, purity, and bravery. Dress and physical appearance helped to symbolize the power of these influential women, and by transforming themselves into these female characters, the actors playing these parts would learn the performance of womanly power.

In other tableaux in Stocking’s *School and Parlour Tableaux*, the power of womanhood is conflated with concepts of liberty, knowledge, and religion. For example, in a tableau entitled “Liberty and Her Handmaidens,” for example, Liberty, “dressed in a long white robe,” “a crown of stars adorn[ing] her head,” with right hand “grasping the standard of a flag” appears with two other female figures: Religion and Knowledge. To the right of Liberty, Religion, “dressed in a long white robe” with hair “loose and ornamented with flowers” is holding a cross and a Bible. To the left of Liberty,
Knowledge, also dressed in white, “holds a manuscript roll at which she is intently
gazing” (21). Similarly, in another selection in Stocking’s compilation, “The Genius of
America Counseling with Wisdom,” a pantomime in three parts, America, portrayed as a
woman in a blue robe with red mantle, engages in intense conversation with the Goddess
of Wisdom, “in a white robe, the usual dress of Minerva” (29). Wisdom shows to
America the figure of Oppression and his attendants, Superstition, Idleness, Poverty, and
Crime. America “turns away with a shudder,” and in the final scene America “invokes
the blessings of Liberty,” ushering in the figures of Liberty and her attendants: Justice,
Truth, Ceres, Pomona, Flora, Industry, and Science:

As the curtain rises Wisdom and America are in the foreground looking
upon the open scroll. Then Wisdom raises her eyes and waves her hand
toward the group before them. A[merica] leaves the side of W[isdom]
advancing toward Liberty; kneels before her. L[iberty] gives her hand to
assist A[merica] to rise, presents to her the shield of stripes and stars.
America gives to Liberty the banner of the Colonies, and side by side they
advance to W[isdom] and kneel before her as the curtain falls. (30)
While these tableaux obviously served as patriotic celebrations of America, these performances also offered to women a range of powerful feminine embodiments. Female figures such as Liberty and Columbia had long served as important cultural symbols of the nation, but the performance of these feminine personifications of America in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tableaux also helped foster a womanhood ethos that would be an effective strategy in women’s reform movements. The tradition of patriotic tableau in particular offered reformers a savvy visual argument in which the tenets of American democracy conflated with the celebration of women. For example, tableaux of Liberty, Columbia, and other feminine representations of patriotic abstractions were performed as part of suffrage demonstrations in the early twentieth
century. During the Woman Suffrage Procession on March 13, 1913, the day before
Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration, thousands of women marched from the Capitol to the
Treasury Building. Led by lawyer Inez Milholland, who wore a white cape and rode a
white horse, the procession consisted of nine bands, four mounted brigades, three heralds,
twenty-four floats, and over five thousand of marchers (Harvey). After the procession,
over one hundred women and children performed allegorical tableaux on the steps of the
Treasury Building, including a tableau of “Liberty and Her Handmaidens,” which could
have come straight from the pages of Stocking’s *School and Parlour Tableaux* (See
Figure 2). As the Official Program of the Women’s Suffrage Procession describes, the
allegorical tableaux “illustrate[s] those ideals toward which both men and women have
been struggling through the ages and toward which in co-operation and equality, they will
continue to strive” (16). The tableaux was written expressly for the Woman Suffrage
Procession by Hazel MacKaye, daughter of the Delsartian pioneer Steele MacKaye. The
Official Program of the Woman Suffrage Procession described Hazel MacKaye as having
“great enthusiasm for the future of pageantry in America, not only as a splendid means of
expressing living public issues, such as woman's suffrage, but also as a potent force in the
regeneration of the people's leisure” (16). The tableaux of the Woman Suffrage
Procession of 1913 simultaneously celebrated womanhood and the concept of liberty,
while at the same time they argued for women’s liberty. Through the performance and
embodiment of the characters of Liberty, Columbia, Justice, Charity, Peace, and Hope,
female actors invoke the superior qualities of womanhood to argue for women’s right to
vote.
The importance of tableaux and other elocutionary genres in women’s compilations becomes clear when considering the ways these performances were adapted by women in their rhetorics of reform. Female compliers of elocution anthologies were often involved in a number of reform activities—temperance, dress reform, labor reform, suffrage—and these alliances and commitments emerge in their choice of selections. Though not as common as the “all occasion” compilations, some elocutionary speakers were devoted exclusively to reform causes. Temperance speakers were particularly
popular. As Mattingly has noted, temperance publication houses and temperance organizations such as the WCTU supplied a wealth of instructional material that contributed to women’s rhetorical education and taught novice reformers how to speak out about temperance and other related issues (*Well-Tempered* 59-72). Lilian M. Heath’s *Platform Pearls for Temperance Workers and Other Reformers: A Collection of Recitations and Other Selections for Entertainments and Public Meetings; Especially Adapted for Christian Endeavor Societies, Prohibition Clubs, Loyal Temperance Legions, Women’s Christian Temperance Unions* (1896) serves as a particularly illuminating example of how the elocutionary genre of poetic and prose recitation was adapted to the feminist rhetorics of temperance, suffrage, and social reform.

*Platform Pearls*, like so many of the other elocution speakers published at that time, was a compilation put together by a woman for a primarily female audience. However, what makes Heath’s collection stand out is its overt reform agenda. *Platform Pearls*, along with other collections such as Lizzie Penney’s *The National Temperance Orator* (1876) and *Readings and Recitations: A New and Choice Collection of Articles in Prose and Verse, Embracing Argument and Appeal, Pathos and Humor* (1878), participate in the

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103 Not only was the temperance speaker a popular subgenre; most turn-of-the-century elocution compilations included temperance-related selections. Often, whole sections were devoted to temperance. For example, Frances P. Hoyle’s (Frances Putnam Pogle) *Complete Speaker and Reciter for Home, School, and Platform* (1905), which was also published under the title *The New Popular Reciter and Book of Elocution* (1901), is divided topically into sixteen sections, including Patriotism and War, Narrative and Descriptive, Humorous and Dialectic, and Temperance Readings. Similarly, Edith Granger’s *Index to Poetry and Recitations* (1918), which indexed over fifty thousand titles from 450 books, includes an appendix of 172 recommended temperance selections.

104 Heath published twenty-one books of parlor entertainments and temperance fiction, including *Eighty Pleasant Evenings* (1898) and *The Red Telephone; or, Tricks of the Temper Exposed: Being Messages from the Under-World of Sin and How They are Answered, a Book Portraying the Grave Dangers Found in the Various Walks of Life* (1905).
popular subgenre of temperance elocution speakers, which applied the popular pastime of elocution performance to the social reform agenda of the temperance movement.\textsuperscript{105}

In the clever preface to \textit{Platform Pearls} Heath recounts the conversation she “overhears by accident” between The Public and Platform Pearls:

\textit{The Public:} “Who comes here?”

\textit{Answer:} “It is I, Platform Pearls, just arrived and looking for my friends.
Can you direct me to them?”

\textit{The Public:} “Perhaps, if you will give me their names.”

\textit{Platform Pearls:} “To save time, I’ll give you their initials, for I am sure you must know them all: Y.P.S.C.E., W.C.T.U., C.L.S.C., Y.M.C.A, Y.W.C.A, L.T.L., I.O.G.T., Proh--”\textsuperscript{106}

\textit{The Public} (impatiently): “Hold on, hold on, that’s enough for the present.
Do you expect me to believe all that? Where did you come from?”

\textit{Platform Pearls:} “From the North, the South, the East, the West; from Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Maine; from the mountains, the cities, and the islands of the sea; from foreign lands and from the Hub of the solar system; from every corner where there are pearls worth gathering.”

\textsuperscript{105} Lizzie Penney edited over forty temperance recitation books and journals between 1874 and 1898. \textit{The National Temperance Orator}, which was co-edited by Frances Willard and Julia McNair Wright, went through four editions between 1874 and 1881.

\textsuperscript{106} Acronyms stand for the Young People’s Society of the Christian Endeavor, Women’s Christian Temperance Union, Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, Young Men’s Christian Association, Young Women’s Christian Association, Loyal Temperance Legion, and International Organization of Good Templars.
The Public: “Well, well, you are quite a traveler. What brings you here, and what do you intend to do, having arrived?”

Platform Pearls: “I came because they said I was needed and I intend to--”

The Public: “But who are ‘they’?”

Platform Pearls: “Jessie. A. Ackerman, Belle Kearney, Mattie McClellan Brown, Dr. Mary Wood Allen, Lou J. Beauchamp, Margaret B. Ellis, E.J. Wheeler, Clara C. Hoffman, and other national temperance workers; so many, indeed, that you would not have patience to hear me through the list. . . .”

The list of women who “said Platform Pearls was needed” includes some of the most famous temperance workers of the day. By invoking these names, Heath squarely positions her compilations in a tradition of women temperance rhetors. Jessie A. Ackerman, for example, was a world missionary for the WCTU who completed eight world tours, which were documented in her letters to the Union Signal and The Ladies Home Companion. Belle Kearney, a temperance speaker well known for her participation in Chautauqua Circuits and Lyceums, was also the president of the Mississippi Woman Suffrage Association and a state senator for Mississippi (Wheeler). Another prominent speaker, Mattie McClellan Brown served as the Grand Chief Templar of Ohio and was one of the founding members of the WCTU. Dr. Wood Allen lectured widely on behalf of temperance, heredity, and hygiene; she was also well-known for her publications on health physiology (Willard Livermore 20).
Heath’s preface dialogue can be understood as an allegory for the complex relationship between women speakers and the public sphere that women wanted to enter and transform. In her personification of the public, Heath demonstrates the general reluctance to accept women’s public speaking. The Public is impatient and suspicious of Platform Pearls. The Public initiates the conversation by demanding to know “Who comes here?” It then interrupts Platform Pearls twice, the first time disbelieving the long list of friends Platform offers, and the second time, demanding to know who it is that sent her. Platform Pearls goes on to describe her aims: “to create a channel through which the enthusiastic young people can help in the grandest reform of the age” (v). The 172 poetic and prose recitation pieces in Heath’s collection include arguments for temperance, women’s suffrage, and the enlargement of woman’s sphere; these pieces serve as clear examples of how women turned the popular pastime of elocution performance into a feminist rhetorical practice for social change.

The selections in Heath’s compilation exemplify the womanhood rationale that figured so prominently in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women’s reform rhetorics. Poetic pieces such as “Why?” by Hattie Horner Louthan, “Eve’s Recompense” by Mable R. Winter, and “Woman’s Hour” by Mary T. Lathrap not only celebrate womanhood; they position woman as the messianic figure needed to fix a world corrupted by men. For example, Louthan’s poem “Why?” exposes the irony of women’s disenfranchisement:

He couldn’t write, he couldn’t read,

He little knew nor cared

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About the people’s wrongs or needs;
How others lived he took no heed,
    Nor how they fared.

The big saloon he couldn’t pass,
    Nor pools of any type,
He couldn’t live without his glass,
And he was miserable, alas!
    Without his pipe.

On public streams, whiche’er the way,
    He could do naught but float;
And on the questions of the day,
He couldn’t think, he couldn’t pray—
    But he could vote.

She couldn’t drink, she couldn’t swear,
    She couldn’t even smoke;
Nor could she open wrongs declare,
Nor with a ballot did she dare
    The right invoke.

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She loved the people and she knew
   The questions passing by
Were weighty; her conclusions drew—
And out of these convictions grew,
   The how and why.

She kept herself outside the rut;
   From leading minds could quote;
She had opinions clearly cut;
   Could write and read and reason—\textit{but} \textit{She could not vote.} (91 Original emphasis)

As the aptly named “Why?” demonstrates, a woman could be educated and informed about the leading issues of the day; she could have a great sense of the complexity of political debates and a keen understanding of the people affected by these questions; she could be morally pure; in short, she could be the model citizen—yet “\textit{She could not vote.}” Louthan’s poem is typical of the selections in Heath’s compilation. At the very least “Why?” demonstrates the gross injustice of the fact that a drunken, illiterate, and thoughtless man \textit{can} vote, while a sober, literate, and thoughtful woman cannot.

Informed by the ideology of true womanhood, Louthan’s poem also implicitly makes an essentialist argument for women’s superior qualities and qualifications for franchise, and positions woman’s voice, woman’s vote, and woman’s political participation in general as not merely right but \textit{necessary}. 

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The necessity of women’s franchise is even more clearly affirmed by Heath’s inclusion of Mable R. Winter’s “Eve’s Recompense.” Winter’s poem offers a reinterpretation of the Adam and Eve story. It begins by acknowledging the more widely known and accepted interpretation in which Eve is responsible for original sin: “A woman once, in Paradise, ‘tis sad / Sinned, and brought countless curses on her head.” However, the speaker questions woman’s sole culpability and suggests that man is responsible as well:

[Eve’s] husband, too, shared the disastrous sin,  
And brought the whole family of mankind in.  
He, timid soul, was fearful of his life,  
And whispered faintly, “Lord, it was my wife—  
She tempted me!” O father of the race!  
That speech but added more to thy disgrace! (95)

As the first stanza demonstrates, “Eve’ Recompense” reverses the traditional gender stereotypes and positions man as the “weaker sex.” Man is the “timid soul”; man is the one who is “fearful” (95). It is man, not woman, who is more likely to fall victim to “Satan’s wiles” (96). Woman, on the other hand, was the first to sin but also the first to repent, and having learned her lesson, she desires to protect the men around her:

First in transgression, first repentant, she  
In works benev’lent ever first will be.  
Experience-taught, all Satan’s wiles to shun,  
She longs to shield her husband, brother, and son. (96)
As the poem continues, the speaker describes women’s efforts in temperance as part of her “works bene’vlent,” but women’s desires to “[a]bolish alcohol, and save the man” are thwarted by the perceived legacy of Eve’s original sin. Women at first attempt to address the problem of alcohol through “moral suasion,” but their efforts to lead man are unsuccessful. “The man, so willing to be led” by Eve in the Garden of Eden “now wills to go before”(96 original emphasis). As the speaker explains, “Now, to be led by woman is a shame, / The world will laugh, ‘twill hurt his manly name” (96). Since man will not be led, woman “thinks by law to thwart the Devil, / And by her ballot to undo the evil” (96). “Satan, in a politician’s coat” attempts to impede woman’s fight for suffrage, but as the final stanza exclaims, woman is “[p]redestined” to fight this battle against evil:

She who first sinned is set apart by fate
To banish wrong and her sin expiate.
For righteous laws and equal rights we stand,
For God and home, our own and every land. (96)

In “Eve’s Recompense,” women’s suffrage is understood as a necessary and predestined step in woman’s atonement for original sin. The poem uses the story of Adam and Eve not to remind listeners of woman’s weaker position, but on the contrary to demonstrate how woman’s first sin uniquely prepared her for solving the social problems of the late nineteenth century. In short, woman’s vote is needed to abolish alcohol. However, while the poem argues for woman’s suffrage for the sake of temperance, it also positions woman as a destined leader in reform and benevolent work. Moreover with her references to fate and destiny, Winter positions her current moment as the critical point at
which woman is called to carry out her preordained mission for “righteous laws and equal rights” (96).

Winter’s poem positions woman as fated to “banish wrong” and usher in a new righteous era. Similarly, in “Woman’s Hour,” by Mary T. Lathrap, the rule of men has corrupted the world, and women—whose moral, emotional, and spiritual qualities are superior to those of men—are needed to restore the world back to the way God intended. Lathrap served as the president of the Michigan Women’s Christian Temperance Union for fourteen years, and she was well known for both her writing and her public speaking. As Frances Willard wrote, “[Lathrap] had as much rarer gifts than are lavished on the cradles of crowned heads and nobility, as her perception of truth was more clear and her ability to harness it to the chariot of language was more conspicuous” (Introduction 7-8). Lathrap’s “rarer gifts” are demonstrated in “Woman’s Hour,” a poem she wrote for the 1891 National Convention of the WCTU that Heath later included in Platform Pearls.\footnote{“Woman’s Hour” also appears in The Poems and Written Addresses of Mary T. Lathrap (1895), a posthumously published collection of Lathrap’s writing.}

In “Woman’s Hour,” the speaker exclaims, “Ah! wise men ruling in church and state, / Where did you miss it—the Master’s will?” (235) “Who holds the key [to salvation],” she asks, “since the wise men stand / . . . with empty hand?” The answer is women:

Behold a strong and gentle host!

They gather from every clime and coast,

With steady faith and a purpose high,

And hearts united by holy tie;

Who runneth may read—‘tis woman’s hour. (236)
Though clearly invoking millennialism through her references to “[the] reign of glory, when Christ is king” and “the dawn of peace on the day of God / By poet and seer foretold,” Latham’s poem also suggests an era in which women have power. In this era, liberty and justice are brought through peaceful means. The speaker contemplates men’s attempts to make the world right, alluding specifically to the Civil War:

The wise men, toiling the world to win,
Have sought the prisoner and set him free;
Have drenched the valleys of earth with blood,
In giving to slaves their liberty. (236)

The Civil War, ostensibly fought for freedom, “drenched the valleys of earth with blood,” and as this passage implies, men have only made a mess of things. Man’s war may have “giv[en] the slaves their liberty,” but Woman will usher in the “dawn of peace on the day of God” (235):

[Men] have lifted the serf to a noble place
And wrought for half the human race.
But the golden day
For which they pray
Shall never dawn upon slave or throne
‘Till woman cometh unto her own. (236)

The feminine eloquence described in Lathrap’s poem was a model of eloquence late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women could use to make their voices heard. Moreover, beyond merely describing a model of feminine eloquence, “Woman’s Hour,” a
piece included in an elocutionary compilation be performed before an audience, also
denotes an opportunity for novice women speakers to enact this model of eloquence.

Women’s Elocution as Feminist Rhetoric

Like all the pieces in Heath’s compilation, “Woman’s Hour” is not simply an
elocutionary exercise for leisure or entertainment, but a rhetorical tool “helpful to those
who are seeking to uplift the world” (Heath *Platform* v). As Heath describes in the
preface, the purpose of her compilation is to supply young and novice speakers from
schools, churches, and clubs with a wide-range of temperance material that could be used
to argue and rally for the temperance cause:

>[A]s to my aims: First of all, I wish to create a channel through which the
enthusiastic young people can help in the grandest reform of the age.
Next, I would bring stirring words of truth to arouse the Christian Church
to meet its glorious opportunity for progress. Then I would enlist every
college on the side of right, and help students to convince others, through
the words of our greatest orators and statesmen, past and present. I would
place a ready weapon in the hands of temperance soldiers, by giving facts
and figures showing that licensing sin does not pay. I would cultivate the
gift of oratory, arouse the true spirit of patriotism. I have short, easy
‘pieces’ for the little ones, and carefully classified selections for the
departments of the W.C.T.U., not forgetting the Departments of Mercy
and of Peace and Arbitration. (v)
As Heath’s explanation makes clear, her compilation is not merely a collection of pieces for quiet consumption; rather they are to be actively performed before a captive audience. Pieces such as “Why?” “Eve’s Recompense,” and “Woman’s Hour,” are “stirring words of truth” and “ready weapons” intended to “arouse,” “convince” and “uplift” (v).

Heath’s compilation has an overt reform agenda and clearly demonstrates the ways women used elocutionary genres such as poetry recitation to argue for temperance, women’s suffrage, and women’s rights. However, even in the all-purpose compilations by Faxon, Irish, Randall-Diehl, Stocking, and Shoemaker, womanhood arguments, reform rhetorics, and models of womanly ethos emerge amongst a plethora of otherwise sentimental and apolitical elocutionary pieces. While an overtly political agenda was usually outside their main objectives of providing a diversity of elocutionary performance materials for all people and all occasions, woman compilers often included a number of pieces that contributed to the feminist rhetorics of the time: celebrations of folkloric heroes and historical women, arguments for the commemoration of women’s contributions, and tableaux that depicted the ideals of womanhood through historical, mythical, and allegorical personae. These elocutionary performances served as a repertoire from which novice women speakers and reformers could draw when they took up the public speaking platform to argue for social reform.
Afterword

Paul’s injunction for women to keep silent in the churches, together with the bondage of the dark ages, almost completely shut the door of public speech to women. Rarely had any woman the courage to break these double bars, conventional and ecclesiastic. Only at long intervals was her voice heard above the clamor of lust and the din of war. From out the mists of the centuries comes the voice of Miriam, the sister of Moses; that of Deborah, the last judge; that of Huldah, the faithful prophetess. Later there were other voices. . . .

Within the last century, chiefly in the last half, has woman had the liberty of speech. True, the law imposed no bar in this country, but public opinion did; and this to sensitive natures was stronger than triple bars of brass. (334)

- George Hoss, “The Woman as Public Speaker” (1899)

In 1899, George Hoss, the president of the Western School of Oratory and Elocution in Wichita, Kansas, published an article in Werner’s Magazine on “The Woman as Public Speaker,” in which he narrated the history of women’s exclusion from public speaking, described her recent rise to the speaking platform in the second half of the nineteenth century, and then outlined the “qualifications of the woman as a speaker” (334). An apt demonstration of the influence of the woman’s elocution movement, Hoss’s article outlines the regendered principles of eloquence that women elocutionists

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108 Hoss was the author of First Steps in Public Speaking: For Beginners, In School or Out (1903), the title page of which describes that in addition to his presidency at the Western School of Oratory and Elocution, Hoss also served as professor of English literature and elocution at Indiana State University and as professor of classics and oratory at Baker University in Topeka, Kansas.
fostered through their elocution and Delsarte texts, their physical culture manuals, and their elocutionary compilations. As Hoss describes, women are uniquely adapted to the art of public speaking because (1) “Woman has by nature a greater facility of expression than man has”; (2) “[Woman] has quicker and more delicate sensibilities”; (3) “Woman has quicker intuition than man”; and (4) “Woman’s spiritual nature is superior to that of man’s” (334-5).

While arguably a number of factors helped contribute to women’s rise to the speaking platform at the end of the nineteenth century, it is clear that the women’s elocution movement in America contributed to the notions of “woman as public speaker” that Hoss describes. Expression, sensibility, intuition, and spirituality were new qualities brought to the American oratorical tradition via expressivist and Delsartian elocutionary theories; these were qualities that women elocutionists specifically emphasized in their systems of elocutionary training, physical culture, and genres of elocutionary performance targeted to female students. In her system of Americanized Delsarte Culture, for instance, Emily M. Bishop emphasized “expression” over “repression” in women’s education (Americanized 184). Similarly, Eleanor Georgen’s system of physical culture taught women to develop their “keener sensibilities” (n.p.). Women Delsartians emphasized the development of one’s intuition—the ability to interpret impressions—and one’s spirituality—the relationship between the immanent and the organic. In their selections in elocutionary compilations, women elocutionists chose poems, dialogues, and tableaux, like “Women of the War,” “Woman’s Hour,” and “Eve’s Recompense” that emphasized woman’s perceived superior expressive, sensitive,
intuitive, and spiritual natures. Through these myriad means, the women’s elocution movement in American articulated a notion of woman as a public speaker. Women’s elocutionary theory and pedagogy served as a site of women’s rhetorical education where women could develop such traits.

The development of such a notion of woman speaking is remarkable considering that, as Hoss acknowledges, women were barred from speech for so long. Indeed, for much of western history, public speaking was gendered male, which necessarily precluded women’s participation. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues in *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, women speakers “encountered profound resistance . . . because rhetorical action of any sort was, as defined by gender roles, a masculine activity” (10). Gendered conventions taught women to restrict themselves to the private, domestic sphere; women were to be “retiring and modest” (Campbell 10). Campbell describes how women’s “influence was indirect”; women were considered to have “no expertise or authority” from which to speak (10). As feminist historians of rhetoric including Campbell, Mattingly, Down, and Johnson have demonstrated, women’s public speaking often predicated on the paradoxical move of simultaneously establishing credibility as a woman and as a speaker. As Johnson describes in *Gender and Rhetorical Space*, “[w]omen speakers could be successful only to the degree that they were able to perform essentialist feminine identity in some recognizable way” (120). However, at the same time, women’s very act of public speaking was often perceived to dismantle their womanliness.
The woman’s elocution movement carved out new associations. Through their regendering of elocutionary and oratorical traditions, women elocutionists realigned essentialized qualities of womanhood with new understandings of eloquence in public speaking and made palatable an understanding of woman as public speaker. Moreover, through their manuals and teachings, women elocutionists taught novice woman speakers how to develop this feminine eloquence. While traditional sites and materials in oratorical training had always assumed a male speaker, women’s elocutionary study at the end of the nineteenth century served as a site specifically for women’s training in public speaking. Such education was not only practical in the sense that it prepared women to take up the speaking platform; elocutionary education was also viewed as an important part of women’s overall educational development. Emphasizing women’s cultivation of expressive consciousness, women elocutionists taught their students to feel and recognize the internal sensations of the mind and soul, to be aware of and able to express internal thoughts and feelings through the body and voice, and to recognize the means of expression when viewing or reading visual and performing arts, literary texts, and oratory. Such capacities would have been particularly empowering for women, who had been long oppressed by educational systems that were often more restrictive than emancipatory and by societal mores that obliged women to remain silent. Often the study of elocution opened the door—to not only public speaking—but to a larger intellectual, spiritual, and embodied development. As Elsie M. Wilbor wrote after visiting Genevieve Stebbins’ Delsarte classes, “Let woman study philosophy, theosophy, moral law, or anything she will, so that she is taken outside of herself” (30).
The legacy of the women’s elocution movement is clearest in the ways in which women put their elocutionary and Delsartian training—and their regendered notions of eloquence—into practice, for example in Hallie Quinn Brown’s embodiment of Delsarte expression in her lectures on racial uplift, women’s rights, and temperance; in Anna Randall-Diehl’s recitation of “Flags at Half Mast” at the International Council of Women; in suffragists’ use of tableaux in the Woman’s Suffrage Procession of 1913; and in the publication of elocutionary compilations, like *Platform Pearls*, intended exclusively for the purposes of arguing for temperance, suffrage, and reform. These points of contact between women’s elocutionary training and their rhetorical practices in reform movements demonstrate the ways in which the new conception of “woman as public speaker”—made possible by the women’s elocution movement—opened up opportunities for women. As America moved into the twentieth century, American women, through elocution, had developed a way to assert their influence in public affairs. The number and productivity of the women who became involved in this movement—as teachers, as theorists, as students, and as performers—was great, and the numerous women I have recovered in the previous pages are only the tip of the iceberg. There is still much work to be done to continue to recover and examine women’s elocutionary theory, pedagogy, practice, and their lasting legacy in the American rhetorical tradition.
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