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We hereby approve the Dissertation

of

Lisa Kay Suter

Candidate for the Degree:

Doctor of Philosophy

_____

Co-Director
(Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson)

_____

Co-Director
(Katharine Ronald)

_____

Reader
(Katie Johnson)

_____

Graduate School Representative
(Charlotte Newman Goldy)

ABSTRACT

THE AMERICAN DELSARTE MOVEMENT AND THE NEW ELOCUTION: GENDERED RHETORICAL PERFORMANCE FROM 1880 TO 1905

by Lisa K. Suter

This dissertation analyzes the American Delsarte movement—a largely white, upper- and middle-class women's performance phenomenon from the 1880s to 1905—as well as Delsartists' work in creating what they called the "New Elocution." Scholars of rhetorical history such as Nan Johnson and Robert Connors have touched on the Delsartists in their research and have begun the work of analyzing women's participation in the American elocutionary movement; nevertheless, extensive turf remains wholly unexplored concerning women's study of oratory in this era, in particular, considering why these women thought it the most vital discipline to study. My research therefore consists largely of a recovery project, bringing archival evidence to light and arguing that in the midst of what elocutionists called this "oratorical Renaissance," American women were flocking in surprisingly large numbers to the study of expression and elocution—not as a "social grace," as Leila McKee, one President of a woman's college of oratory put it in 1898, but as a means of "social power." Turn-of-the-century women believed that this power was theirs for the taking if they knew how to speak with more eloquence and confidence in public; this motive has been overlooked, I argue, as has the means by which women meant to procure oratorical ability—by the study and practice of what I term "rhetorical performance." This dissertation defines and analyzes the concept of rhetorical performance as it occurred within three different Delsarte-influenced sites: competition in oratorical contests, the demonstration of elocutionary skill via public recitals, and finally the use of rhetorical drama to advance arguments regarding women's rights.

THE AMERICAN DELSARTE MOVEMENT AND THE NEW ELOCUTION: GENDERED RHETORICAL PERFORMANCE FROM 1880 TO 1905

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Lisa K. Suter

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: FROM THE NEW ELOCUTION TO THE NEW WOMAN

"**This Is the Day of Schools of Oratory….**"

On Tuesday, June 28th, 1892, the First National Convention of Public Readers and Teachers of Elocution met in New York City. The conference held at Columbia College was, by contemporary news reports, extremely well attended—and also "overwhelmingly feminine" ("With the Public Readers"). On the opening day of this inaugural convention, at the very first plenary session, a young woman walked to the platform to address the gathered professional performers and educators. Listed in the convention's proceedings as Miss Lily Hollingshead from Cincinnati, Ohio, Miss Hollingshead explained to her audience that her grandfather, the well-known elocutionist James Murdoch, had been asked to speak, but he had been too ill to come. Indeed, he had been too ill even to write the requested address, she said: thus, she had penned it on her own. The young woman, a teacher of elocution herself, began by acknowledging the "honor, as well as the responsibility" of addressing the assembled educators and performers. Perhaps we can picture her there: standing at a podium draped in bunting, on a platform decorated with lavish ferns, at the front of a large hall dotted with men in black suits amidst a sea of women sitting straight and tall in their corseted white dresses. Looking out from this speaker's perspective over the crowd, did she sense that these audience members were bemused? Did she imagine they were wondering what type of speech this last-minute substitute speaker would give? Perhaps she experienced some trepidation concerning the size and prestige of the assembly—but perhaps not. Her speech's opening lines seem to

ring with authority, as she confidently declared: "This is the day of schools of oratory—schools of expression—schools founded on the methods of Delsarte…."

Today, scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition—close kin to these forefathers and foremothers, the aforementioned teachers of elocution—may not readily recognize the association Hollingshead drew between the study of oratory and the study of "Delsarte," but it is doubtful that anyone in her audience was unfamiliar with the term. In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, Delsarte was a household phrase all across the United States. If a scholar today could travel back in time to belatedly attend this conference, and if that scholar then walked outside the hall to ask the term's meaning of a random group of people on the street, the definitions she received would vary widely. Some passersby might describe it as a form of theatrical performance, or as a religious pathway to the improvement of one's soul. It might be defined as a popular system of physical exercise, as an academic course at the local college or seminary, or as an aesthetic method for dressing and decorating one's home. However, if that same time-traveling scholar walked back inside Columbia's convention hall and asked the elocution teachers in the audience gathered on this summer day in 1892 what Delsarte was, another response would prevail. Among its other meanings at the turn of the century, Delsarte was first and foremost a vibrant system of oratory: one that rhetoricians today have largely forgotten, ignored, or misread.

To rectify this lacuna in our field, this dissertation will take as its focus the analysis of the Delsarte system of oratory, also known more broadly as the American Delsarte movement—both its theory and its *praxis*—as it existed in the United States in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Also of central concern in this thesis will be the Delsartists' intimate connection to the movement then known as the New Elocution, which (as I make clear) produced the first *professional* women rhetoricians in the young republic: a group of women who, until now, have never yet been documented, much less acknowledged for their unique contributions to our field and for their ground-breaking roles. To demonstrate the scope of their endeavors, I excavate the proceedings left behind from the national conventions which followed the one just mentioned: how this mass of scholars, teachers and performers later came to call themselves the National Association of Elocutionists (NAE), and how they began to legitimize their respective lines of work

in the larger world. Along the way I offer a new theory, which I term gendered rhetorical performance, to better explicate the rationale for the spectrum of communicative tactics used by both groups. Here, with the help of scholars from the field of performance theory, I hope to shed light on the unconventional strategies that the American Delsartists and the New Elocutionists used to win converts to their many and varied causes. Finally, I offer a few thoughts concerning the role of this elocution revolution—or as one period observer pronounced it, this "oratorical renaissance"—in the production of the so-called New Woman at the turn of the twentieth century.

It would appear that this type of historical reconstruction and restoration must be useful in and of itself, when a field is as young as the field of women's rhetorics is, today. A mere twenty years ago, in 1989, scholar Cheryl Glenn broke new ground in her own dissertation, "Muted Voices from Antiquity through the Renaissance: Locating Women in the Rhetorical Tradition." In this thesis, as her title suggests, Glenn began vital work by simply attempting to "locate" women heretofore excised from the canon of rhetorical history. In her introduction two short decades ago, Glenn observed that there were still many who believed the term "'female rhetorician' [to be] an oxymoron" (15). Glenn was able to locate only one single female rhetorician [Aspasia of Miletus] in the scope of her landmark study (256); nevertheless, she opened the door for generations of rhetorical scholars to follow, in pursuing her own courageous vision. In a field so very young, then, the type of recovery project I undertake—to locate a band of hundreds of professional female rhetoricians and thousands of female rhetors—might perhaps be useful even if it were only descriptive in nature.

Since that time, the scope of the known world of rhetoric has become much wider due to the re-mapping efforts of additional scholars such as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Joy Ritchie, Katharine Ronald, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Shirley Wilson Logan, and many, many others. Our field became immeasurably richer for their textual and archival digging, combined with their incisive analysis. Still, as they themselves did, within this dissertation I strive to go beyond "mere" historical description of a forgotten group of elocutionists. I examine points of convergence between the Delsartists and other rhetoricians, I engage ongoing conversations in the field, and I raise new questions concerning the salient texts and contexts of this period—some of which I answer, some

of which I leave open (in the hope that future work will elucidate what I can only begin to sketch here). In the final analysis, I argue both that the American Delsartists have been unjustly devalued by contemporary scholarship, and also that modern-day rhetorical scholars would do well to re-examine these fascinating individuals and their passion for public expression.

To return briefly to our aforementioned convention, we must once again call up a mental image of the rhetorical situation, as it were. Our speaker, still at the podium, has finished delivering her paper concerning the paramount importance (as she tells it) of the study of elocution for all people in all walks of life at this, the cusp of a new century. Imagine her slightly flushed with exhilaration, having performed to the utmost of her ability on this auspicious occasion. But what of the audience of her colleagues? No longer half asleep at this too-early hour or half annoyed at the unexpected change in the program, might they have realized a pleasant sense of surprise: either at the young speaker's enthusiasm for her topic, or at her competency in assessing the current world of professional elocution? Surely some will clap their hands; some will raise their hands to ask questions. Soon, however, each of the assembled scholars and performers will gather her program and notes, then head back to disperse throughout the convention hall. There each will make her purposeful, graceful way toward her next session—for after all, the conference is just beginning. In the chapters to come, where these intrepid women go, we will follow.

In the Beginning (Research Questions)

The image I ask readers to imagine above, that of these late Victorian era women at their professional conference, is on the one hand no more than a fun rhetorical device, but on the other hand, is also an indicator of the way I approach my work as a researcher. As a scholar, I have always found myself fascinated (and motivated) by images. In fact, the research which led me to this topic—into this entire dissertation in fact—was all set in motion by a single, curious photograph and an unusual stained glass window.

If my reader will allow a brief (relevant) personal narrative, a few years back I was spending a good deal of time in the university archives. Having been advised by a successful colleague to seek out "lost" or forgotten historical documents to analyze, I was then going to the archives once a week, spending an entire afternoon looking for… what, I hadn't the foggiest clue. I read diaries, scrapbooks, newsletters, journals, newspapers, all by the box; I found myself intrigued by many small scraps of informal history. Still, it was not until I stumbled across a photograph in one particular scrapbook that I felt curiosity really begin to kindle. The scrapbook's creator, Maxine Mary LaPorte, titled this photo "Greek Girls," and in it a group of 15 college-age girls stand, kneel, and lie in the grass in white, toga-like gowns. Some have their hands to their foreheads in ritualistic fashion (signifying what, I did not and still do not know). Those on their knees, in the middle row, have their hands clasped as if in prayer. The two on the ground in front look to be on all fours, and look up from their awkward position with some difficulty. The strangeness of the scene would stay with me, and I examined the picture time and again. Why did these college girls have on such strange outfits? Why the headdresses and armbands? What did their various religious positions and prostrations signify? And why were some of them smiling, clearly delighted with the event—whatever it was?

Another image. After another long session of digging, in the women's archives on Miami's western campus this time, I crossed the street to Kumler Chapel to take a breather before heading home. I went in often in those days to admire the church's beautiful stonework and vaulted, wood-beamed ceiling, or merely to sit in the dim light and the echoing quiet and think. But as I sat there that day, I found myself staring at the largest stained glass window, set off to the side—a window that seemed of secular, not sacred origin. Something about it seemed out of place (as it turned out, that was literally true, and I share that explanation at the end of this chapter). The Brice window, as it is called, is a striking neoclassical composition: a young woman in Greek garb has walked up a hill to a temple at the summit. She carries a large book in one hand and a burning torch held high in the other: this she apparently just lit from the golden lamp on the pedestal in front of her. Above her head is a indigo night sky filled with stars, and above that, two women's faces look down from on high: one marked Clio, the other, Urania.

The overall aesthetic impact of this artwork is quite beautiful. Viewers often comment on its powerful radiance and amber glow. Nevertheless, several elements in this scene puzzled me that day. First, a Greek temple seemed an odd topic, vitreous or otherwise, for a Christian church. Second, there were the Muses: as the daughters of Greek gods, and demi-goddesses themselves, they also seemed incongruous thematic material, considering the setting. And then there were the haircuts, all out of context with the neoclassical time frame: the Muses had what looked to be nineteenth-century hairstyles (one up-do, one long curls and bangs), and the young apparently classical woman in the temple was very clearly wearing her hair bobbed. I pondered and pondered, but could not for the life of me imagine who had commissioned such a work, or why. What could it mean?

Some time passed before I could answer that question, but I had begun to make a connection—the photograph of real women in togas posing on campus, and the stained glass window featuring a representation of a nineteenth-century woman in a toga in a temple. Not long thereafter, still patiently reading in the archives, I came across a student newspaper published on that same campus in 1892. The newspaper was written before the school had been annexed by Miami University, back when it was still a women's seminary, and the paper was written by the students. One issue contained a reference to a "Delsarte recital" recently staged by the college. Reading the article, I learned that the theatrical evening, including one piece called "The Dance of the Muses," was put on by women students wearing togas. I also learned that the entire performance was overseen by their instructor of elocution: Miss Chew, a graduate of the Boston School of Oratory. (This recital we will revisit in detail in chapter three.)

This was my beginning: two images of women in white, neoclassical gowns and one published review of a student performance. From such humble seeds sprouted a great, tangled garden of questions. What was Delsarte performance? Were the young women at this college studying oratory, if their instructor was so trained? Were the togas meant to represent that training, after the fashion of classical orators? If not—what did the togas signify?

As I delved further into this fascinating period in women's rhetorical history, I found few traces of the cultural phenomenon I came to know as American Delsartism—

just a few bread crumbs, you might say, but enough to keep me on the path. [There are substantial differences between both the theories and the practices of French Delsartism and its American counterpart (Georgen, Bishop); I therefore differentiate between the two by referring to my field of study as "American Delsartism" throughout.]

My research questions accumulated: soon I wanted to know *how* American Delsartism was studied by would-be women orators. I found that thousands of women were studying Delsartism (Ruyter *Cultivation* xvii), which made me wonder why this new course of study became so immensely popular in the 1880s and 1890s. I wanted to know how the women who practiced, taught, and wrote about Delsarte conceived of it: did they think of it as merely as a pragmatic move to forward their careers as elocution teachers, or more as an oratorical means to a political end? I wanted to know exactly how widespread it was, as a movement—when and where it was studied, and also by whom. Did women from all walks of life study Delsarte, or only women from certain classes, races, age groups, ethnicities, and educational backgrounds? I learned that Delsarte was tied somehow to an upsurge in the establishment of new colleges of oratory for women, but I didn't know how many of these schools existed, where they were, or what percentage of these schools taught Delsartean instruction specifically (as opposed to elocution, rhetoric, or oratory generally). I hoped to learn what texts were used in those college classrooms and what curricula were assigned by those collegiate faculty. I found that Delsarte was often taught in gymnasiums—a fact which intrigued me, to say the least. What kinds of exercises were practiced? Several Delsartean practitioners made reference to the use of Indian clubs and barbells and even swords in these gym classes—what could they have been doing with those? Did the same instructors teach both the vocal and the physical training, in the same course, and at the same time? Besides what seemed to be an emphasis on physiological instruction, I was keen to learn about their vocal instruction. Finally, when and where and under what circumstances did these students perform to audiences—and to what type of audiences, I wondered?

These research questions, I learned, were only the beginning. Still later, I came across a third and final eye-catching photo, this one in a Delsarte-based handbook. This posed group portrait was labeled "National Convention of Elocutionists;" the year was listed as 1900. One keyword search in the library catalog later, and I had two OED-size

volumes and approximately 1800 pages of transcribed proceedings of the American Delsartists' scholarly transactions and interactions. I learned of the "New Elocution" debate raging during this period—and found myself curious to learn in what ways this "new" elocution was different from the old one.

One final remark about "where and when I enter" work as a scholar: it seems crucial to disclose from the outset that I am first and foremost a feminist historiographer. The information that I was keen to uncover concerned the rhetorical practices of the American Delsarte women in this era. Indeed, though men did learn, teach and practice this art, this was largely a women's movement, as Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter has argued. Ruyter examined the publications and advertisements of "more than 400 American teachers and performers active between 1870 and 1900 who either identified themselves as Delsarteans or acknowledged that system as a significant component in their training," yet in the end analysis, she concluded that "[t]here were probably many more" (*Cultivation* 57, 71). In Ruyter's estimate, approximately 85% of these practicing "Delsarteans" were women (58). Still, as another scholar has correctly observed, the far fewer American Delsarte men and their practices have been much more thoroughly documented in previous scholarship (Fahey 14)—so much so that they scarcely require added attention at this time. The purpose of my study therefore was to examine the women who called themselves Delsartists, Delsarteans, or New Elocutionists and to situate them firmly within our rhetorical canon. As I will show, these women were eager and determined to establish themselves within the professional terrain of the field of oratory, regardless of obstacles: in the following thesis, these women alone will be the focus of my attention—as they have been since I first saw those togas.

Gendered Rhetorical Performance

Before beginning the history of the American Delsartists, it would be well to lay out the theory I will be forwarding in order to analyze their work. Put simply, I argue that

the American Delsarte movement has been misread by rhetorical scholars in the past due to this culture's unique relationship to performance (albeit of a highly rhetorical nature).

In advancing this theory, I will be following the categorization of "performance" codified by theatrical scholar Marvin Carlson. In his book, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Carlson articulates three definitions that are commonly signified when using the word. Rearranging his order slightly (to echo my dissertation's structure), one definition of the word performance signifies that there is an activity happening, and someone is judging that activity's quality—either the performer herself, or her audience. There is some "standard of achievement" to be attained (which may or may not ever be explicitly stated, Carlson notes) and someone is judging if the performance measures up (5). He offers a variety of examples ranging from linguistic performance to sexual performance to a student's performance in school (5).

Another meaning of the term performance is a "public display of technical skill," Carlson records, which alludes to the entire range between the so-called performing arts [music, dance, theater] and the related but separate category now known as "performance art" [activities that lie outside generic performance boundaries]. In this definition, Carlson posits that the definition is predicated upon "the physical presence of trained or skilled human beings whose demonstration of their skills is the performance" (3). There is no overt act of evaluation included in this definition, although clearly all of the just-mentioned art forms could be and are judged or reviewed at times, and therefore could pass back into the first category quite easily. (To my view, it would seem that these semantic boundaries are permeable in every direction; nonetheless, these definitions are still useful as a guide to the activities of the American Delsartists.)

One final definition Carlson offers is "a recognized and culturally coded pattern of behavior" (4-5). Like the previous definition, this is a public performance that is on display, but may range from culturally recognizable patterns such as theatrical rôles (parts in a play), to equally socially constructed behaviors of the self—such as gender "rôles," to choose just one example—which are usually recognized by their performers as culturally coded.

As I will demonstrate in this dissertation, as a group, the American Delsartists consciously chose to take part in performances of all three types. I have elected to make

this pattern of varied performative behavior more obvious by separating the different definitions: one for each subsequent chapter. In chapter two, I look at the Delsartean preference for oratorical competition: contests that were judged by an arbiter with prizes awarded for the winners. In chapter three, I take up a type of their public performances which they termed "recitals": these were showcases for the technical skills they were acquiring in their elocutionary colleges. In chapter four, I analyze their use of theatrical rôles, some which they appropriated, some they wrote themselves. (For a full expansion of these chapters' contents, see the section "Overview of Chapters," near the end of this Introduction.)

The theory I develop here attempts to expand upon Carlson's definitions, in order to show the heretofore unremarked strength of both the American Delsartists' agenda of rhetorical education and their savvy participation in civic discourses pertaining to women's rights issues.

At one point in his introduction, Carlson restates an observation found within the field of performance studies that "all human activity could potentially be considered as 'performance', or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself" (4). He continues, stating that "The difference between doing and performing, according to this way of thinking, would seem to lie not in the frame of theatre versus real life but in an attitude—we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this introduces a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance" (4). Carlson is merely reiterating one of the explanations of performance to hand in the theatrical world, but I'm not certain I agree with the notion—allow me to state my reason why, by way of a rather humble comparison of examples. I will then show their relevance to my argument.

A scholar is working late at her laptop: she gets up to proceed to the kitchen to make a pot of coffee. Being tired, she walks into the doorframe and hears the crunch of her elbow hitting the door. She is alone in her apartment. There is no one to observe her action, yet she is in pain; consciously, she rubs the arm to make the pain subside. She might have walked into the door "unthinkingly," but now awake, her act of arm rubbing is as likely to be "conscious" behavior as not. Yet is this a competitive act? A show of technical skill? A culturally coded behavior? It would seem none of the above. I can, however, think of an example of a similar activity that would be performative—and more

than that, it would also be rhetorical. My family loves the 1954 movie *White Christmas*, in which two soldiers return home from World War II. To those not familiar with this classic tale, one soldier (Phil Davis, played by Danny Kaye) is shown in a flashback to have saved the life of the other soldier (Bob Wallace, played by Bing Crosby) by pushing him out of the way of a falling wall during the war. In his unthinking heroism, Phil is slightly wounded in the arm. He makes a full recovery, but after the war is over and the two men are safely back stateside, whenever Phil wants anything from Bob—anything at all—he begins to rub his arm as if his "war wound" is acting up again and causing him pain. This inevitably makes Bob feel guilty, and Bob ends up giving Phil whatever his old war buddy wants, to the great amusement of the movie audience.

The classification of this "performance" from this old film is not really the point: would we situate it into category one, the "standard of achievement" category, as Bob is trying to evaluate if his buddy's arm is really hurting or not? Or category two, the "technical skill" category? (It becomes clear in the film that Phil's character is something of a loveable con artist, and this new "shtick" is just one of his many tools of the trade.) The exact categorization seems less important than the recognition that Phil's "act" is a performance to an audience (Bob)—yet it also has a specific and conscious purpose, and a rhetorical one at that—namely to persuade Bob to do what Phil wants him to do.

I offer this example as a way of stating that, while an interesting idea, I do not agree that all conscious human activity is performative. Perhaps it would be better stated that the performer needs to be conscious of the presence of an audience for an act to be performative. But let us go a step further. To be conscious of an audience and to have the explicit purpose in mind to *persuade* them of something (as opposed to entertaining or informing them, say): that is the definition I propose for the act of rhetorical performance. While recognizing that the term "rhetoric" has occasionally encompassed both informing and entertaining, as well as persuading, I nevertheless define the term in this way in order to highlight within the American Delsartists' work a suasive edge that was doubtless seen as argumentative in its own day but in recent years has been overlooked by scholars of rhetoric. Also, I should note that this form of persuasion was not usually "argumentative" in the meaning of explicit, agonistic oratory, thundering from the pulpit or platform—this

was persuasive work taking place in more creative venues and in subtler and more careful ways.

One question I anticipate from readers is how this nascent theory that I am working to establish will distinguish itself from Lindal Buchanan's excellent theory regarding delivery among women rhetoricians in the nineteenth century. In her book *Regendering Delivery* (a work which receives more extended attention in chapter two), Buchanan makes the essential point that an orator's delivery cannot be judged in and of itself alone but rather must be judged based on the (multiple) contexts from which the orator is speaking. [Here, note the performative category of judgment as applied to rhetorical performance, even in our work as historians: we scholars have judged orators' work in retrospect, even as we wrote analyses of these works as matters of historical record.]

As is made clear by the title of her book, Buchanan's focus is on delivery. The concept of rhetorical performance as I articulate it, however, encompasses a rhetor's attention to all five of the classical, Ciceronian canons: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. While the American Delsartists were professional elocutionists and therefore were extremely interested in all things pertaining to delivery, nevertheless their various types of rhetorical performance evince understanding of the persuasive potential of all five canons. Buchanan's work focuses on the bodies of the women as they sat or stood upon a public platform, and whether or not girls received vocal instruction in their rhetorical textbooks (among other things). While the Delsartists were intensely interested in voice and gesture both, their acts of rhetorical performance take much more into consideration: much of which (I submit) has an argumentative purpose of some kind or another.

Rhetorical performance considers the way the performative space will be prepared (in the Delsartists' case for example, flowers, garlands, or other feminine markers or props would often be employed to counter the prevailing cultural contention that speaking in public was a masculine activity). Rhetorical performance considers the way the performer's body must be trained or prepared in advance in order for her to perform to her full power—it does not just examine her physical gestures from the rostrum. It encompasses *silent* performances within its purview, not just voiced delivery. It

encompasses not just collaborative oratory (such as the famed duo of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Buchanan) but collaborative performances in the theater, in costumes, with music and lighting—all done with a persuasive edge. It takes into consideration issues of arrangement, in which the selection of pieces in a seemingly "random" recital is anything but random.

The rhetorical nature of performance, or this new performative mode of rhetoric, seems the key to understanding the American Delsartist women on their own terms. In this work I offer a few of the observations I have made in my research in recent years. I will also try to show how these performances were gendered in nature.

Dual Origins: The Delsarte System(s) of Oratory on Two Continents

Before any analysis of the American Delsarte women can take place, however, two earlier iterations of the movement must first be briefly documented: the movement's initial origin in France, followed by the theory's exportation, transformation, and subsequent rebirth in America. Both earlier Delsartean theories took as their purpose the improvement of a performer's speaking or singing voice alongside an interest in a performer's expressive body: a key difference between the two schools of expression (and that of the women's movement which followed) was in the type of performer that each focused on, as we will shortly see. To begin, let us turn to the first system's creator, a French singer-turned-teacher named François Delsarte.

Born in 1811 in Solesme, France, Delsarte was orphaned at an early age and was forced to make his way as a child on the Parisian stage—a feat which one contemporary biographer, one of his students, asserted that he accomplished by virtue of his amazing voice. Later, however, his voice was said to have been ruined by poor teaching practices at the Paris Conservatory where he had been a pupil (Werner 290). Thereafter, perhaps as a result of this loss, Delsarte devoted himself to seeking out alternative means of communication. He began a lifelong search for the "universal" laws which governed gesture—how bodies "naturally" speak, and how they might be trained to speak with

more expressive fluency. As recorded in the sole surviving "literary remains" written in his own hand, Delsarte studied children at play in parks, patients' bodies in hospitals, statues in museums and corpses in morgues: all to understand the communicative potential of the human body (Werner 401-9). From these first-hand observations, he eventually developed a theorem he named "The Science of Expression." He then taught this theory in his *Cours d'Esthétique Appliquée* (Course of Applied Aesthetics), opening his first formal school in Paris in 1839 (Shaver 204).

Delsarte's new "science" was well received in France—or at least, what we know of it was. It is essential to point out that Delsarte published nothing concerning his ideas in his lifetime. Only a few scattered comments about his "science of expression" were found in his own words—these, in the form of fragmented lecture notes, remained in his wife's possession after his death. (She allowed these to be published; however, they are mere quotes or small, unattached narratives.) Most of what has come down to scholars concerning his theory, therefore, comes from the published work of two of his students who took notes during his lectures—L'Abbé Delaumosne and Madame Angélique Arnaud—as well as the writing of one of Delsarte's daughters, Madame Marie Géraldy. These works would later come to be published in the United States by Edgar Werner, who collected and edited them, releasing the lot as the first translated edition of Delsarte's theory, *The Delsarte System of Oratory*, in the year 1882.

Werner's title notwithstanding, was Delsarte's theory really a system of oratory? Claude Shaver suggests that the originator's science was "misrepresented" by the pupil, Delaumosne, who focused on oratorical delivery in his publication of his teacher's instruction (215). Shaver is of the opinion that this focus stems from the fact that Delaumosne was a priest and was therefore in a class Delsarte planned especially for clergymen—a class that seems to have been an anomaly. Shaver points out that Delsarte himself had no training besides singing, and further, that he "was not a speech teacher in any real sense of the word, but was, primarily, a teacher of instrumental and vocal music and an opera coach" (204). By his own calculations, Shaver notes that most of Delsarte's recorded students were singers (22), instrumentalists (12), or composers (4): of his 55 known pupils, 38 were allied with the field of music, in other words. Another "seven were actors, five were writers… two were lawyers, and three were painters" (206). Of

these last, only the two lawyers would have had need for oratorical training in the strictest sense, though perhaps we might include the actors in that count as well. Either way, the tendency of Delsarte's instruction to lean toward the improvement of the singer's voice (or even the musician's technique) may be inferred by considering who Delsarte's known students were.

In the other aforementioned pupil's transcription of "The Delsarte System," Angélique Arnaud included a biography of her teacher and listed his most famous students. These included several luminaries of the European opera in the late nineteenth century: singers Henrietta Sontag, Alfred Giraudet, and Madame Pasca, she claims, were known to attend his lectures and performances (332-345). It may be impossible at this temporal distance ever to know with any certainty whether or not Francois Delsarte's new science was designed primarily as a system intended for oratorical use. What does seem certain is that within the ranks of all his pupils, only one is known to have come from the United States (Shaver 206), and that he, James Morrison Steele MacKaye, was the man who became Delsarte's favored protégé.

The second wave of Delsartism begins to shape here, with the arrival of Steele MacKaye, as he was known, in France, in October of 1869. An American who wanted to study acting at the Conservatory in Paris, MacKaye had been convinced to study with Delsarte instead; however, he did not have long to work with his chosen instructor. After the Franco-Prussian war began in 1871 (and with it the siege of Paris), MacKaye was forced to return to the United States. He imported with him his teacher's theories, and very soon thereafter he began an extensive lecture tour which took him around the east coast and parts of the Midwest.

Whatever his instructor's system or intended audience might have been, though, it is clear that Steele MacKaye was strongly aligned with the theater for the best part of his professional career. He was an actor, a theater manager, a prolific playwright (he wrote thirty plays), and a theatrical inventor who patented over 100 technical improvements for the stage ("Steele MacKaye"). He even helped open the first formal school for actors in the United States, which would later evolve into the American Academy of Dramatic Art.

At one point, in 1878, MacKaye delivered a dozen lectures on his philosophy of expression at the Boston School of Oratory. One scholar in speech education, evincing an

evident disciplinary prejudice, believes these to have been the "most important" of all MacKaye's lectures because "they seem to have influenced directly the teaching of elocution or expression" (Shaver 209). This may be so—the Delsarte "influence" may well have been transmitted or transferred in this fashion, in other words—but the pupil MacKaye seems to have been disinterested in the teaching of elocution or oratory himself for the better part of his life, as was his instructor. Shaver sums it up neatly: "Delsarte had been interested primarily in the training of singers. MacKaye was interested in the training of actors. *Only in the hands of pupils of MacKaye and of pupils of his pupils was the system applied to 'expression' or interpretation*" (211, emphasis added).

Thus, having already transformed once in the crossing of the Atlantic, this uniquely American form of Delsartism would transform again. In the hands of MacKaye's students—women like Genevieve Stebbins and Anna Morgan, both of whom opened schools of elocution of their own—this inherited "science of expression" was reformulated in two important ways. First, the theory for actors became a theory for public speakers of all kind (though as we see in chapter four, some focus on drama would remain—just with a rhetorical and argumentative edge). The other crucial shift was in constituency: as previously noted, by the 1880s, the main demographic seeking access to this theory of expression had shifted dramatically from mostly men to mostly women (Ruyter *Cultivation* xvii).

Many other changes were wrought upon this system of oratory, which was now actually becoming a system of oratory, as we observe in the next section. I argue that the quintessential metamorphosis taking place here, however, is that this period marks an inchoate (yet coalescing) beginning of a felt desire on the part of many American women for formal rhetorical training. In this moment, many American women seem to have been coming to the same conclusion: in order to enact needed changes in their world, they needed first to win the current debates on those issues, to win over others to their way of thinking—and to do that, they would need to study elocution. Put another way, in order to voice demands concerning the Progressive societal reforms they were seeking, their *literal* voices would need training. In this period a large number of American women (many white and middle- to upper-class, though not all, as we see below) seem to come to the collective decision to take matters of rhetorical education into their own hands, to

bring about the New Woman, a new era, and the promise of a new set of possibilities, all through the program of study they called the New Elocution.

Now, Oratory in Women's Colleges—Acquiring The "Means of Social Power"

In 1898, at the seventh meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists convened in Cincinnati, Ohio, then NAE president Thomas C. Trueblood opened the conference by discussing the renewed excitement that the nation was experiencing for the study of oratory. Trueblood, a professor of oratory and debate from the University of Michigan, spoke of the marked differences in the state of the discipline of elocution from 20 years previous to that date. He compared the number of colleges, high schools and academies offering that course of study; the status of professional academics in the field; and the separate schools dedicated to oratorical study alone: he concluded that this "great awakening in oratory in the colleges" would one day be looked upon as "the Oratorical Renaissance" of turn-of-the-century America. (*Proceedings* 2: 30-1).

This contemporary assessment from the president of the national body in charge of elocution is intriguing, as most scholars in our time have documented a different trend. Quite a few who have examined the field of elocution have regarded the latter part of the nineteenth century as a falling-off point in collegiate interest in elocutionary studies. One landmark source, for example, claims that although "[e]locutionary training never died out of the college curriculum" altogether, still the "interest in elocution diminished" in colleges in the United States from 1850 onward (Hochmuth and Murphy 171, 173). These same researchers also record the "decline of interest in oratory" from 1875 to 1900—though they qualify that this is in "the Eastern colleges"—then they observe more generally that "in the last part of the nineteenth century… more and more the concern in departments of English was with forms of writing other than oratory" (169, 172). Hochmuth and Murphy are careful not to generalize too greatly from insufficient data, but their analysis of the interest in collegiate elocution courses in the latter part of the

nineteenth century does not much resemble NAE President Trueblood's "great awakening in oratory in the colleges" or his "Oratorical Renaissance."

Directly after Trueblood's address, there was a "session of the main body" featuring speaker Leila S. McKee, President of the Western College of Oxford, Ohio; her paper was titled "The Efficiency and Deficiency of Elocution in Colleges for Women." Taken in context with the former speaker's enthusiastic claims, McKee's comments and observations may be revealing. McKee divided her talk into four parts. First the college president spoke to the purpose of a college education; second, she compared that to the purpose of a college education for young *women*. Third, she analyzed the specific purpose of elocutionary study, and finally, she listed the problems inhering within the current state of the discipline, in undertaking such study.

McKee opened by stating that there must be no true difference between a man's education and a woman's education at college. While the women's curriculum must be adapted to some subjects "germane to women's needs," nevertheless she insisted that "not one jot or tittle" of the workload must be lessened (*Proceedings* 2:41). McKee wanted her students subjected to "healthy, hard work," but this must be work assigned in the service of their specific needs. And what were those needs, from her perspective? Naturally she stated that elocution was an "essential" course of study—but one *specifically* essential to the higher education of young women (42). The reasons she offered? Elocution rightly understood, she proposed, should not concern itself with students achieving a mere "accomplishment" or "social grace" but rather with their attaining a "means of social power" (42). Elocution was the "science of sciences, and the art of arts," she argued. The study and practice of elocution could provide the wielder with "the power to think critically" and the "power to express thought" (43). McKee's only concerns were that not enough colleges were teaching elocution as a requirement (as opposed to an elective course), that the course should be more rigorous and "scientific," and that more time in the curriculum should be set aside for this new science's study.

Here I feel it is important to pause briefly and note that, despite McKee's worries (or perhaps as a direct result of them), her own institution in Oxford, Ohio, did not appear to be experiencing any of the concerns that she is raising; nor did the other college for women in that same town. In college catalogues and course descriptions contemporary to

McKee's administration, as well as in newspapers, various entertainment programs, and subsequent local histories, this researcher found ample evidence that the formal study of elocution and Delsarte were thriving in the 1890s at both the Western Female Seminary (McKee's institution) and at Oxford College. In fact, four years after McKee's NAE address, the latter institution opened an entire College of Oratory staffed with four brand-new faculty, all teaching elocution or Delsarte. Already, elocution seemed genuinely the pre-eminent curricular concern—at least for women and at least in this one Ohio town. President McKee, like Professor Trueblood before her, did not offer specifics to back her cause for alarm; therefore, we are left to make what we can of their differing reports and diverging claims. It seems more widespread research in the archives of various women's schools from this same timeframe will be necessary, before the veracity of either claim could be established.

After Leila McKee's presentation, there was a scheduled respondent as well as a lively question and answer period, all of which were transcribed in the proceedings. This conversation sheds great light on the felt need driving the American Delsarte movement and the New Elocution. In page after page of comments from women who teach elocution to other women, one begins to see a pattern develop as to why they felt it was such essential work. The respondent, Mrs. Lucia Julian Martin, principal of the Toledo School of Elocution, began by stating that "the time has now arrived when women most need the art of public speaking" (2:49). She continued, asserting that "Young women are not taught, as they ought to be, to think and to express those thoughts upon their feet…" and that this form of training in extemporaneous expression "cannot fail to become a great power towards self control, self reliance, self expansion" (2:49). She made her strongest argument for the timeliness of this instruction, however, in the following way:

> If this kind of training is of such great value to young men [,] it is worth even more to young women who today are being called upon to help fill the avenues leading to the heights of attainment, so recently controlled almost exclusively by their brothers. Under some other name than elocution, young men have enjoyed opportunities for this kind of culture to a greater or lesser degree, almost from time immemorial, and *today,*

> *when we women are brought into direct competition with them, as we are, the greater number of us are at a disadvantage*. (2:50, emphasis added)

Being the head administrator of a school of elocution, Martin evinces the bias we would expect her to possess in stating that this training is "of… great value" to all. Still, the argument she is advancing here is strongly resonant with the echoes of modern-day feminist scholars in our discipline: scholars who have likewise recorded centuries of this "time immemorial" passing, wherein these aforementioned young men were receiving "this kind of culture" under "some other name than elocution." Put another way, many historiographers in our time have observed men's access to formal training in rhetoric, to which women and members of other marginalized groups had little or no access. But in 1898, at this convention, we are not only listening to that same conversation, more than a hundred years ago: we are also *seeing* that very tide begin to *turn*. Here are two women administrators of institutions of higher education for women, addressing one another and their assembled crowd of educators (also predominantly women)—and everyone is talking about the need to study this "culture" and this "power," lest the young women coming up through the ranks of every career be left "at a disadvantage." In order to succeed, these "women of the future," as Principal Martin calls them, will certainly need the balancing advantage of "so-called New Elocution" (2:51, 49).

A "New" Elocution?

Seconding the foremost concern offered by President Leila McKee, Principal Lucia Martin worries that, though the New Woman may well be in dire want of the New Elocution, she is sure that "this particular training and practice is as yet very '*new*' to the students in the great majority of the colleges, seminaries and academies for women" (2:49, emphasis in original). Her play-on-words no doubt amused her audience, long familiar with the contention as to whether there was in fact a "new" elocution, or if the old one had merely been relabeled ("new and improved!") in an effort to boost sales of

voice lessons. (Observe Martin's ambiguous wording employing the qualifier "so-called" in the phrase "the so-called New Elocution.") Whatever one chose to call it, she seemed to be saying, women were in need of this training.

As she was well aware, however, many teachers of elocution and professional performers in her audience would have insisted upon the moniker, "new." Fifteen years after its inception, this debate was still hotly contested at panels and presentations at NAE conferences. This subject also received regular air time in the elocutionists' major trade journal, *Werner's Voice Magazine*, in the form of competing advertisements, articles, and impassioned letters to the editor. The evident fact of this debate is surprising, since we as a field have at present no scholarship on record concerning this second wave of "the" American elocutionary movement. In Brenda Gabioud Brown's treatment of the subject of "Elocution" in *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, for example, there is tribute paid to the British Elocutionary Movement, its French counterpart, and a single American Elocutionary Movement, but no whisper of any second wave, any new iteration comprising different constituents or different purposes. Likewise in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg's canon-making anthology, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*—there is not one line concerning any "new" elocution. Not even in Jane Donawerth's book, *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900*, is any mention of this disciplinary rift to be found, though Donawerth includes more primary textual material and original analysis of same on the American women Delsartists than any other modern-day writer of rhetorical history. The documentation and analysis of the New Elocution is still to be undertaken in our own time; it is this gap that I will now work at bridging.

The first time the qualifying phrase "new" appears attached to elocution in this context, in print, is in 1883. Moses True Brown, the first Professor of Oratory at Tufts College, submitted an article to *The Voice* titled "The New School of Elocution: The Philosophy of Human Expression as Formulated By François Delsarte." His title makes the argument he will advance fairly clear from the beginning, but in his opening line, he foresees (and attempts to forestall) the consternation of his colleagues at his line of reasoning. "It may seem a bold assertion to some of my readers," he writes, "yet it is made in all seriousness, that until Delsarte there existed no such thing as a Philosophy of

Expression" (Brown 1). He can assert this, he contends, because no scholar besides Delsarte has ever before applied "the Scientific Method" to the study of vocal and physical expression (1). It is Brown's contention that this new method will (and should) revolutionize the entire field. Brown's voice carried weight in that field: a year after publishing this article, in 1884, he founded the famous Boston School of Oratory (not incidentally, the school where quite a few women American Delsartists went for their initial training), and two years later still he wrote an academic textbook, *The Synthetic Philosophy of Expression*, which further developed this initial theory. [This textbook was used at the Oxford College for Women's new college of oratory in Ohio, according to their college catalog in 1893.]

After this article by Moses True Brown was published, it was not long before many more professionals in the field were discussing the idea of a "new" elocution. Soon after that, the debate within the discipline began in earnest—one which continued for years. Reading through traces of this argument left behind in various print publications, what is interesting is that the terms of the debate do not always appear to be lined up symmetrically on both sides, which is to say, the argument seemed to proceed without any clear idea of what exactly was being argued, at times. Only one thing seems to be essential to all of the debaters—some connection is always established between the New Elocution and to the women of the American Delsarte movement. All other points of contention seem to shift without warning, making analysis of the truth of the various claims more challenging. One representative exchange taken from papers presented at NAE conferences in the years directly before and after Leila McKee's address will be useful to demonstrate both this reifying connection as well as a few of the disconnects of the debate.

In a presentation in 1897 titled "The New Elocution," a speaker listed as S. H. Clark affirmed both that there was a new school and also that it presented a major leap forward in elocutionary studies. Professor of elocution at the University of Chicago for 29 years, Solomon Henry Clark took care to open by mentioning the "great differences between the individuals of the new school" (2:66), thus implying that this was no monolithic movement, but rather a school of variegated methods and theories at best. Possibly this observation accounts for the different ways in which the debate is being

framed. Moving into the debate concerning whether this is a disciplinary paradigm shift, the professor outlines three key points of difference between the old school and the new: the New Elocutionists' pedagogy, their "attitude toward literature," and their study of art.

To sum up Clark's argument, he believes the new school is superior both in method and in philosophy. Their pedagogy does not teach vocal and gestural drills in a vacuum, but rather in context to an actual act of vocal or gestural interpretation. Thus they study the skill as it is being applied to an actual expressive performance. [This appears to be something like our own approach to the teaching of grammar today: no longer divorced from the text and studied in and for itself, compositionists today are more likely to work with students' grammatical issues as they are found within an already created text.] Next, the New Elocutionists' putative "attitude toward literature" differs from their counterparts in the old school, Clark opines, because the new school is committed to bringing the great works to the masses. Clark claims that they perform "not merely to amuse, not merely to entertain…" but to "understand" and to offer a "careful and critical analysis of English masterpieces" (2:78). Finally, the professor says that their study of the art approaches that of the priest's devotion to the divine word. He claims for them an "ambition… to serve… as ministers of literature; to interpret the great ideals of the poet's mind" (2:80). However, in these points that Clark has chosen, only the first—the argument of a new pedagogy—seems a true divergence from the received theories of the "old" school of elocution. The other two center on elocution as a relationship to art—the expression of art—and that is an inherited, not new, relationship, albeit one received from a time frame a bit removed from their day. In this, Brenda Gabioud Brown agrees with me, stating that "Whereas eighteenth-century elocutionists viewed elocution as an art… nineteenth-century elocutionists viewed elocution as a science" (Brown 212).

Clark's summary of the salient features of the American Delsarte movement seems none too cogent, frankly, for my own research would indicate that many of the New Elocutionists were interested in the science, not the art, of expression—from originator François Delsarte himself to Principal Leila McKee, who as we recall, was worried that the scientific component of this course of study should be made more rigorous.

Nonetheless, Clark insisted upon his argument that a new elocution did exist and that its title was therefore warranted. To the critics who denied the existence of sufficient difference between the two schools to warrant the terminology "new," Clark constructed the following analogy between the new elocution and the new rhetoric. To critics of the new movement, he asked, doesn't the new rhetoric have some features of the old one? He answers his own question: of course it does. "But the new rhetoric," he says, "with its keener insight into the mind, develops its students in such a way that its average result is better than that produced by the methods of the past" (2:80). He added one final support to his argument, referring in tongue-in-cheek fashion to the ubiquitous complaints in the past about professional readers trained with the old methods. He claimed, somewhat humorously, that "The cultivated public, too, is gradually becoming convinced that there is a new elocution, and that it may attend readings without the dread of subsequent nightmare" (2:82).

Not all elocutionists were predisposed to agree with Clark's argument—many were vehemently opposed to it, in fact. One such was Henry Gaines Hawn, who in 1898 presented a paper titled "Needed Reforms in Elocutionary Instruction." In this work, Hawn argued that there is no such thing as a new school of elocution; at the same time, he insisted on a "return" to some of the *older* principles of elocution which apparently have been abandoned—an irony which seemed altogether to escape him. The affront he evidently felt at the very name of the new movement—let alone their methods—seems comical, yet let us listen and try to read between the lines, if we can, to learn what is really at stake here.

> *The worst crime that has been committed in many years against this great, God-given, man-developed art*, is the manufacture of the following term, "the new elocution." Aside from being an unpardonable impertinence, it is not even good rhetoric as a definition. Elocution is primarily, secondarily, and all the time vocal utterance. And whether we accept the Biblical theory or the one of evolution, human speech is rather an ancient matter, and what is old cannot be new. (2:156, emphasis added)

Continuing, Hawn lashed out at the verbal "jugglery" of the practitioners who would lay claim to such a name for their school, relabeling them only a new "cult that has arisen" (2:156). But is there not in his frustration a hint of the real problem? Hawn went at some length, speaking of problems and calling for reforms. He was against calisthenics or any physical training being added to a vocal art, for one. He also was aggravated that there appeared to be so many different meanings implied when "a school-miss" informed you that she was studying elocution and Delsarte (2:157). Only here do we begin to get to the heart of the matter, in my opinion. When the "school-miss" begins to study that which has previously been off-limits to her, when she begins appropriating that "man-developed art" for purposes of her own, a power struggle is surely bound to ensue. For despite understanding Hawn's adjective use ("man-developed") to be intended as a universal, I would argue that this is what the debate was really all about, at its core: the appropriation of professional rhetorical turf by upstart women instructors, and the school-miss's access to formal rhetorical training, which might at any time be miss-employed in the public sphere, for dubious purposes.

Was the New Elocution really new? It seems to me that the answer is two-fold: both a qualified yes and a more emphatic yes. While the Delsarte-based school of elocution was not a radical departure from the old school of voice and gesture training in all ways, nonetheless several differences are observable. The Delsartists do appear to have initiated new pedagogical methods (training being applied in context to the actual interpretation, as opposed to drills for drills' sake) and new training techniques (overall physical culture generally and specific physical exercises, as we see in the next chapter): both of these innovations educated their students in ways not seen before. However, as the "new" school of elocution still aspired to be an ideology of expression, it naturally retained the emphasis on voice and gesture training that had been central to the previous American and British elocutionary schools, and as such, it constitutes no complete break with the past.

On the other hand—often wholly unnoted by many nineteenth-century scholars who were arguing about this new method—there were substantial and remarkable differences regarding who now had access both to study and to teach the art of delivery. As women became students and faculty at various colleges and seminaries, or set up their

own independent schools of elocution in big cities, or became professional performers and educators touring the country offering lectures and classes for a generous fee, scholars of the so-called "old" school must have felt their reputations (if not their very careers) to be somewhat at risk. Then too, at the same time, a felt sense of authority and entitlement among the women of the new school must surely have been swelling. Having won for themselves a formal education in oratory still not available to many, how could these women not feel they had earned the legitimate, unassailable right to speak and be heard?

As women from different socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds began to claim their space on public platforms and in the workplace, it may seem to us now of secondary importance precisely which methods got them there, or how "new" those methods really were. A new era of rhetorical education had arrived for women in the late nineteenth century: this was a New Elocution, indeed.

Which (New) Women Were American Delsartists?

Elocutionists were only one of many groups being relabeled "new" at the turn of the twentieth century. This millennial trend proclaiming the ostensible novelty of some cultural group or another has been observed by other historians who study this era: for example, in the various discourses and vernacular of the period, the "New Woman" and the "New Negro" were also making their respective appearances at this time (Smith and Dawson 2). It will be my contention that, albeit rarely drawn as an explicit or conscious connection, nevertheless the perception seems to be dawning among these two formerly marginalized groups that their forward progress was tied to their access to rhetorical education, yet they appear to have gone about their appropriation of this knowledge in different ways and ultimately for different emancipatory purposes.

As previously observed, beginning approximately a third of the way through the American Delsarte phenomenon—from the 1880s in other words—and continuing into the first few years of the twentieth century, women comprised the vast majority of the

movement. We also saw that there were (at least) thousands of women involved, maybe more, dispersed all across the country (Ruyter). However, as scholars recognize today, the term "women" is neither a stable nor a monolithic category. Barbara Biesecker holds that "the critic taking up the project of rewriting the history of rhetoric would be required to come to terms with rather than efface the formidable differences between and among women." She rephrases the point even more firmly: "Put simply, it is not enough to declare, 'Man cannot speak for her.' One must also admit that no individual woman or set of women, however extraordinary, can speak for all women" (170).

So *which* American women were taking part in this cultural undertaking? This question did not appear to have received any true, sustained attention in previous studies, yet was one of the most important questions to me as I conducted my own research.

Every scholar who has written of the American Delsarte movement at any length has at some point commented that it was a largely white and upper- to middle-class alliance (Fahey; Lake; Ruyter). I, too, have seen a great deal of archival and textual evidence suggesting that the preponderance of women who were American Delsartists were white women of a certain social standing. However, having read Jacqueline Jones Royster's *Traces of a Stream*, I tried to keep firmly in mind her cogent assessment of what she terms the "deep disbelief" of many scholars who do not see women of color's involvement in rhetorical or literacy activities for the simple reason that they—the scholars—are not looking for these women.

There are a few surviving textual traces that show that there was (at least) one professional elocutionist in this period who was African American and trained in the Delsarte system of oratory. Jane Donawerth's anthology, *Rhetorical Theory By Women Before 1900: An Anthology,* includes sections of two rare, rhetorical chapbooks written by an elocutionist named Hallie Quinn Brown; these texts make both explicit and implicit allusion to Delsarte philosophy (173-94).

As Donawerth tells it, Brown led an extraordinary life. As a child, her family's home was on the Underground Railroad. She was educated at Wilberforce College at a time when most women, much less African American women, could not and did not expect access to such training: while she was there, she studied elocution. Graduating from Wilberforce in 1873, Brown continued her education, working with a professional

elocutionist who had trained at the Boston School of Oratory. After this, she "toured with the Lyceum" as an elocutionist, traveling all over the country and even to Europe. Brown taught what she had learned in various places: in plantation schools, at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama under the administration of Frederick Douglass, even a night school for migrant workers which she herself opened in Dayton, Ohio, and apparently ran from 1887 to 1891 (Donawerth 172).

This tantalizing beginning notwithstanding, as of this writing I have found no record of other women of color who received or taught Delsarte or *New* Elocution training in my archival excavations: no other writings or chapbooks, no photographs have yet come to light. Still, there is sufficient secondary evidence to indicate that African American women (like their white colleagues) were seeking out training or professional performance opportunities in elocution in general. Shirley Wilson Logan records that in the United States, as early as the 1840s—long before Delsarte had even dreamed of his theory in France in other words—"black women expanded the professional roles available to them by making a living as elocutionary performers…" (123). She also notes that black newspapers contained frequent reviews of black elocutionists' performances: these women's speeches or lectures turned them into "rhetorical educators" for the papers' readerships (Logan 124). And in the aforementioned *Traces of a Stream*, Royster locates numerous moments in which African American women sought formal rhetorical training, including Ida B. Wells (at LeMoyne-Owen College and Fisk University) and Selena Sloan Butler (at the Emerson School of Oratory)—both of whom, Royster says, "enrolled in college courses to receive elocution training rather than a college degree" (194). Royster reminds us that in the nineteenth century, any college study whatsoever marked the holder as a member of "an educated elite," given the very small numbers of African American women who were admitted to such institutions. She says that she will therefore not distinguish between those women who graduated from these colleges, and those who only went for elocution coursework and then left—a "pattern," she writes, that arose from their desire to "participate in public discourse" (194). We might choose to push this point further and add that *swift, pragmatic* training in public speaking might have held more value in these women's eyes than a degree, considering the causes for

which they were fighting: Wells for the cessation of lynching, as we know, and Butler for improved education and day care nurseries for at-risk African American children.

Regarding this last point, a recent analysis of the work of Hallie Quinn Brown by Susan Kates advances the notion that racial (not gender) uplift may have been the purpose of elocutionary study among women of African American descent (68). Given the state of racial affairs in the post-Reconstruction United States, we may indeed find it easy to concede this as probable. Whatever their purpose, it seems very likely that other African American women, who were by Logan and Royster's accounts much involved with elocutionary education, could easily have been taking Delsarte classes or doing Delsarte performance. As this group of women would have had little access to professional printing presses or sanctioned publications, however, more archival digging will be required, I believe, to uncover many of the informal histories and records of their involvement in the movement, just as Donawerth found Hallie Quinn Brown's self-published rhetorical handbooks.

[*Nota bene*: I have started this research. I made a trip to the Oberlin College archives in Oberlin, Ohio, to look for just this involvement, assuming that a logical place to begin searching for proof of such activity would be the first co-educational, racially-integrated college in the country. My research there was productive in other ways, but this particular goal bore no fruit on this first visit.]

As for women of other races, I have to date found no trace of *any* woman of color in a stage performance (professional, amateur, or student) such as the ones we will examine in chapter three, wearing togas and embodying *tableaux vivants*, for example. I have also not yet come across pictures of any women of color taking part in Delsartean calisthenics, as we see in chapter two. Furthermore, I am not yet searching in the types of archives that would allow me to find access to proof that women of the working classes were involved—all three of the college archives I am looking in are somewhat limited in that regard.

So while it might initially seem that the other documenters of Delsarte history may be right in the main, that this was a practice which endeared itself to white women for some reason, it might also simply be that more research needs to be conducted at schools which were traditionally open to more women of color, before conclusions can or

should be drawn. From contemporary primary sources we know that schools of all grade levels offered classes in this "new elocution" and gave Delsarte recitals for public audiences, so perhaps more material will turn up of high school students' involvement, for example. Also, literacy scholar Anne Ruggles Gere notes that Delsarte entertainments became "enormously popular" among literary clubwomen at this time (35), so research within non-academic documents left by these women's clubs may prove valuable as well.

One theory I wish to tentatively posit here is that, if indeed white women *were* disproportionately attracted to the study of Delsartism compared to women of other racial backgrounds, this imbalance could be due to the lingering effects of the Cult of True Womanhood upon that particular demographic. It has previously been observed that the gender ideology of the Cult of Domesticity, as it is also termed, was never applied to the immigrant woman, the working class woman, or the African American woman (Royster *Southern* 20). Historian Barbara Welter categorized this ideology as prevailing from 1820 to 1860, and as she long ago framed it, this ideological construct required "true women" to be pious, pure, submissive and domestic—but again, the "true woman" in this period really only meant the white woman who remained in the home, or at least in the private sphere as it was variously inscribed. [Using what she terms the "rhetorics of space," Jess Enoch has recently demonstrated how real, physical spaces outside the home—the schoolhouse is the example she provides—could nevertheless be discursively constructed as "within the private sphere" and therefore be all right for women to work in.]

One respondent to Welter's landmark work poses the question of how it came to pass that this ideology ever fully disappeared, as the Cult of True Womanhood held such hegemonic sway for so long. In her essay "True Womanhood Revisited," Mary Louise Roberts remarks that Welter never really addresses this point. She quotes Welter's ambiguous claim that "*Somehow* through this mixture of challenge and acceptance, or challenge and continuity, the True Woman evolved into the New Woman" (qtd. in Roberts 152, emphasis added). Roberts would prefer a bit more detail on this point. Exactly how did individual women resist, she wants to know. "[H]ow did change occur?" she asks (152). We will return to her question in just one moment, for it is an important one.

A second respondent to Welter's theoretical framework was more taken with the iconic contradiction inherent in the construction of the True Woman. Nancy Hewitt's analysis of the ideology obtaining in the pre-Delsartean era is helpful. She writes:

> The ideals Welter uncovered in her analysis of nineteenth-century prescriptive literature, novels, diaries and correspondence did not simply codify modern notions of women's place. Rather, in response to dramatic economic and political upheavals, *they constructed white, middle-class "true women" as the gladiators at the gate*, fending off the evils that accompanied the pursuit of wealth and power by bourgeois men…. *Yet this was a warrior without armor taking her stand behind a white picket fence*. (157, emphases added)

Note here again the emphasis—it is "white, middle-class" women who are being constructed as "true women" or in Hewitt's observation, as the "gladiators at the gate, fending off … evils" (actually a rather common visual trope in this period, so not merely a hyperbolic metaphor, in other words). Yet, as Hewitt remarks, when you came right down to material realities, each of these ostensible gladiators was nothing more than "a warrior without armor, taking her stand behind a white picket fence." What weapons did women possess to do battle with the problems of the world they had inherited? Even or perhaps especially if they were white women of some means and education, with some access to comfort and privilege, in other words—how could they fight for necessary changes if they were not sanctioned (or formally prepared) to come out from behind the fence and speak in the public sphere?

In the chapters to follow, I propose that the American Delsartists were fully cognizant of the "disadvantage" they were still at, as Principal Lucia Martin named it, even two decades after the Cult of True Womanhood is now said to be over. In the years leading up to the turn of the century, these women turned in larger and larger numbers to weapons of the elocutionary variety, whether to "fend off … evils" (as Ida B. Wells did, in truth) or merely to gain for themselves the right to come out from behind the picket fence and move freely through the world at large: taking up new occupations, earning

new college degrees, winning the vote and a voice in their republic's affairs. The True Woman did not yet have a secure right to these things. But the New Woman was on her way, and she was armed with the New Elocution. And as we will see in the next chapter, though the New Woman might still have had no armor—she would be carrying a sword!

Overview of Chapters

In chapter two, "Calling All Amazons: Late Nineteenth-Century College Women Taking Up Arms, Entering Oratorical Combat," I pay special attention to women's focus on physical training as a means of improving their vocal delivery during oratory. As I document, this era marks the beginning of the craze for "physical culture" in the United States; many women were interested in improving their health, but also, I argue, in preparing themselves for the rigors of the public speaking platform. Public oratorical competitions were popular, as were other forms of rhetorical performance where an audience judged who won the contest. In this competitive setting, perhaps it makes sense that college women studied elocution in newly-built gymnasia, doing sword drills. The work of Debra Hawhee and Lindal Buchanan strengthens my analysis of these exercise regimes and the gym costumes the girls wore while training. I also take up the question of how essential it was for a woman public speaker to be able to shed her corset—what effects that garment had on both her vocal and gestural range. I look at young Delsartists' use of martial metaphors, their study of fencing, and finally their adoration of the fighting Amazon as a mythopoetic trope embodying their rhetorical goals. Using the scholarship of Harvard historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, I argue that the ever-present references to Amazons in their work were not frivolous, but rather reflected what we now term their "situated" rhetorical values.

In chapter three, "Invoking a New Muse of Oratory: Silence, Voice, and Citizenship at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," I investigate a second type of rhetorical performance: the demonstration of elocutionary skill or mastery. In this chapter, I note that the Delsartists' silent performance genres (*tableaux vivants*, living

statues) have often been read as a capitulation to the prevailing Cult of True Womanhood. My research resists such a categorization of these complex, multi-modal and intertextual enactments, which I suggest communicated far more to their contemporaries than they do to historians today. The Delsartists were fascinated by the rhetoricity of silence in all its forms, theorizing many oratorical uses for silence. Still, as elocutionists, they were clearly also concerned with the rhetor's voice. With the help of rhetorician Cheryl Glenn, I weave together both the rhetorical silences and women's voices raised in this era in an attempt to reclaim the Delsartists' rightful legacy—one in which women fought to be recognized as the oratorical equals of their male peers. To this end, I offer the analysis of a forgotten play, "The Ladies of Athens," which demonstrates a connection between silence and voice in another sense. The play's author, Mrs. M. A. Lipscomb (a prominent New Elocutionist), inverts the classical rhetorical canon, openly challenging the silences in received histories concerning classical women's participation in rhetorical practice and study. I argue that Lipscomb's keen and comical insight is predicated upon her Delsartean understanding of how silence can be rhetorical, as in the battle here between Xanthippe and her husband Socrates. In this chapter I also advance a multi-strand analysis of the signification of the togas the New Elocutionists often wore while they performed in public, rejecting the theory that this was merely a sartorial statement. I close with a look at a Class Day performance in the year 1900, when the young women at a college in Oxford, Ohio, invoked a newly-imagined Muse of Oratory.

In chapter four: "Rhetorical Drama and Women Worthies: Women's Rhetoric and Women's History Take Center Stage," I locate an important moment in American women's performative history: women's strategic use of the theater to forward rhetorical goals. Many plays in this era were *written by* women, then *performed by* women, *to* women—thus it comes as no surprise that these stories often took as their focus women's lives, education, and importantly, rhetorical abilities. What is surprising is how these dialogues have frequently been misconstrued as a "matter of costumes and wigs" (Banta). This chapter examines four plays which engage in matters of public policy relevant to women. "The Excitement at Kettleville" deals with women's rights advocates as travelling public lecturers; "After School, What?" exhorts young women to make wise career choices; "A Pageant of Good Women" has an army of female protagonists

pleading the case of all women before the throne of Justice herself; and "The Genius of the Nineteenth Century" imagines an inventress who created a time machine to ask women in the past—and future—how things really were and will be. These plays began vital historiographical work, much like the recent scholarly work of Biesecker, Bizzell and others in our time. I contend that these performances were not merely entertainment, but also a form of argument using "catalogs" of great women from the past to demand the public's acknowledgement of the potential of the women of their own time. These "women worthies"—scholars and warriors alike—were strategically marshaled to swell the ranks of those nineteenth-century women fighting for universal suffrage and access to higher education, among other battles. In the end analysis, I submit that this inductive, affective, collaboratively-produced and –received rhetoric deserves more of our disciplinary attention.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in the midst of what one elocutionist called an "oratorical Renaissance," and others termed a "new" wave of elocution, American women were flocking in surprisingly large numbers to the study of expression at the turn of the nineteenth century. They did this not to obtain a form of "social grace," as Leila McKee phrased it, but to obtain a means of "social power." Working from interconnected strands of evidence, I concur with McKee's assessment. I argue that turn-of-the-century women believed that this power was theirs for the taking if they could speak with more eloquence and confidence in public. This motivation for their rhetorical study has been overlooked, I argue, as has the wide variety of means by which women went about procuring an elocutionary education or improving their oratorical ability in this time frame.

The American Delsarte movement has been by turns devalued, misinterpreted or ignored in the annals of rhetorical history, both as a site of rhetorical praxis and as a theory of embodied expression. This dissertation argues that, ironically perhaps, the factors which heretofore caused historians to criticize Delsartism are the very factors why

rhetoricians should be studying the movement, today. The American Delsartists of the late nineteenth century practiced and theorized an important form of rhetoric that has been misread due to its performative nature, its use of silence as a medium, its embodied delivery, its multi-modal nature, its revisions of canonical rhetorical texts, its various costumes, and finally its collaborative production on stage. The Delsartists used unusual (even anomalous) methods, to be sure, but their iconoclastic tactics were understandable and justified when analyzed within their respective contexts. Women were not permitted to speak within most rhetorical forums of the day, yet these women had things to say, arguments to make, and things to do that required them to have a voice in public policy deliberations and more generally in the world at large. Their world was changing rapidly, and they wanted and needed rhetorical training to be able to help shape those changes, to help guide society's transformations. Therefore, they sought out elocutionary instruction and the promise of the Delsarte system of oratory, with an eye towards the future.

CHAPTER TWO

CALLING ALL AMAZONS: LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY COLLEGE WOMEN TAKING UP ARMS, ENTERING ORATORICAL COMBAT

Introduction

In chapter two I delineate the first definition of rhetorical performance: one in which "the success of an action in comparison to some standard" is evaluated or judged by an audience. Two types of this sort of rhetorical performance are extant in the late nineteenth century: "rhetorical readings" to public audiences and oratorical competitions which were often called "combats." Women's participation in both sites has been given scant attention to date, but I cannot adequately address both here. I will focus therefore on the oratorical combat: a contest between two or more orators judged by an audience intent on evaluating both the orations' content as well as their delivery (including *actio,* or embodied delivery, and *pronuntiatio,* or vocal delivery*)*.

I wish to stress in this chapter what I believe is a vital point, one that has largely been forgotten: the sense of how widely popular this pastime was for the nation as a whole at this time. Listening to oratorical debates and rhetorical readings, then critiquing or evaluating them afterward (either formally or informally) was done in much the same way that people today go the movies, then rate the film later online. At the turn of the nineteenth century, critiques of orators' delivery were often written up in national and local newspapers. College students in literary or debate societies wrote original papers, read them aloud, and then analyzed one another's work and delivery, and those reviews were sometimes written up, too, in student publications. With supporting evidence to show this popularity (and the profitability of going on the reading or "recitation" circuit as a paid performer), I believe rhetorical scholars can more clearly observe one exigency which brought about the sudden creation of so many schools of expression and/or oratory at the turn of the century. This potential to develop a financially rewarding career was

one draw for women, who benefited just as men did from the public recitation craze—but another draw to the schools, as I will demonstrate, was the opportunity to obtain much needed, much sought after social power in the form of greater argumentative facility: power which could be used to win arguments, fight for legislation, accrue social standing, garner other sorts of employment, etc. I argue that the New Elocutionists and Delsarteans taught argument within combative contexts to this purpose; thus I attempt to extend the work of other rhetorical theorists who have looked at the late nineteenth century and seen only women's participation in more irenic rhetorical roles (Connors).

Before I analyze the oratorical contest, I will begin with a look at women's increased interest in physical performance more generally in this era—the advent of the physical culture movement, or physical education as we know it today—and how it was connected to elocutionary training from the outset. This part of my dissertation will offer archival evidence to demonstrate that in this period, elocution and calisthenics were usually taught by the same instructor, in the same class. The calisthenics or "rhetorical exercises" as they were called were thought to be necessary in order to properly "do" oratory—to be recognized as an orator, one had to be able to perform this type of corporeal movement along with the vocal flourishes. In the two colleges in Oxford that I am focusing on, young women studied elocution with the use of various tools such as Indian clubs, hoops, wands, and training swords (*see figure 1*): their Delsarte-trained instructors taught with these to improve their students' range of rhetorical action as well as to increase their lung power and oxygen intake for increased vocal delivery. These physical exercises were done either in their new gymnasia or on the campus yard where presumably, no men would be expected to be present. In order to do the required movements, the students took off their corsets and long dresses and put on bloomers, gym suits, or as they were called by at least one Delsartean author, "brain costumes" (Meckel 74). In this chapter I will work from the research of Debra Hawhee and Lindal Buchanan to strengthen my analysis of these exercise regimes and the implications of the various costumes donned by the orators-in-training.

Finally, again attempting to fully contextualize the phenomenon of women's entry into oratorical competitions, I look at young Delsartists' use of martial metaphors, their study of fencing, and their adoration of the fighting Amazon as both rhetorical and

Figure 1: This [1894-5?] photograph of three actors posing as girls in gym costumes with (respectively) a wand, a pair of Indian clubs, and two dumbbells, is a still advertisement from a production of a play called *The Amazons*, written by Arthur W. Pinero. The show, first played in the United States in 1894, shows the influence of both the physical culture craze in general in this era, and the influence of American Delsartism.

performative trope to embody their rhetorical and real-life goals. Using the work of Harvard professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, I argue that the ever-present references to Amazons in the Delsartists' work were not frivolous, but rather may serve us as an index, pointing silently to their situated rhetorical values. Archival sources make clear that college women in this era studied agonistic as well as irenic oratory, in conjunction with physically demanding as well as more whimsical physical training. It seems important to stress that these students often took fierce Amazons as their role models, working this classical figure into their writing, orations, and Delsarte performances. I contend that this reference from Greek mythology is ubiquitous in the work of the New Elocutionists because some late nineteenth-century women wished to resist the gender roles proscribed for them.

Women who wished to be orators in this era had an uphill battle to fight. In the last decades before the turn of the twentieth century, men were orators, not women—yet oratorical skill and elocutionary training were thought to be the path to upward mobility and success in all fields and all spheres of life. While young women in this era needed to appease the expectations of society and the limitations of the constrictive gender ideology they lived in, these same young women surely had high aspirations for their own futures. In some real ways, these orators in training *were* training for combat: persuasive combat. In a world which had no intention of yielding up increased access to women's rights, women's higher education, or women's professional careers, these young women were determined to have the last word.

The Great Debates

> *Delsartian (also "-ean"): a system of exercises for the development of bodily grace and vigor, somewhat similar to calisthenics. (Funk & Wagnall,* Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, 1895)*
>
> *…Delsartism. People seem to regard it as a series of gymnastic exercise intended to make pupils proficient in gesticulation. This, of course, is not*

its definition…. (Anna Morgan, "Some Modern Tendencies of the Art of Elocution," 1893)

In the final two decades of the nineteenth century, two connected debates raged across the nation: whether the study of American Delsartism was useful and efficacious to speakers and actors, and the connected question, what Delsartism *was*, precisely. The latter debate often hinged on the question of whether or not the discipline was anything more than a system of exercise, as manifested, for example, in the two quotes above. There were those who believed it to be little more than a fanciful, foolish manner of physical education—or, as Americans in that era referred to it, physical culture. Some practicing elocutionists of the so-called "old school" (as they styled themselves) were of this opinion, voicing it warmly and repeatedly in the leading scholarly journals on oratory of the day and at the NAE conferences all throughout the 1890s.

Practitioners and instructors of the New Elocution did not hold this view, naturally. While there was never absolute consensus about the exact scope of their endeavor among them, nevertheless, having studied either French Delsarte theorists or American Delsarte theorists or both, the New Elocutionists insisted that they possessed clearer insight into the system of expression which they were using or teaching. They defended this system from its critics, sometimes with self-righteous indignation, sometimes with sardonic wit. Still, it seems worth considering where the confusion (if it was indeed genuine) stemmed from, and why the misunderstanding was so prevalent. It is also important to note that exercise and gymnastic training *were* in fact at least a part of many, if not most Delsartists' regime of oratorical training. (It not being immediately clear what students of oratory are doing in a gymnasium swinging on rings, or crossing swords—at least to the uninitiated eye—it seems that perhaps contemporary onlookers might have had reason for being somewhat confused.)

Another reason that this site seems worth examining: in a final observation in her 2002 book, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America*, Carol Mattingly reminds us that we have often ignored the role of the orator's body in histories we have constructed of our discipline. She writes:

> The place of the gendered body has historically been peripheral to the study of rhetoric, primarily because rhetoric has been seen in terms of men, and masculine constructs of the body have been synonymous with oratory.… In addressing women's significance we have paid surprisingly little attention to the body, perhaps the greatest barrier women speakers faced…. (Mattingly 135)

Any scholar wishing to test the veracity of Mattingly's claim—that the body was "perhaps the greatest barrier women speakers faced" in nineteenth-century America—would find ample support in the New Elocutionists' theories of expression. In their own words, speaking about the special obstacles that women faced when addressing a crowd, the New Elocutionists often analyzed the role of the speaker's body—how it was to be managed, moved, displayed, dressed, and more. As we reconstruct the rhetorical situation that female orators were faced with in the late nineteenth century, therefore, it seems vital to begin with various phenomena of the physical culture movement in this era and the complex relationship that obtained between these phenomena and theories of physical expression. My primary research questions in this section are why and how the American Delsartists thought classes in physical culture would improve one's oratorical delivery. Another, secondary research interest is why they took up the sport of fencing specifically, and how they may have related its study to the improvement of a speaker's skill.

Physical Culture for Women in the Late Nineteenth Century

In her study of "Physical Education of the Latter Nineteenth Century (1865-1900)," sports education scholar Mabel Lee records that in this period, three types of "gymnastics" were taught to students of various age groups in schools: The German system, the Swedish system, and the Delsarte system (*History* 53-7). Of the first two systems, Lee has much to say in terms of their value and their respective methods; of the Delsarte system, Lee offers only a single, cursory paragraph. Dismissing these "gymnastics" as being "[w]ithout sound principles" on the one hand, and a "fad [that]

soon died out," she nonetheless admits that Delsartism "enjoyed much acclaim in its day" and possessed a good deal of influence. Lee rightly observes that the originator of the French system of oratory, Francois Delsarte, had no hand in the creation of these exercises. It was in the United States that these exercises began to spring up, Lee notes—and within one very specific context:

> Elocution teachers were in demand to teach this system in many girls' schools and a few coeducation colleges where it was accepted as a physical education program. This system was characterized by a series of relaxing, "energizing," and deep-breathing exercises augmented by poses to denote various emotions. Related as it was to voice and speech culture […] the term *physical culture* now came into common usage in America stemming from the Delsarte system of exercises. (Lee *History* 57, emphasis in original)

In explaining the other two systems then in vogue, Lee mentions that several American women who taught physical culture went to Sweden to study the system of calisthenics there (*History* 55). This was named the Ling system after its creator, Per Henrik Ling. The German system developed by Frederick Ludwig Jahn was more than a series of calisthenics, according to Lee. It encompassed all manner of sports and games, including: marching, "free exercises with … wands, dumbbells, rings, and clubs," dance moves for female students, "apparatus work using… poles, ropes, round swing, suspension rings…" and more (*History* 54). These other two systems are important in so far as they later will become enmeshed and entangled with Delsarte oratory and/or elocution classes. As we will see, teachers of expression (then as now) borrowed freely from other methods and systems to suit idiosyncratic pedagogies and to accommodate both the purposes of the individual instructor and her assessment of her students' needs.

One such tool they borrowed was the fencing foil, for the German system made use of fencing as an "exercise of alertness" (Lee *History* 55). In another section of her book, Lee records that "In the 1880s and 1890s, fencing became a fashionable sport, especially for women…" (*History* 62). She does not speculate as to the cause of the

sport's popularity—a popularity which might strike a modern-day reader as somewhat odd at first. The apparent incongruity of the combative nature of the sport of fencing, alongside the timid mannerisms that late Victorian-era women were admonished to subscribe to seems a clash of more than foils—more like a clash of value systems. Later in the chapter, I will therefore return to this point, attempting my own explication for the elocutionists' martial interests. For now let it suffice to say that physical culture for women in the U.S. was on the rise in the late nineteenth century, several distinct systems of physical culture were being offered to the public (including female college students), and the sport of women's fencing was making its surprising debut on the national stage.

Psycho-Physical Culture

François Delsarte believed that each person possessed a triune nature. He believed that humans had three aspects—mind, body, and soul—and that these three aspects were not only inextricable from one another, but were in fact mutually constitutive (Werner 209). Delsarte named this theory the "Law of Correspondence," and when the Delsarte theory of oratory was imported from France by American actor Steele MacKaye, this notion came, too.

Delsarte was fond of the tripartite system of classification: he used it to codify nearly every aspect of his theory of expression (which, as previously stated, we have preserved almost solely in notes from his students and a few assorted scraps of his own writing). One other such codification was his thinking on the three types of human expression, as reported by his student, L'Abbé Delaumosne, which stated that human beings express themselves through three modalities: pure sound (a child's babbling or an adult's animal-like cry when in pain or ecstasy), language, and gesture (Werner xxix). In the *Delsarte System of Oratory*, we see instruction for students in all three modes of expression.

This emphasis on vocal as well as physical delivery is nothing new, to be sure. Oratory has always been about both speech and gesture, about the sound of an orator's

voice and the movements of his body, going all the way back to classical times, to Cicero and Quintilian. And though "elocution" comes from the Latin phrase "*e loqui*" meaning to speak out, elocution too has always been associated with both verbal and physical forms of delivery, not with speaking alone: this fact we may observe in manuals from the British elocutionary movement in the eighteenth century and subsequent texts from the American movement in the early nineteenth century.

What *is* new in the late nineteenth century is that *women* were studying oratory formally for the first time. As they did so, they came to realize that received notions of physical delivery were not best suited for them. [Note that it may also be true that young women were not "receiving" received notions of physical delivery at all. In *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*, Lindal Buchanan advances the cogent argument that in response to women's increased participation in policy debates in public forums, writers of American handbooks on oratory and rhetorical reading began leaving instruction on *actio* (the physical side of delivery) out of their manuals for female students in the early nineteenth century, thereby attempting to curtail women's viability as persuasive public speakers (35-40).]

Whether they were responding to a felt lacuna in their rhetorical education or not, the American Delsartists did appear to fixate more on gesture than any previous elocutionary school or system—to the extent that Delsarteans were often lampooned for a purportedly single-minded focus on mere "mechanical" physical delivery. But the Delsartists had another problem besides not having been taught conventional or received notions of embodied delivery. As previously established, the vast majority of practicing Delsartists were women, and as such inhabited different bodies, and were inscribed into a very different relationship with those bodies by their society. How they dressed, how they walked, how they sat and stood and breathed—all these aspects of their embodied lives were regulated in a different way than men's lives were. Women's oratorical training would need to account for and adjust itself to these differences. Girls learning how to sweep their hands with a particular oratorical flourish was not going to be enough, in other words, nor was a simple diagram of "correct" facial expressions going to make a woman feel comfortable on a public podium, with her body under the unblinking gaze of a promiscuous audience evaluating her performance. This, the Delsartists understood.

Thus, many textbooks written by Delsarte instructors focus on physical culture or as some called it, "psycho-physical culture." This was not mere training in gesture; rather it was training women to feel at home in their bodies—to feel comfortable, strong, and confident. This was mental preparation as much as physical—as we will continue to see reiterated in various ways throughout this entire chapter—although the instructors used a physical set of exercises to bring about the more confident mental state.

Julia and Annie Thomas were two such instructors. The self-styled "founders and originators" of their own copyrighted training system, these two sisters opened the Conservatory of Thomas Psycho-Physical Culture of Elocution and Dramatic Art in New York City in or around the year 1876. In the year 1889 the dynamic duo patented their ideas (255), and in 1892 they published a book which forwarded their own theory of correspondence. They called the book simply, *Thomas Psycho-Physical Culture*. In it, they argue (following Delsarte) that the body, mind, and soul cannot and should not be educated one without the other (Thomas and Thomas 2-3). They must be made mutually beneficial to one another and be trained to complement one another.

This is the Thomas sisters' overarching theory; in specific, however, as curators of a school of elocution, they are obviously going to be more interested in particular combinations of mind-body correlation than in others. This heightened attention can be found in their book, which often focuses on the connection between a woman's speaking ability and her physical health and well-being. Here it will be helpful to quote the section of their book most applicable to my argument at some length, so that readers may observe first, the clearest definition of their theory and second, how it pertains to a prevalent school of thought concerning women's elocutionary training in this period:

> Psycho-physical culture may be defined as those exercises or movements of the body excited and sustained by soul-force, and directed by, without taxing, mental activity.
>
> […]
>
> *Psycho-physical exercises for strength and grace*, and for special ailments and deformities, *were devised for pupils who came to the Conservatory for the study of elocution*, with stooping shoulders, narrow

> chests, protruding chins, superfluous flesh and attendant ills, and who, after practicing exercises in other systems of physical culture, were apparently little benefited. *We were aware that in order to train the voice, the whole body must first be put into the best possible condition*. (Thomas and Thomas 23, emphases added)

In this small section of the Thomas sisters' book, we observe both one rationale for the confusion or "debate" concerning whether Delsarte instruction was anything more than a system of physical exercise, and also one response to that debate. The source of the confusion, the physical exercises themselves, do in fact form a substantial portion of this book. There are instructions and illustrations provided for exercises for "psycho-physical pose," "joint movements," "equilibrium" exercises, and "harmonious action" exercises. However, these must be interpreted within the purposeful context that the sisters created: the physical exercises they suggest coexist next to "exercises for organs of speech," "breathing exercises," a chapter on "voice-culture," "address exercises," and a final chapter on elocution in general. Therefore the two sister-authors explain that the exercises are not merely physical; they rename their calisthenics "psycho-physical" to insist upon the point, and underline in the explanation of their regime that these exercises "for strength and grace… were devised for pupils… of elocution…." Furthermore, they state emphatically that the voice can only be trained when the body is "put into the best possible condition"—yet clearly we see that it is not for the body alone that this training is proposed.

Further points concerning the overlap of the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of young women's education are made throughout the Thomas sisters' entire book. They argue that girls should be made acquainted with the science of physiology, and that they should specifically receive "a thorough exposition of the mysteries of their own physical being…" (Thomas and Thomas 5). They also want young women taught about prenatal care—a point for which they apologize, calling this overly "plain talk" on the one hand, but then demand to know when will "those who people the earth" be allowed to do so from a position of knowledge and health, as opposed to ignorance and illness (6)?

While they demonstrate concern for young women's general education, however, the Thomas sisters remain committed to elocutionary study as the *sine qua non* of a girl's most vital training for entry into society and American citizenship. They quote Matthew Arnold, a Victorian poet and critic who once remarked that "No girls' education should be considered complete until she has had at least one year's training in a school of elocution and oratory" (Thomas and Thomas 21), but these two authors wanted to push the point further. In a chapter called "The Relation of Elocution to a Complete American Education," Annie and Julia Thomas lay out what they see as the problem with schools of their day. Everyone would agree that our country needs great thinkers, they say—yet what is forgotten is that "Thoughts, to be of any service or value to the world, must be transmitted to the world…" (121). Without training in public speaking, citizens will be unwilling—or unable—to offer their best and brightest thoughts to society. And it begins in the schools, the Thomas sisters argue. They contend that "many and many a boy and girl of excellent ability has failed to ever attain distinction in the world by the failure on the part of his or her instructors, to insist on the proper expression of thought" (121).

In the end analysis, New Elocutionists like the Thomas sisters surmised—correctly, I believe—that women would need a special type of mental and physical instruction before they would feel comfortable standing before a podium to speak. This instruction, I have argued, needed to be specially tailored to women in order to fit the way in which their bodies were inscribed by late Victorian ideology. One of the more fascinating types of "tailored" instruction they received (you should excuse the pun) was what to wear while studying oratory or while delivering a rhetorical performance in public.

Delsartists on Dress Reform, or, Why the *Smart* Female Orator Is Wearing A "Brain Costume" This Year

As American Delsartism developed as both a national pastime and curriculum, instructors of expression who taught young women the New Elocution began evidencing

more and more concern for what their students were wearing. Often mocked for their toga-like gowns worn while on stage, as well as for the bloomer-like costumes many adopted on the streets and in the gymnasium, Delsartists nonetheless insisted upon wearing a wide range of outfits that might strike the twenty-first century viewer much as it did the late nineteenth-century viewers—as slightly outlandish. It seems important to consider their sartorial choices here, because as I will show, these were not costumes adopted merely to raise eyebrows or to garner attention, but were instead always connected to the turn-of-the-century (white, middle- to upper-class) woman's physical difficulty moving and breathing while laced into her lady-like corset. A woman attempting to speak in public within the confines of conventional, nineteenth-century dress was unable to draw the deep breaths of air necessary to add volume to her vocal delivery. She was also unable to move freely about a stage or gesture from a podium, as the following story makes clear. One dress reformer writing in 1873 recorded the story of a male elocution instructor who was "greatly puzzled" that his students at young ladies' seminaries could not do the calisthenic exercises that he had asked them to do. He remarked,

> To my surprise, the girls could not meet their hands above their heads; many of them could not raise them half way to the required point. I was a young man, and did not know much about a lady's dress.... At length I bethought me, that their mode of dress was at fault. I have been obliged to discontinue entirely the use of those exercises in girls' schools, though I think them very important to the elocutionist. (qtd. in Mattingly *Dress* 136)

As this narrative illustrates, even thoughtful male instructors could not be relied upon to understand the difficulties faced by the female student of oratory. She had to have a new type of instruction, in the New Elocution: instruction which took into account her different needs—and even different clothes. Several of the American Delsartists took these responsibilities seriously and designed outfits for young women to wear while studying elocution—outfits that would allow the students to still look somewhat ladylike while at the same time permitting them to perform the calisthenics thought necessary for

full disciplinary development. One such costume was the "psycho-physical dress" designed by the aforementioned Thomas sisters. Their book even included a pencil drawing of this dress being worn by a young woman, who was drawn with her arm straight up in the air, to demonstrate the limb's full mobility in this new type of garment! (*See figure 2*.) A second such costume was the "brain costume" designed by an elocutionist named Henrietta Russell.

Henrietta Russell was one of the most famous (and flamboyant) of all the American Delsartists. One biographer notes that her "active and at times frenetic life" was full to the brim with accomplishments, to wit: "she was a well known dress reformer, the Director of Physical Culture at the World's Columbian Exposition, an active member of bohemian circles on both coasts, a founder of the Progressive Stage Society, and a formative influence on Ted Shawn and early modern dance" (Meckel 66). With such an impressive and unconventional curriculum vita, one might well imagine that Russell was not your average Victorian woman. She was not. She also found time to be married three times and have multiple children by different fathers—at one point being pregnant with the child of the third husband-to-be while still married to the second husband (Meckel 72).

She was also something of an entrepreneur. In addition to being a dress reformer, Russell also became a dress designer. While not much is known of her early years, records do indicate that while married to her first husband, Russell was a "sickly young woman whose frailty doctors ascribed to tight, restrictive clothing" (Meckel 67). Perhaps looking around, and seeing an opportunity in all the other young women encouraged to be frail and ill, Russell began designing clothes and going around to her friends' houses to talk to others in her immediate circle about the "evils" of American women's clothing. It seems on one such circuit, someone commented that she might want to look into the study of oratory and elocution—either to sell more items of her own line of apparel, or to continue improving her health, Meckel is unclear—but the result is the same either way: Russell decided to relocate to Boston and matriculate at the Boston University School of Oratory, and from there on, her career as a professional Delsarte teacher was underway. It was somewhat after this that she designed the outfit that she named the "brain costume."

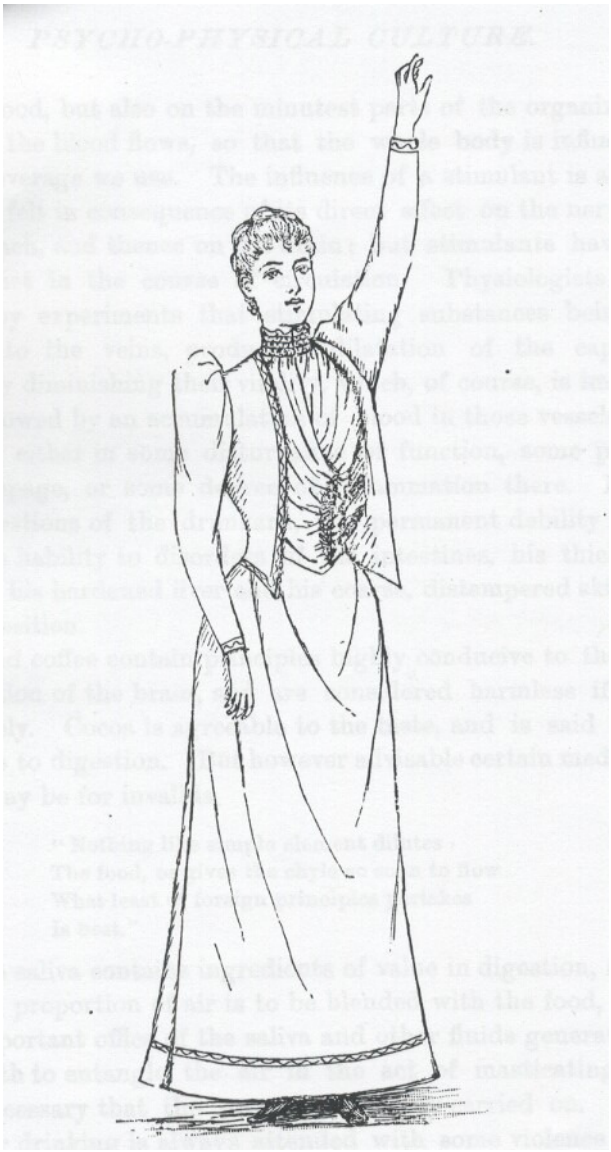

Figure 2. The psycho-physical dress designed by the Thomas sisters is shown in three various illustrations in their book: here it is shown with the wearer's arm fully raised, indicating that the dress does not preclude that activity. (Some garments for women designed in this era apparently did.) Clearly, this makes the elocutionists' garment better suited for rhetorical action.

Sadly, there do not seem to be any extant photos of the intriguingly-named "brain costume," nor too much information provided as to who Russell designed the garment for. One scholar describes it as a "Greek robe with barbaric brooches"(Kendall 30), but does not provide any source for this information. Neoclassical-style, free-flowing robes were obviously quite popular among the Delsartists, so it is possible that Russell's design was patterned after this trend. On the other hand, Russell herself possessed a somewhat theatrical style—she was often described as being dramatically dressed, in "richly textured robes" and "exotically carved brooches" (Meckel 65). It may be possible, perhaps, that her own wardrobe and her special elocutionary design have unintentionally been confused here. [The archives at Dartmouth College holds a scrapbook of hers which may yield a few insights, and a few other personal papers that may hold clues, but I have not yet seen these documents.] I will therefore venture only a few scholarly guesses.

The thing that seems most likely is the connection between this outfit's design and her career as a professional elocutionist herself and also as an instructor of the New Elocution. The New Elocution required society women (among others) to be more mobile than they were used to being. This increased mobility, so natural and commonsensical to us, drew notice and was cause for comment in the late nineteenth century. In 1891, for example, a *New York World* reporter wrote that women in one of Russell's classes were being asked to "writhe, wriggle, bend and sway" as well as to learn how to "'decompose' and collapse with grace and aplomb" (qtd. in Meckel 65). In order to allow the body to do all this writhing, wriggling, and collapsing, some additional freedom of movement would have been necessary. Tight-fitted garments would not be helpful or comfortable; whale-bone or steel-stayed corsets would not work at all.

Russell's rationale for the design might have been simply her connection to the dress reform movement, however, it seems a good bet that there was more behind her sartorial scheme than that. When asked to comment about her odd choice of moniker (why she had named them brain costumes), the Boston School of Oratory alum is said to have responded, "Because it takes brains to make and to wear them." Said to have been "always uncorseted herself," even while in public (Meckel 65 and 74), Russell gives herself and women who wear her dress credit for daring to be unconventional in an era of stifling conventionality. She was also in a position as a Delsarte-trained elocution teacher

to understand that both the corset and women's restrictive clothing were a real hindrance to the elocutionist's art. The clothing, as we have just seen, made it difficult to perform the types of rhetorical action thought essential to be a successful orator, and the corsets made it difficult to take in sufficient breath for the necessary vocal power, as we in the twenty-first century might well imagine, but are about to hear first-hand.

"The Right to Breathe As Nature Intended Us to Breathe:" Shedding the Corset, Increasing Vocal Power

In 1893, at the second annual National Association of Elocutionists convention (NAE), a medical doctor named Carl Seiler delivered a paper entitled, "The Bad Effects of Forced Abdominal Breathing." Dr. Seiler—who perhaps had been invited to speak for the occasion by the organization, although this is unrecorded—was not kind to the Delsarte system of oratorical instruction for women. He had no word of praise, either for the aims of its instruction, its methods, or its end results. Seiler declared that the gestures produced by Delsarte performers were "ludicrous," that the "pale and emaciated forms" of the performers were "barely hidden" by their classical togas, and that the performers' "cracked voices" were not pleasing. We may well doubt, therefore, whether his professional opinion as a medical doctor was unbiased, for in this paper he appeared to have no shred of respect for the New Elocution. He bemoaned the "strained" and "unnatural" breathing that they practiced (178), stating that human beings should adhere as closely to nature as possible, and not allow themselves to deviate into any "artificial" practice that might produce "dire results" (178).

The respondent charged with leading the "Discussion" afterwards was Miss Cora Maria Wheeler. Wheeler was a lifelong devotee to the field of expression. Educated at Cambridge and having received her degree from the Boston School of Oratory, she would later be appointed for a three-year term as one of the seven directors of the NAE, in 1897. But even in 1893, Wheeler was no novice to the field, nor to this medical argument about

the "natural" way women should breathe. Her measured reply nonetheless betrays some level of cool indignation at the good doctor's heated, overly emotional criticisms. Speaking for the Delsartists as a group, Wheeler goes toe to toe with the man of science, and yields not an inch:

> We as a profession need to emphasize the necessity for freedom in the use of the muscles in the thorax. This is not the time to bring in, nor do I wish to bring in, the much vexed question of reformed dress for women, except in so far as it affects this very important subject, but when it has reached the point that generations of restricted waists have produced, even among scientists and physicians, the belief that woman must always and under all circumstances breathe differently from man, it is quite time that we took some stand in the matter. It is in that, if in nothing else, that we claim equality with man—in the right to breathe as nature intended us to breathe. (NAE 186)

As is made clear from these two discussants, both sides (the doctors and the Delsartists) were arguing for "natural" breathing for women. But as Wheeler herself would ask later in her paper, what is meant by the word natural? She emphasizes that most "natural" acts are in fact *learned*: the ways we stand, walk, and talk—all are learned. Driving her point home, she contends that even the ways in which women have been expected to breathe are learned. The implication here seems to be that, even without her corset on, the well-to-do lady of the late nineteenth century is not supposed to breathe too deeply. Any time she is encouraged to do so (to improve the force or range of her oratorical delivery, for example), it must by definition be "strained," "unnatural," and in a word, "Bad." Wheeler is politic enough to try a more conciliatory approach here as well, stating that "The gentleman must have seen something in his varied experiences that led him to see the necessity of taking up this subject." But, she counters again, "My experience has been that more harm is done especially with women, by insufficient breathing, than by overuse of the breathing muscles" (NAE 186).

Wheeler seems certain that "insufficient breathing" will lead to women's injury, but just how much harm was being done? How detrimental were corsets to women's health generally, or to their abilities as would-be orators specifically? Many feminist scholars have touched on the first question, so I address only the latter here.

The problems inherent to corsets (and the added perils of so-called "tight-lacing") were frequently addressed in all manner of publications in this era, but perhaps nowhere more vociferously than in the publication devoted to the study of oratory and Delsarte philosophy known as *The Voice*. Skimming through this journal's pages in the last two decades of the century, one can't help but notice the number of articles and ads devoted to what this researcher began to think of as "the corset question." A few examples will perhaps be useful. In August of 1884, an article was published entitled "The Dangers of Tight-Lacing: Vocalists Warned Against Impeding Respiration by Wearing Close-Fitting, Unyielding Stays." In February of that year, an article appeared by P.H. Cronin, M.D., entitled "How Shall Women Breathe?" Unlike his (her?) colleague Dr. Seiler, Dr. Cronin is concerned that women are not breathing as deeply as is beneficial to their health. He writes that "The dress adopted by the women of our times… has serious disadvantages in that it induces grave mental and physical ailments" then additionally notes that "it is a positive obstacle to proper vocal exercise" (26). However, in the November issue of this same year, 1884, we find an interesting exchange between an alleged letter-to-the-editor writer and an alleged respondent. The letter to the editor asks if there is not somewhere on the market, a corset that would not impair a woman's vocal ability. The respondent, who signed herself only "B.K., from London England," replies that she has purchased such a corset from Messrs. E. Ward & Co of Bradford England, and that this "hygienic corset" is "most comfortable." B.K. states confidently that if the original letter writer will only order one for herself, she will soon receive a corset that "will fit admirably, and yet give perfect freedom to the lungs" (197). It seems at least a possibility that this supposed "exchange" is actually a clever advertising ruse undertaken by Ward and Company; however, it seems worth considering whether such a demand might have been legitimate. Were there corsets that did not impair a woman's speaking ability? Or were they all likely to have been harmful to the practice of elocution—and just how harmful were they?

It's difficult to know exactly, but one scholar recently took up the subject matter in some detail, and her findings were intriguing. Valerie Steele's 2001 book *The Corset: A Cultural History*, from Yale University Press, is meticulously researched and thus would appear to be the authoritative statement on the subject. In chapter three, "Dressed to Kill: The Medical Consequences of Corsetry," Steele argues carefully (and cogently) that while the dangers ascribed to corsets in the mid- to late-nineteenth century have been vastly overstated by modern-day feminist scholars, nonetheless there were health issues related to the wearing of these fashionable undergarments, and breathing was in fact always somewhat impaired while wearing one. Steele's research has led her to conclude that modern-day historians have been taken in by their "uncritical acceptance" of the opinions and claims advanced by dress reformers and doctors of the period (67). These nineteenth-century experts were wont to lay all manner of ostensible, serious medical injuries at the doorstep of the corset—and significantly, the wearer of the corset as well, leading to a perpetual atmosphere of "blaming the victim"—which scholars today are unintentionally continuing, Steele contends.

Steele's own prolonged interest in her subject matter has allowed her to make certain findings that challenge these confident scholarly claims, past and present. As an example of her thoroughness, in one research trip she tells of, she traveled to the Smithsonian Institution to view a number of female skeletons that ostensibly showed rib deformities caused by 1880s-style, steel- or whalebone-stayed corsets. A little date-checking, however, soon turned up the inconvenient fact that these women had been born around 1900, and would therefore not have been likely to wear corsets of any kind—"elasticized girdles" would have been far more likely, Steele writes. Therefore, there was little chance that the women's ribs had been bent by their support wear. "Not only had no one checked [their birth] dates, no one had done any research into male skeletons to see if they, too, had any rib deformities" she states. Neither had other potential causes been considered, such as rickets, a disease known to deform the skeletal development of children, particularly those who are malnourished. The Smithsonian archivists had merely assumed, based on their ready acceptance of the myth of the killer corset.

On the other hand, corsets did indeed cause some lesser medical problems for women, Steele records; one of these was an increased difficulty with breathing deeply.

She refers to the dissertation of Colleen Ruby Gau for "hard evidence" that corsets did in fact negatively affect women's respiration. While a doctoral student at Iowa State University in 1998, Gau set up experiments with a group of voluntary re-enactors; these participants wore reproductions of 1870s-style corsets and then attempted to perform various tasks, including tests of their lung capacity. In the end, Gau's results were unequivocal: "total lung capacity is reduced by wearing even a moderately laced corset or chest binding" (Steele 70). Gau's findings are echoed by other late twentieth-century studies as well as the reports of modern-day corset wearers, Steele confirms—a corset will not in most cases produce any serious physical damage, nor is it likely ever to cause any disease, but it will hamper the intake of a deep breath—just the kind that might be necessary to deliver an address to the back of a crowded performance hall, one might imagine. As a related point, Steele writes that corsets were probably a "disincentive" to exercise for this reason (71). I would add that this disincentive, if such it was, would in all likelihood then carry over to the realm of elocutionary exercises for oratorical action.

Small wonder, then, why the American Delsartists were eager to doff these restrictive undergarments and don a neoclassical toga, brain costume or psycho-physical dress instead: any item of clothing more accommodating to both moving *and* breathing, thus promoting the untrammeled deployment of one's full rhetorical power.

Connections: Classical Rhetorics, Gymnasia and Nineteenth-Century Rhetorical Training

As we have previously observed in this chapter, the study of physical culture was widespread in the United States among men and women in the late nineteenth century. What is perhaps less well known is that the curriculum in most elocution classes in women's colleges in the 1880s and 1890s included (but was not limited to) a wide range of athletic and calisthenic exercises. These exercises included marches; drilled movements with various apparatus such as wands, brooms, or hoops; sword drills and

fencing; work with Indian clubs, bar-bells and skipping ropes; choreographed dance routines and more. A wide range of textbooks and handbooks from the period confirm that these exercises were common pedagogical practice among the New Elocutionists. The primary questions which arise from this observation, it would seem, would be why and how the American Delsartists thought training the body with physical culture of this nature might improve an orator's rhetorical performance. In addition, this unusual combination of embodied and vocal training brings to mind Debra Hawhee's research on a similar connection between athletic and rhetorical instruction among the sophists in classical Greece. Commonalities exist between the two groups' respective methods of rhetorical education, but a few important differences should be pointed out as well; I therefore offer a brief comparison of these educational moments at the end of this section.

In the 1898-99 Oxford College catalogue, students would have read the following announcement:

> Upon entering the College each student is weighed and measured by the Director of the Gymnasium, and exercise is prescribed to meet the wants of each student. […] All exercise in the Gymnasium is under the personal supervision of its Director, a graduate of the Boston School of Oratory. She has found after years of experience, that the adaptation of the three methods, that of the Swedish, the American, and the Delsarte accomplish the best results.

Standing alone, this advisory might seem to indicate that Delsarte curriculum was, in fact, nothing more than a system of physical exercises (to return to the question we observed previously regarding the "great debates" on the true nature of American Delsartism). However, further sections of this catalogue indicate that Anna Chew, the graduate of the Boston School of Oratory noted here, was the college's professor of Elocution as well as the Director of the Gymnasium; her scholarly demesne would have included the teaching of both the vocal and bodily delivery important to successful oratorical performance.

Ophia Smith, a local historian and author of *Fair Oxford*, tried to explain the interdisciplinary tangle in this way: "At Oxford College, Delsarte gymnastics were an

important part of physical culture in the early 1890's [but] the Delsarte system was not really a gymnastic system. At the College, young ladies were taught to relax and to control the breath, *thus acquiring ease on the public platform*" (58, emphasis added). For Smith then, the purpose for the study of these "Delsarte gymnastics" was to serve young women in their ambition to be heard outside the private sphere—to help alleviate their anxiety at speaking "on the public platform." Thus gymnastic training in this context would seem to fall within the purview of the elocution instructor, as indeed it did, here as at many other women's seminaries and women's colleges of oratory.

After exhaustive searching in Miami University's two archives, I could find no first-hand account of an elocution class in the Oxford College of Oratory or the Western Female Seminary: no instructor's journal, student's scrapbook or diary, no lesson plans. However, a few grainy photographs survived of students practicing "hoop drills" and "wand drills" in the gymnasium and on the campus lawn, and one photo survived which included several pairs of women fencing with one another, in bloomer-type outfits (*see figure 3*).

From these few remaining shards of history we must imagine a different world: one in which women did not run track or leap leggily over hurdles, play softball in shorts (their hair stuffed untidily into baseball caps) and slide headlong into bases in the dirt, or indeed do any of the other vigorous types of physical activity which are now so common on a coeducational college campus as to cause no notice whatsoever. In the late Victorian era, however, the thought that women's bodies might be moving within their gym outfits—that women might possess the temerity to don those gym suits at all—these thoughts were immodest, scandalous. So, for instance, when Smith writes of a sizeable exhibition of physical culture put on by the Western Female Seminary in 1894 to show their progress in the new discipline, the historian feels the need to explain the presence of two men in the audience watching the college girls. The physical performance is not itself described, but was probably one of marching or drills or (gasp) stretching exercises of some kind. Clearly fearing that some illicit quality might be ascribed to these gentlemen scholars looking on, Smith writes, "President Thompson of Miami University and Doctor Cook were the only males admitted to the first part of the show, the former in the interest of education, the latter in the interest of pure science. The Miami students were admitted

Figure 3. This photo might have been taken at the "sizeable display of physical culture" mentioned in Smith in 1894; however, it was located (without attribution or date, sadly) in a *Multifaria*, the Western College for Women's yearbook, dated 1967, as part of a retrospective photo essay on the changes in the women's college. The bloomers indicate that the year is circa 1890s. Note the three lines of women exercising: in the back, four women with hoops performing "hoop drills;" in the middle, four women with Indian clubs; in the front, four women in pairs of two, crossing swords at fencing performance.

to the second part of the program, which being principally Delsartean was more suitable for performance before a mixed audience. The girls presented a very smart appearance in their 'bloomer suits'…" (Smith 60).

What is interesting here is that the Delsartean part of the program was thought "more suitable" for the mixed-gender audience. It is a shame that Smith did not offer any rationale for this statement, because in other accounts, Delsarte performances were questioned due to their risqué nature. Be that as it may, here again I believe rhetorical scholars need to recognize the veracity of the claim previously stated at the beginning of this chapter, that "perhaps the greatest barrier women speakers faced" would have been their own bodies—and others' reactions to their bodies—when they were trying to prepare themselves for the public speaking podium (Mattingly 135).

Which brings me to Debra Hawhee. To those familiar with Hawhee's work on the syncretic relationship between rhetorical and athletic training in classical Greece among the sophists, this similar connection in the Delsartean era may seem somewhat familiar ground; however, as previously stated, there are contrasts to be remarked and examined as well. To dispense with the most obvious first: the gender of the orators is different. As she begins her analysis of the intertwining of the two fields of study, Hawhee records that "as with most civic activities in antiquity, these endeavors were decidedly masculine" ("Pedagogies" 143). Another difference is more vital. I wish to argue that, despite the exceptional caliber and rigor of Hawhee's scholarship, that there is a fundamental difference between the "embodiment" of sophistic pedagogy and Delsartean pedagogy.

Hawhee's article in the November 2002 *College English* shows that the sophists taught in gymnasia and palaestrae (among other places) in ancient Greece, then argues that these educators chose these locations because these were public spaces where young men were already coming to train to become public citizens. These young male students were training their bodies in pursuit of the Greek concept of aretē, or virtuosity, as Hawhee, in the book which followed this article, translates the term (*Arts* 4). The students would then demonstrate their mastery of these physical skills in an agôn: a public "struggle or contest." This was not the type of competition that produced a winner or loser; that contest they called an athlios (*Arts* 15). Since the athletes were already in one convenient spot, training to be future Greek citizen subjects, the sophists found the

gymnasium an excellent site to begin teaching rhetoric as well: oratorical prowess was considered essential to the ancient democracy, so the two complementary halves of this educational intermingling provided "a program for shaping the entire self" in Hawhee's eyes ("Pedagogies" 145).

Hawhee does a virtuoso job herself—a scholarly form of aretē if you will—highlighting how the sophists' rhetorical instruction becomes permeated over time with the terminology of the athletic training happening in that same material space. She contends that this is not just a metaphoric exchange or a spurious scholarly claim based on wordplay ("Pedagogies" 145), but that these two formerly discrete arts begin to share a manner of instruction which she calls a "bodily art: an art learned, practiced, and performed by and with the body as well as the mind" (144). Hence, for Hawhee, the syncretic exchange between the two is a matter of modality of instruction. She offers a theory concerning the "3 Rs of sophistic pedagogy" as she is pleased to name the component parts of the ancient rhetoricians' instructional method: namely, "rhythm, repetition and response" (145). First she suggests that the sophists might have used the music of the *auloi* (pipe-like reed instruments) which played in the palaestrae to train the young rhetors to notice "the rhythmic, tonic quality of speeches" (146). She follows this possibility with a translation of the classical Greek notion of rhythm, observing that it had much to do with repeating with a difference, not in an identical way. Their understanding of rhythm then would allow students to fuse a general theory with varied applications, or as she put it, "fixity with variability" (148). Next she analyzes the rhythmic repetition of certain mental exercises—how these exercises were inculcated into students to produce a flexible sort of mêtis or cunning rhetorical intelligence, better enabling them to respond (the 3rd component) to any specific rhetorical exigency.

In the end, however, the "bodily" type of habit production that the University of Illinois scholar is here arguing for seems, when examined minutely, really more of a state of mind (albeit one imbued with a physical vocabulary, and taking place in a space where bodies are otherwise being exerted). Looking at the textual passages she is carefully parsing, we might take as an example one fragment written by Empedocles in which the text urges the student to "push," "thrust" and "struggle" with new ideas. As Hawhee explains it, the sophist is encouraging the student to "engage" with his instructor's

teaching in an earnest, “demanding,” and “even violent” way (150). However, while the verbs are active and the adjectives are impassioned, to my best reading, the student is still “engaged” in mental, not physical activity here.

To confirm this assessment, I wrote to Professor Hawhee, asking if she would mind clarifying the point. I asked if the sophists ever taught actual physical training in their classes, as it appeared that the two disciplines were taught side by side in the gymnasia but separately, by different instructors, and shared more terminology (and to an extent, an idea of modality) than a literally embodied connection.

She was kind enough to respond almost immediately, and confirmed the point. She wrote:

> In terms of ancient Greece, given the limited sources, it is very difficult to tell to what extent the practices were intertwined, which is why I focus on the shared space and terminology…. But it does appear, yes, that different teachers worked in the two realms. (Hawhee “Re: question”)

Here then is a second, substantial difference between the two historical groups. With the Delsartists, as we have previously seen, the same instructor was teaching the gymnastics *and* the elocution simultaneously. If we could venture back in time, we might peep in a ladies’ seminary gymnasium and glimpse a class of students, reading a chapter from an elocution textbook on the necessity of physical culture, then getting up to stretch and perform various physical exercises, drills and fencing bouts (dressed in their bloomer outfits, naturally), then working out their voices and doing vocal drills, all in the same hour of the day, perhaps even simultaneously. Although this is speculation, one can imagine students being asked to practice articulation or projection of the voice at the same time as they were moving through their various choreographed apparatus drills. While conscientious and “effective” sophistic instructors might have asked their students to "combine" what they had learned in their various physical and rhetorical classes ("Pedagogies" 151), this would not have been a necessary final step in a New Elocutionist’s classroom. The instructor would have realized how vital full knowledge of the canon of delivery was to an orator’s success in this era, and she would have

understood first-hand her female students' fear of delivering a speech in public, with their bodies on display. A Delsarte instructor would have been combining the two arts for her students' benefit all along.

Much more could be said here of the commonalities between the two eras as well. Observations could be offered including the Delsartists' own use of music in the classroom, their own emphasis on repetition and rhythm—a true connection between the two groups, I believe—and also of their similar focus on citizen production: the relationship assumed between rhetorical training and civic duty. I will attempt to sketch this last point briefly in the next chapter (chapter three), when I assess the many semiotic "layers" which infused the toga the Delsartists often wore for public performances. But for now, let us turn to another intriguing part of New Elocutionary training—the fine art of fencing—and look at how Delsartists used swordwork to refine wordwork.

Elocution and Fencing: Choose Your (S)words Carefully, Ladies

Previously in this chapter, we observed that the study of physical culture took several different forms in the U.S. in the late nineteenth century, based on three different systems of training: the Delsarte, the Swedish, and the German. One interesting divergence among the New Elocutionists from the "pure" Delsarte curriculum—which was never really pure, as we will see—involved a borrowing from the German system. For some reason, these women instructors of expression, encouraged to be quiet and passive by their society, decided it would be a fine idea to take up the practice of fencing. They also apparently thought it would help the young women they were teaching to become better orators. The question is, why?

Examining one handbook of physical culture from the German system that was translated into English and published in the states in 1894, thoughts on fencing are indeed included (Schmidt 33-4). This being a mere "synopsis" of the system, there are no explanations of specific guards, attacks, parries, and we find no strategies to win a match. Instead, the author's purpose is to assess the relative value of different exercises and to

prescribe certain exercises for different stages in an athlete's life. The author—a medical doctor—categorizes all the exercises he is considering into two large groups: exercises for strength and skill, and exercises of quickness and endurance, but then adds another layer of differentiation: those exercises in both categories which quicken the mental capacities of the brain, by forcing the brain to make split-second decisions. He calls these "exercises of alertness" (33). Fencing he groups into this last category.

Schmidt observes that fencing (and other "alertness" exercises like wrestling) require a different type of work from a student, in that the student cannot always passively follow the teacher's instruction, but must learn to respond to "*the impulse of the moment*" (33, emphasis in original) as any given bout develops. A second point which separates fencing from other types of physical activity is that a fencing move does not have to be done perfectly in order to work. In a match, the scoring is pragmatic, not aesthetic—was a touch made? That is the important thing, not the grace with which an attack was attempted. The final distinction from other types of physical training, Schmidt claims, is that in exercises of alertness, "Sizing up the situation, resolve and execution must follow in lightning succession" (33).

The book is very short, more of a bound pamphlet than anything, but there is an interesting injunction made in an early section. At one point, Schmidt contends that there are certain restrictions that ought to be observed in the pursuit of this program of physical culture training. "Manual training, vocal culture, mimicry, etc., must be looked after outside the gymnasium," he states, then insists that only large-muscle groups—not the muscles of the larynx, he says—should be worked upon with his suggested regimen (Schmidt 13). A strange comment for a book on calisthenics to make, in any other time period perhaps, but not in the Delsarte era, obviously. In this passage it seems evident that Schmidt is responding to some form of borrowing of his system of physical training for instruction in "vocal culture." For clearly, *some* part of this German system must have being used in classes of expression, else why insist that the two seemingly discrete arts remain separate? He does not comment on what particularly is being appropriated, or in what manner, but it is a matter of historical record that after certain European laws were passed against dueling, one of the few places that continued fencing tradition and training was the German university.

As we've seen of course, in the United States, college women's elocution classes were happening in the gymnasium—vocal culture, physical culture, mimicry and all. While the threads of physical evidence I have located keeps my case circumstantial for now, I hazard the supposition that instructors of Delsartean oratory at the college level included fencing in their teaching of physical culture, as a way to enhance students' rhetorical ability to defend themselves in debate. For like fencing, debate is another type of competition in which an opponent's "moves" would have been unpredictable, where "alertness" and the "lightning" fast abilities to size up a situation and to respond would have proved highly beneficial.

Looking at the main Delsartean mouthpiece, the aforementioned scholarly journal *The Voice*, we find that fencing is being employed by some American elocutionists, at least. About a decade before the English translation is published of Schmidt's book, in October of 1883, we find a lengthy article on fencing. This article is an excerpted reprint of a book chapter: a book published in the U.S. by longstanding champion of American Delsartism, Edward Werner. The book's author was Oskar Guttman, a German teacher of oratory. Guttmann's book title makes one connection I am attempting to limn explicit: *Aesthetic Physical Culture, A Self-instructor for All Cultured Circles, and Especially for Oratorical and Dramatic Artists***.** In Guttmann's treatment, physical culture is applied to the very area of the body that Schmidt would have be off-limits: that is to say, to the voice, and specifically, to the muscles of the larynx. The excerpt of Guttmann's book that is reprinted in *The Voice* contains a primer of sorts on competitive fencing: how to "take measure" between two combatants, how to hold the foil and move the hand and wrist for attacks ("attitudes of the hand") and so on ("Aesthetic" 152-54). Frustratingly, in the article no comment is made as to why fencing should be thought important practice in a classroom of vocal expression, or for those who wished to pursue vocal culture independently. There is no word of assistance to the twenty-first century scholar who is curious as to why this piece would sit between an article on church singing and letters to the editor concerning tonics for the improvement of one's voice. Having read four or five whole years of the journal's run, I can state with some confidence that general questions concerning physical culture are not covered often. (In Delsarte textbooks, yes. In their journal, no.) It follows perhaps that fencing must have been thought particularly well

connected to the study of oratory or elocution to have been thus included. Perhaps the connection was thought *so* manifest as not to require explanation?

Another text makes this inchoate connection come more into focus. In 1892, an instructor of physical culture from Cleveland, Ohio, R. Anna Morris, published the book *Physical Education in the Public Schools: An Eclectic System of Exercises Including the Delsartean Principles of Execution and Expression.* The use of the word "eclectic" in Morris's title to describe the mixture of different physical training systems she's urging her readers to adopt is revealing; I argue that this adjective should be kept in mind as a way to think about the syncretic nature of most Delsartean classrooms, not just Morris's suggested curriculum. She's preparing lessons for younger children, not college students; however, the way she describes the class exercises are clearly influenced by her Delsarte training, and may thus be useful to think with as some scaled-back approximation of what was probably happening in institutions of higher learning.

Morris lists fencing as one of six "apparatus drills"—the other five are wands, Indian clubs, rings, dumb-bells, and "recess recreations." (These last are ways to get students to move their bodies inside the actual classroom, like doing push-ups on a desk, or doing chin-ups on a bar hung in the doorway. Think "indoor recess.") Wands, Indian clubs, rings and dumb-bells are all mentioned at times in Delsarte parlor rhetorics as useful physical culture, so there is nothing particularly bizarre about this list. The way she discusses fencing is a bit different, though. While the excerpt on fencing in *The Voice* is describing full combat engagement, Morris's use of fencing as exercise is a series of choreographed moves—like scripted dance moves, or drill team movements to music—which look designed not for combat, but performance. She describes the positions of the body and hands similar to the description of previous authors, but with this difference: there is repeated mention of how many "counts" a position should be held for, and how to perform the steps to "march time" (131-33). She calls these "broad-sword movements," yet says the "exercises" may be performed using either "steel foils" or "light sticks" (131).

From the mere three pages' coverage this textbook provides, it is impossible to tell to what extent these exercises were used to prepare students for competition, and to what extent they were used solely as physical exercise. Also, readers must keep in mind

that this is a book intended for an audience of teachers of schoolchildren, not more mature students. (Morris might have thought it unadvisable to give a classroom of energetic 5th-graders a set of foils and tell them to "have at" one another. Can we blame her?)

But what was happening in women's college gymnasia? It is perhaps not crucial to say with certainty which was the case. I believe that two possibilities are equally likely, and that perhaps both were happening—some in one college, some in another. One, that these fencing exercises were merely exercises: that they were meant to increase a young woman's lung power, to race the blood, to stretch muscles fatigued from long hours sitting at a desk, and to limber up the body for improved rhetorical action on stage later. Two, I strongly suspect that there were some college classrooms of elocution that were employing fencing exercises in the manner suggested by the excerpts in *The Voice*, the original book on oratorical practice by Oskar Guttmann, and in the German book on physical culture by F.A. Schmidt—that is, that fencing was being taught as competitive sport which prepared the orator to think quickly on her feet, to respond gracefully and with strength and confidence when "attacked" by a debater, and not to lose her equanimity and poise. I believe that the practice of literal combat would have been deemed fine preparation for what were known at this time as "oratorical combats"—these phenomena we will take a closer look at in just a minute. Before we head there, however, I would like to take a related detour into another historian's (very different!) assessment of the period.

Dueling, Ironically, with the Theory of Irenic Rhetoric in the Nineteenth Century

In his 1997 book, *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory and Pedagogy*, Robert Connors advances an important observation concerning American rhetorical history. In his introduction, Connors states that he had long noted a scholarly lacuna in the coverage of the rhetorical history of the nineteenth century in the U.S. He says he

thought it strange that there had been so little research done concerning a presumably non-existent rhetorical scene. He counters this notion, correctly stating that there was plenty of rhetorical activity and theorizing going on: it was merely that rhetorical historians had not yet seen it because it didn't fit with prevailing disciplinary definitions of rhetoric as an oral art and practice. In the nineteenth century, he contends, we as a country shifted to an emphasis on written forms of rhetoric. He proposes a new label, "composition-rhetoric," as a way of acknowledging the field's then nascent focus on the technology of writing, especially in the classroom.

This important contribution to our discipline's self-knowledge Connors followed with a provocative claim—provocative, and I'll argue, misleading. In a chapter called "Gender Influences: Composition-Rhetoric as an Irenic Rhetoric," Connors lays down what he sees happening in the nineteenth century as women enter the *milieux* of higher education in ever-increasing numbers. From ancient times, Connors notes, "rhetoric was the property of men, particularly men of property" (24). Fair enough as a generalization, perhaps: feminist scholars have since recovered many exceptions that challenge this statement, but there is, of course, no question concerning the attempts made to restrict women's access to or learning of this form of discursive power. This much is not in contention. Connors continues, however, stating that in the nineteenth century, rhetorical education shifts from a male-oriented agonistic rhetoric "to a more modern irenic rhetoric that can include both genders" (24). To summarize, his claim in this chapter is that when women entered the educational scene, rhetorical education had to become gentler to accommodate them. As we know, the word "irenic" is derived from the Greek word for peace; they worshipped a goddess of peace called Irene (also spelled Eirene). In making this point, Connors is following up his earlier claim that previously, rhetorical classroom study had been a fierce, agonistic zone where students and teachers fought with one another over in the most antagonistic way to determine who was correct. He puts it baldly: "students and teachers were enemies" (47). He says this is the reason that classes in rhetoric and logic were formerly so popular. As he tells it, if you were going to be attacked by your professors, you wanted to be able to defend yourself (47).

Then along came young women. Also eager for an education including training in rhetoric, elocution, and oratory, young women created something of a dilemma for male

instructors and their male students as well, Connors says. As he puts it, "Real men do not fight women" (49). (Note that he uses the present, not the past tense here.) While it may be possible that Connors intended only to reiterate a long-standing cultural cliché—the familiar admonishment from parents to sons prone to roughhousing with their sisters, as I heard it myself in my distant youth—it is intriguing that Connors doesn't qualify this statement in any way, or preface it with some explanation of what effect he's going for. Is he being ironic? His tone does not sound ironic, nor does his phrasing encourage one to smile at an outdated aphorism.

Allow, dear reader, if you will, a moment while I respond to Connors' thread of argument. Connors' argument becomes vexing on several levels in this chapter, all of which call for a thorough reassessment (if not outright refutation) in my opinion. Working forward from this last point, I found myself genuinely puzzled as to Connors' purpose in including this phrase. I think he means to suggest that, long ingrained by nineteenth-century discourses concerning the ostensible fragility of the female gender, it would have been hard for men of the late Victorian era to imagine engaging in verbal combat with a young woman. Leaving aside for the moment the implication of phrasing this statement in the present tense, and leaving aside the un-noted difference (which I think ought to be insisted upon) between a physical engagement and a cerebral one such as a debate—still, I think Connors *means* to suggest merely that nineteenth-century men would have had trouble arguing with women, and vice versa. Although he does not make this point clear, I would wager that Connors is working from readings of scientific, psychological, even literary texts from the nineteenth century which refer to women as the weaker sex, etc., as we already know all too well.

Several points still rankle about his analysis, however, to my mind at least. One is that Connors talks of men's debating societies and how popular they used to be, then says that women came along and that culture disappeared. Yet he makes no note of the fact that women had their own debating societies in college and seminary, or that they sometimes joined men's debating societies in coeducational schools. Several feminist scholars have since chronicled this point (Conway, Kohrs Campbell); for additional evidentiary support, one might simply flip open nearly any Delsartean text or women's rhetorical handbook from this period. Most have a list of debate topics at the back.

Connors makes no note of mixed-gender oratorical contests in this era, either, where men and women competed for honors and prizes, at times "arguing" two stances on the same topic. For while the orations were delivered one after the other and did not explicitly respond to one another in that moment, still the points made would have been disagreeing with one another. It must be likely that at the time when he was writing this book, Connors had not yet have seen evidence of any of this activity.

What I think is probably more damaging in the long run than these particulars concerning Connors' scholarship, is the reinscribing of certain historical tendencies in how we represent women from this era: because they were encouraged to be weak and fragile, these histories go, women must therefore have *been* weak and fragile. Who among us has not observed this penchant to sum up girls and women from the previous century as this meek creature? And surely there were some women—then as now—women who, in order to be admired, did willingly lace themselves into this ideological corset—this restriction of themselves, their aspirations, their potential. (This same observation could be made of some men, clearly.) However, what this historical retelling leaves out is women's resistance. Not all nineteenth-century women were interested in irenic rhetoric, yet we see this some level of acceptance of this "fact" in some of the best scholars writing rhetorical history today. It is often implied that these nineteenth-century ladies should not be blamed for their acquiescence: no, they cannot be blamed for it, it wasn't their fault—but still this notion lingers that women were quietly accepting their prescribed roles in this era. What this type of history omits, in this instance for example, is all manner of courageous acts of self-expression arguing against the status quo. Both at the national level and the much smaller (and thus less well chronicled) local level, we can find a young female student or even a senior scholar meeting a pernicious argument head on, in a public space, demanding to have her views heard—but we can find this only if we are looking for it. These are not the canonical orations of Elizabeth Cady Stanton before Congress—these are the micro-arguments being made in schoolrooms, gymnasia, and coffee shops come to that: wherever people are gathered. The tectonic plates of gender ideology were shifting in this period, yet from histories of this sort, we are left to assume that they must, like their geological counterparts, have shifted by themselves. It did not happen thus. Ponderous mountains of repressive thought were moved—slowly,

and individually—by women who were not afraid of a discursive fight, and who had thoughtfully and strategically armed themselves for oratorical battles in the public eye. Their readiness to fight for the social changes they required is suggested by their study of fencing, but also in their fascination with stories about fabled women warriors of old—the Amazons. As we will observe, the Delsartists were enraptured with these mythical fighters. It will be my contention that their interest in these warriors indicates that their rhetorical practices were not nearly so "peaceful" in intention or realization as we latter-day historians have been led to believe.

Amazed by Amazons

If the annals of unlikely love affairs were ever written, the American Delsartists' delight in the symbolism of the Amazon warrior would seem a logical inclusion; their passion appears, on the surface at least, a strange and incongruous match. As we've observed, the Delsartists were white women from more-or-less comfortable backgrounds. Although by Barbara Welter's estimation, the heyday of the Cult of True Womanhood had ended in the 1860s, and the Delsartists did not become a national presence until the 1880s, some carry-over from this ideology of the feminine ideal would have likely still been in circulation twenty years later: turn-of-the-century American society was probably still encouraging women in the Delsarte era to be "pious, pure, submissive and domestic" as it did with women from previous decades (Welter 152). By contrast, the mythical group of women known as the Amazons (depending on which version of the legend you prefer) are said to have been Asian or African women of indifferent class backgrounds, to begin with. But "pious, pure, submissive and domestic"? The various myths of Amazon warriors all denote them as religious pagans, note their sexual independence (if not sexual rapacity), their inclination toward domination of other peoples and submission to no one (especially to no man) and domesticity? Not unless you count domesticating horses for mounted warfare under the rubric of proper "domestic" behavior!

Yet observe the Delsartists' adoration. In 1893, at the second annual conference of the National Association of Elocutionists, famed American performance artist Genevieve Stebbins gives a talk called "The Identity of the Principles Underlying the Greek Statues and the Delsarte System of Expression." At the end of the talk, she takes the liberty of demonstrating to her scholarly audience exactly how human tableaux are expressive; she performs a series of 15 "living statues," momentarily transforming herself into a sort of mobile, human museum. (We see more of this performance genre—living statues and *tableaux mouvants*—in chapter three.) Among the statues Stebbins performs are the Winged Victory, the Gladiator, and the Amazon (282).

And again in 1905, at the close of the New Elocution period, Elsie Wilbor writes a rhetorical reader, entitled *Delsarte Recitation Book*. Within it she includes a photographic copy of an Amazon statue (both statue and museum are unidentified) for readers to study for posing purposes (40). Tellingly, Wilbor also includes a black-and-white photo of a group of smiling young women in military-type costumes, holding what look to be mock sabers. The photo is captioned "the sword drill" (248). Interestingly, this type of drill appears to foreshadows the modern-day "rifle" corps that accompanies a college or high school marching band: both are choreographed, both physical performances are done in time to musical accompaniment of some sort, both are collaborative performances. Another example of Amazon adoration and this sort of drill work can be observed in a self-titled "Amazon drill" photograph sent in 1899 to *Werner's Magazine*, later known as *The Voice* (Ruyter "Antique" 86). In this static photograph (*see figure 4*), the young women are posed facing the camera. In many elocutionary handbooks in this period, however, choreography patterns were included with staging or costuming notes, indicating that this was an multi-modal drill that moved, not a still *tableau*.

And again in 1892. One night in May, the young women of Oxford College in southwestern Ohio put on for the local public "a Delsarte entertainment." According to their student newspaper, the *Oxford Ladies Collegian*, during the course of the evening, the girls performed single statues of Amazons and later, in a different tableau, a "frieze" they called "The Battle of the Amazons." In the review of the program printed in the newspaper the next day, it was noted that of the many performances that evening,

Figure 4. Originally from *Werner's Magazine* (22:5) 1899, "Amazon Drill," sent in by elocutionist Mrs. Jamie Thompson Laird (qtd. in Ruyter "Antique" 86). Carrying stylized arrows in lieu of swords, these women may not look overly fierce or transgressive to twenty-first century eyes, yet mark the empire waists on their gowns. No corsets would appear to be inhibiting their range of physical action in this drill.

"among those which attracted special admiration were The Sacrifice of Iphigenia, Night, Bacchus, and the striking scene from 'The Battle of the Amazons'" (103).

Why were the Delsartists interested in a hoary Greek myth about the alleged existence—somewhere, at some point in ancient history—of iconoclastic, fierce women warriors?

We feminist scholars might well ask ourselves that same question. As Harvard professor and MacArthur Fellowship ("Genius Award") recipient Laurel Thatcher Ulrich points out, modern-day women scholars have been rather obsessed with that mythos, too. She points out that "In the past thirty years, Amazons have inspired archaeologists, historians, poets, scriptwriters, feminist activists, and pencil-toting travelers" (42). As to the question of whether a true, historical matriarchal society devoted to bloodshed and domination ever peopled the earth, Ulrich writes that there is scant evidence at present to suggest that such a group existed. Still, she says, "the power of the old stories is unmistakable. They will not go away" (42). Why not? Ulrich notes that in our recent past, when feminists (Gloria Steinem among others) have appropriated Amazon tales and images for their own twentieth-century purposes, critics have accused them of folly, arguing that trying to build a political statement on a mythical group of women can only undermine a cause. To which criticism Ulrich responds that "The answer is surely not in the objects but in the fantasies they may or may not inspire" (61). By which the redoubtable scholar means, I think, that if we look only at the "reality" or "truth" of a given history, in this case we are missing the point. The real power in this story—any story, really—comes from the narrative's ability to fire a reader's imagination: for a reader to see a new future taking shape in her mind, new possibilities.

I believe this to be the case with the New Elocutionists' use of the Amazon, as well. As I argued in the introduction to this dissertation, the New Elocution was thought to be the cornerstone of the foundation for the New Woman—studying the one would soon bring about the other. Looking at Delsarte rhetorical readers and reciters, I couldn't help but notice the many short stories, poems, photos and drills to do with women who were brave under fire, who were capable of martial acts of patriotic duty or service to an ideal, and so on. Besides the Amazons *per se*, there were the tales of Joan of Arc, Boadicea, Catherine Douglas (also known as Kate Barlass) and more—all women who

were brave in battle. In including these tales of warriors real and mythical, it seemed to me quite clear that the Delsartists were looking to overcome some of the lingering ideals of the Cult of Domesticity—to venture beyond the submissive subjectivity that was still expected of a late nineteenth-century woman. I see them beginning to collectively imagine new lives for themselves—active physical lives, professional lives, civic lives—all the while full realizing that they would have to fight for the right to have them.

On Oratorical Combat

In the city of Philadelphia in 1894, at the 3rd annual meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists (NAE), a report was presented by an NAE subcommittee commissioned the year before to research the state of the teaching of elocution as a discipline in colleges nationwide. This report is presented in full in the transcribed notes of the conference, and in its entirety is probably the most exhaustive *contemporary* snapshot of the field of elocutionary study available from this period. The findings of the report are revealing.

At the beginning of their panel, the subcommittee opened their presentation with the limitations of the scope of their inquiry: they did not, they noted, write to any colleges committed solely to the study of oratory or expression. (Possibly because there were too many of same at this time? Or just too many in addition to the ones they decided to address?) In any case, they wrote to "over 400 colleges" with a more liberal education framework "to ascertain… what educational value is attached to [the study of expression] by the faculties in college and university" (129-30). Of the 400 institutions asked, the committee received 102 responses. Leaving aside for the present all manner of questions which they asked concerning interdisciplinary approaches, methods, teacher and student workload, students enrolled and texts employed, as well as the salary, rank, and gender

breakdown of the instructors in elocution departments all across the country, let us focus instead on one small item somewhat buried in the middle of their report:

> One fact of considerable significance was developed by the answers to our sixth interrogation, as showing with what lines of work elocutionary study and drill are associated, and what efforts of the students give greatest momentum to their work in expression. In 20 cases it appeared that elocution was largely connected with oratorical or declamatory *contests*. In 60 cases it was associated with some form of *public rhetorical exercise*…. (131, both emphases in original).

Possessive pronouns can be such a headache. Who is the "their" in the query "what efforts of the students give greatest momentum to *their* work in expression" supposed to be referring to? The instructors, or the students themselves? The report does not make this clear. However, the subcommittee sees a connection "of considerable significance" emerging from their research—in some way, "oratorical or declamatory contests" were bringing new life to the field of elocution in this time frame. (So, too, were "public rhetorical exercises," but we will be looking at those in the next chapter.)

Throughout this chapter, I have contended that this period demands another look from rhetorical scholars, as I believe the tenor of women's rhetorical work in the 1880s and 1890s was never wholly or even primarily irenic in nature. There is much more work to be done, I argue—in the archives of many a college or library lie unseen "snapshots" of this era (some literal snapshots, some figurative, but all concerned with women's public rhetorical performances). What is required is some systematic and careful recovery work to re-document these oratorical contests, for one. How prevalent were these oratorical contests? What were they like? How did they operate? Who judged them, and on what grounds were evaluations made—did the scoring follow a predictable pattern, or were different guidelines for judging used in different contests? How often did young men and young women compete against one another, versus single-gender competitions? What were the prizes (or other perquisites) for winning? Was the real purpose of competing to win, or are there other "competing" purposes which we academics should

consider—in some ways, couldn't we say a student "won" who got up and voiced her opinion in public, regardless of the outcome at the end of the competition?

Another, related set of questions would be to tease out the connections to various debate societies and clubs in operation at the turn of the century. We have already begun (somewhat sporadically, it seems) to take note of this related cultural trend. Barbara Miller Solomon mentions in passing that many young women in this period had access to "separate debating clubs" in college, just for women, although some few were involved in co-educational ones (105). Kathryn Conway has examined the flowering of girls' debate societies at the Seven Sisters Colleges from 1865-1919. She found that prior to this period, similar groups sometimes had had to meet in secret, when girls were not allowed by their institutions to assemble for this purpose (206). Conway also found, not surprisingly, that these societies were a good practice ground for suffrage arguments, and that many nationally prominent suffragists cut their rhetorical teeth on this debate work in college.

Yes, comparisons between debates and oratorical contests should be attempted, but contrasts need to be drawn as well, for these two events (while related) are not the same thing. In a debate—at least in the present day—competitors do not know exactly what they are going to be speaking on. They research a general topic or field, then are presented with a specific question when they arrive at the debate site. Debaters must speak extemporaneously, then, which would be in contrast to the oratorical combatants. Still, one imagines that debaters are judged on content and delivery both, if not explicitly, then implicitly—a similarity.

Another point of concern as to the limitations of our studies so far: there was more at stake within the study of oratory or the winning of oratorical contests than "just" the question of woman suffrage. This was of course, a monumental and groundbreaking issue, but it is only one massive cultural shift happening at this time. Much of the ideology of gender seems at stake and in contention here, in some ways, and prevailing discursive boundaries are being transgressed for more than one political agenda (as we'll see in just a second).

To this scholar's way of thinking, there are still far more questions than answers regarding this cultural phenomenon known as the "oratorical contest." Still, a few things

are clear. They were most definitely happening, and apparently they were widespread across the country. In addition to the NAE report, contemporary news articles provide information about the oratorical "medal contests" transpiring all over the country at this time. In these events, young people (probably dressed in their Sunday best) would get up on public platforms in front of a large audience, and then deliver a much-practiced speech or "oration" on a previously-announced topic. It is not clear whether they were allowed to make their own selection of speech, whether they drew these randomly, or if (perhaps?) they were even allowed on occasion to write these speeches themselves. A spectrum of possibilities seems probable. After each speech, a panel of judges would score the contestants on their content and delivery (both embodied and vocal). The winner often received a prize of some sort.

One hugely popular oratorical contest of this sort was the so-called Demorest Medal Contest. Begun by William Jennings Demorest in 1886, these eponymous contests formed a world-wide campaign protesting alcohol abuse and promoting the cause of Prohibition. A former abolitionist, magazine publisher and politician, Demorest put up his own money to offer real silver, small gold, grand gold and diamond medals to the winners of thousands of such contests—which according to one source were happening all over the globe. Specific numbers of contests are not provided in this source, but a very large number of contests were held in the U.S. and others were apparently held in Europe ("especially England and Scotland"), Bulgaria, India, the Sandwich Islands, China, Japan, Australia and Tasmania (Spooner 631-2). Here's a glimpse of how one of these contests went in Demorest's hometown of New York City, in the year 1891, according to an article in *The New York Times* the following day:

> Nine young people of this city were the contestants in a Demorest gold medal contest at Prohibition Park, Staten Island, yesterday. [...] The contestants had each won a Demorest silver medal in similar contests in this city, and ranged in ages between thirteen and eighteen years. They were: Blanche Wendell, Robert Fox, Clara Harker, Will Pritchard, Esther Ridley, William H. Bradley, Olga Johnson, Mabel Beckman, and Richard Wegener. In the order named, each delivered a recitation upon the

> temperance question, selected from a series of books published for the purpose. *The judges awarded the prize to Blanche Wendell,* whose recitation was entitled "The Walls of the City." *Mr. Wiman presented her with a neat gold medal*. He said that Clara Harken and William Brady were entitled to some recognition, and gave them each a five-dollar gold piece. ("Prohibition Medal Contest," emphases added)

Clearly, this news article leaves out more than it includes, but it does provide a few important nuggets of information for a rhetorical historiographer. The fact that this contest for school-age children was held not at a school but at a public park suggests that this was an event made open to the public at large. By this account, the contests were obviously progressive. You moved up from one level to another based on your success; the contestants for this particular battle got in by winning the silver medal contests. Which leads to the possibility that after this gold contest in Staten Island would have come a "grand gold" contest (state-wide?) and then finally the winner of those contests would have moved into the final round, the "diamond medal" contest. This might have been a nation-wide event, perhaps even international. More research is called for. Still, the idea that students were engaged in this sort of transitive, extra-curricular exchange of ideas is exciting. Finally and not inconsequentially, we note that the girls were on this platform competing with the boys. Not just a token girl—there were more young women than men at five to four, and they were up there delivering their orations to whoever was listening. And in the end, we note who won.

CHAPTER THREE

INVOKING A NEW MUSE OF ORATORY: SILENCE, VOICE, AND CITIZENSHIP AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Fundamental Paradox—Silence as a Rhetorical Strategy, Medium and Focus Among the New Elocutionists

This chapter analyzes an intriguing paradox. In the late nineteenth century, as we have seen, women who called themselves the American Delsartists were teaching and studying elocution in college classes—even to the point of opening new colleges and writing rhetorical handbooks strictly dedicated to the study of oratory—but at the same time, they were also fascinated by silence as a communicative strategy, as an expressive medium, and also as a thematic focus within their theories of elocution and fictional narratives. While in the classroom, the New Elocutionists followed some of the rhetorical education studied by their male colleagues (but tailored to their special needs as women, as we observed in chapter two, with alterations such as breathing lessons, special suits, gym practice, and fencing lessons). When the Delsartists *left* the classroom, however, their public performances either as individuals (usually professional) or as a group (usually amateur) diverged even more sharply from the straightforward, pulpit-pounding oratory practiced by their male counterparts. The Delsarte public performance or "recital" was a series of performances on stage, many of them (as we will soon see) embodied and delivered in silence. Herein lies the paradox: why would the performers mute their voices in public when students and teachers alike were clearly so determined to be more effective orators, battling for such a hard-won rhetorical education in private?

This unusual intermingling of the study of the art of speaking with the mode of silent delivery in public spaces has confounded rhetorical scholars' attempts to fully understand the Delsartist movement on several occasions. One form of their silent delivery in particular has been not been given its full due as the rhetorical *techne* it was: I

refer to the performance genre known as *tableaux vivants*. Examining textual traces of tableaux similar to those the Delsartists performed on public stages, for example, one important historian in our field recently pronounced these living pictures ineffective as a political medium, because this type of performance genre does not appear to make an agonistic or explicit argument for women's rights (Johnson *Gender 38*). But there is more to be seen here, and more to be heard, within the quietude of these ostensibly mute performances. First, these silent performances need to be "rhetorically sequenced," as Richard Enos would have it, alongside the Delsartists' continual imbrication of theories of silence and expression, acknowledging the group's rhetorical savvy about how one can function as the other. Second, the tableaux themselves need to be understood in their own right, with more in-depth analysis than has previously been granted them, and with more consideration to the intertextuality always already present within these staged scenes.

Properly contextualizing these silent performances will require an in-depth look at the New Elocutionists' attention to silence in its many forms, as well as contemporary rhetoricians' ideas regarding how silence can be an efficacious rhetorical strategy. I will mention several sites of silent rhetorical activity in this chapter, including the American Delsartists' theories of silence which differed from the original theory imported from France, but I will focus on the aforementioned silent tableaux of the public performance. I'll also make use of a lost Delsarte dialogue, or drama, called "The Ladies of Athens," to demonstrate the elocutionists' keen insight of how silence can communicate volumes. Along the way I will use the work of Susan Gal and Cheryl Glenn to parse the linguistic and rhetorical nature of silence: how interlocutors who are not speaking can still be expressing themselves clearly, in other words.

Finally, beyond this crucial paradox there is an emphasis on issues of citizenship that needs to be recorded in the annals of Delsarte history. Therefore, in this chapter I will also try to limn the ways in which questions of who gets to speak (and who is silenced) are tied to vital questions for women in this period concerning who may attain full citizenship within the nation. In the end I contend that not only was the Delsartists' use of silence highly rhetorical (and theorized as such), but in some ways it was also demonstrably political, as the New Elocutionists tacitly entered into questions of public policy concerning women's emancipation, women's education, and the franchise.

Theories of Silence: Then and Now

Theorizing the rhetorical nature of silence might seem an incongruous subject for any system of oratory or elocution to take up. From their inceptions, however, each of the two branches of Delsartism, French and American, had its own relationship to silence. Within the French school, this interest focused on the use of silent gestures to accompany an oration's vocal delivery, and silence as a way of timing the oration—both were used to *augment* a vocal performance, in other words. Within the American school, silent delivery would be studied as a way to *replace* that vocal performance altogether (this we will see more of later in this chapter, in the section on silent tableaux).

To return to France for just a moment, one of Delsarte's students was a French clergyman, Abbé Delaumosne. In his section of notes on Delsarte's class, called a "rational grammar of oratory" (Werner 163), Delaumosne's instructor attempted to locate the scientific principles underlying the art of vocal and bodily delivery. Delaumosne recorded Delsarte's idea that "The science of the Art of Oratory has not yet been taught. […] Horace, Quintilian and Cicero among the ancients, and numerous modern writers have treated of oratory as an art. We admire their writings, but this is not science; here we seek in vain the fundamental laws whence their teachings proceed" (Werner 3). In his 170-page record of Delsarte's teachings, we see the French *maître* striving to articulate that elusive "science" to his pupils: over one hundred pages treat either the strategic use of silence or the rhetorical power of gesture. He noted that the two were related (Werner 27), yet in Delaumosne's transcription they remain separate elements of a speech's delivery. Listed as "a powerful agent in oratorical effects," silence is recommended to would-be public speakers as a means of pacing themselves. A list of times to pause during an oration is offered, and speakers are reminded to remain silent until they are certain they are ready to speak and have their thoughts well in hand. Readers are also instructed that silence can deliver more pathos than speech, as when an orator is too overwhelmed by feeling to continue speaking. Delaumosne's Delsarte observes that when this happens, the audience may be moved to tears—not by the speech, but by the orator's inability to go on (Werner 27). Here we see silence used as a rhetorical tool to help the

orator achieve the effect he desires with his audience: a tool which adds to his vocal capabilities.

With the coming of Delsarte's theories to America in the person of Steele MacKaye in the early 1870's, the French master's system of oratory fell into the hands of a brand new group of eager rhetors and would-be rhetoricians: the women who would later come to call themselves the New Elocutionists, staking out careers for themselves as the first *professional* female rhetoricians in the New World. But as women, they were differently inscribed into cultural discourses and differently proscribed against certain forms of public speaking. No sooner did they receive Delsarte's striking new theory of oratory (and silence) than they began to reshape both to their own uses. The American Delsartists began theorizing the complete replacement of speech with silence: what a compositionist today, analyzing one of their texts or performances, might call moving from a "local" to a "universal" attention to silence. Why? The answer is simple. Even those women with the most political and socio-economic clout and with the greatest access to formal education—in this period, middle- to upper-class white women, for the most part—even these women knew they were facing a long, uphill battle to be allowed to lecture or address a "promiscuous audience" in the 1880s or 1890s. It was not easily done. Not surprisingly then, they began imaginatively coming up with ways to express themselves via other types of delivery. (One wonders if the irony of studying silence in colleges of oratory ever amused them?) Before too long, one method they had chosen as one of their special hallmarks was the silent tableau.

As previously stated, this chapter focuses on the Delsarte's public recitals which featured many of these performance genres that were partially or wholly silent. The silent genres were almost never present in American men's Delsarte performances (Ruyter *Cultivation* 59); neither had they been imported from the French school of Delsartism. The American Delsartists' statues and living pictures can be seen as derived from certain older, mimetic traditions such as pantomime and crèche scenes (Holmström 210-20)—but whatever the source of the revival, these performances swiftly became very popular in the states, as we will shortly see. Still it begs the question, why would *elocutionists* get so excited about reviving this type of artistic performance?

Lindal Buchanan's recent book, *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors* offers the insight that cultural constructs of gender and the ways they affect rhetors' strategies have not yet been taken into account in our analyses of all sorts of rhetorical choices in the past. Buchanan might ask us to remember that the American Delsartists were working in an era *particularly* hostile to women speaking in public. At the end of the century, as women continued to argue for women's education, universal suffrage and temperance, among other things, it became common to refer to female activists speaking their minds in public as "freedom shriekers, " "abominations," and "ranters" (Johnson, *Gender* 64), just as their British suffragette counterparts were labeled "shrieking sisters" or "screaming viragos" for the same crime of demanding equality (Jorgensen-Earp 96). In this climate, the voice which male rhetors could take for granted was for any woman speaking in public a potentially dangerous means of expression: a rhetorical medium likely to backfire. Small wonder that in this historical context many of the American women Delsartists began to study the rhetoricity of silence.

In our own day as well, rhetoricians and linguists are becoming re-interested in theories of silence. We too are beginning to theorize the suasive power of silence (Glenn), the importance of cross-cultural listening (Ratcliffe), and the dialectic always already obtaining between speech and silence (Gal).

In the field of linguistics, for instance, Susan Gal published an article in 1994 called "Between Speech and Silence: The Problematics of Research on Language and Gender," in which she argues persuasively that while linguistic oppression and forced silencing of women have been real issues in the past (and is still true in some cultures in the present, though she does not mention this), sometimes silence is instead a chosen form of resistance that grants agency to those who deploy it. Gal is one of many linguists writing about women's language issues, but I appreciate her unique take on the subject that "silence can be a strategic defense against the powerful" (407).

And in our own field, five years ago, women's rhetoric scholar Cheryl Glenn published the groundbreaking volume, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. In this book, Glenn adduces multiple examples of silence used by speakers involved in power struggles, all cited as evidence that silence can be used as a savvy, strategic move. She

argues that "like the zero in mathematics, silence is an absence with a function, and a rhetorical one at that" (4). Though Glenn does not say so, this "function" might take different forms in different rhetorical situations, just as speech itself does.

This current and growing interest in the value of silence as a communicative medium might have felt comfortably familiar to the nineteenth-century woman studying Delsarte. Working from Glenn's theory, I assert that within the Delsartean public recital, there are at least 5 distinct ways in which silence is being used persuasively.

The first rhetorical function silence performs in a Delsarte recital is the most obvious: it is a form of cultural acquiescence on the part of the women who are not meant to be expressing themselves in public. They are silent in conformance to the prevailing gender ideology, but this silence is used to a woman "speaker's" advantage—this is silence as agency, not oppression.

The intertextuality of their performance genres is the second form of rhetorical silence within a Delsarte recital. Their embodied performance pieces—tableaux and statues, rhetorical gestures and attitudes—referred to other written or visual texts that their audience would have been familiar with. Thus, the audience "heard" messages that might not be immediately apparent today.

The third value of silence within these performances lies in often-forgotten aspects of the Delsartean recital. What looks like silence in the still photos (that are all that now remain of the recitals) was, at the time, actually a multi-modal delivery. Music was usually being performed live to accompany these performance pieces, and often had a verbal score as well which was written and sung specifically for the so-called "silent" performance. Some of the performers, then, would be embodying the narrative on one part of the stage; another performer or performers would be playing the piano or singing a sort of "voice over" which told that same narrative in song form. At times it's not easy to tell whether or not this musical accompaniment was present, however, or whether it was only instrumental, or only sung, or both.

In the late nineteenth century, one of the forms of silence found in the public recital was already rhetorical by disciplinary definition as well. The women doing these performances studied not only the Delsarte science of expression in their college classes and their parlor rhetorics—they were also coming into the elocution business as the

men's elocutionary movement was fading away. Thus they were the inheritors of many various texts and treatises on the physical delivery of the orator, and often incorporated a series of attitudes and gestures into their recitals, to give physical proof of their formal rhetorical training: their readiness to begin public speaking not as a reader or a lecturer, but an orator, complete with embodied action. Gestures were meant to imply action, attitudes were meant to imply the orator's emotion. To signify the attitude of horror, for example, it might be suggested (in Warman's, or another catalogue) that the speaker raise her hands up to cover her eyes, or to throw a hand up over one's mouth as if to stifle a shriek. However, what I think scholars today miss is that, for the women of this time period, these silent attitudes were signifiers not just of the emotional states they were meant to suggest; these attitudes were signifiers both of oratorical education and the act of oratory itself.

Fifth and finally, many of the performance pieces were explicit references to women rhetors "silenced" by received history—a type of proto-feminist historiography. These Delsarte authors and performers weren't using the methods feminist scholars use today, of course, nor would they have described themselves as feminists, but from some of the dramas I have seen, it seems an unavoidable conclusion that they were trying to establish some connection between themselves and their rhetorical foremothers, much as we are. The Delsartists paid close attention to where the silences were in the rhetorical canon, and not just history in general, just as we do—and then they rewrote that history, as we will see in the section called "When Silence Is Voiced."

A Public Delsarte Recital at the Turn of the Century

It should be noted from the outset that most public performances of Delsarte training were not overtly political—or rather, were not political in a feminist sense. Instead, most were one of three things: a form of entertainment, a way to advertise a college's oratorical training for women, or a philanthropic money-making scheme. (Two charitable causes that I have read about New Elocutionists gathering funds for with their

recitals were temperance societies and Indian boarding schools. Of course, these are political causes. I mean only to distinguish these from feminist causes such as suffrage.). It could also be argued, however, that in an atmosphere as predisposed to women remaining in the private sphere as the late Victorian era was in the U.S., that any act of public performance takes on a political subtext. A seemingly innocuous entertainment on the surface might well have been construed by some as women trying to slip past the boundaries of her "proper" gendered sphere. As a group, the American Delsartists seem to have been well aware of both this anxiety and the potential repercussions of society if they overstepped their bounds: thus they were careful to arrange their public recitals in ways that would placate a viewing audience's fears.

Let's examine one specific public Delsarte recital. In the May 1892 edition of the *Oxford Ladies Collegian*, an enthusiastic editorial review was written of an entertainment called "A Delsarte Evening." The theatrical production, said to have taken place that month in the chapel at Oxford College, was pronounced "a complete success in every particular" (103). Like other Delsarte productions being put on by women at this time, this one featured a cast of predominantly female fictional, historical, and mythological characters, in various performance pieces. There are between five and seven different performance genres represented here (depending on how you classify these separate acts). Below in the program you will see an overture for a pianoforte, a farce, a reading, a monologue, an operatic "ensemble" for a duet, *tableaux mouvants/ poses plastiques*, and single statues. The evening's program (from the review) is long, but I show it here in its entirety to better demonstrate the ways in which some of the various pieces of the puzzle of the Delsarte movement can be understood to work together. In point of fact, these seemingly disparate pieces can be better understood by imagining how they functioned with one another, albeit implicitly. It is the interanimation of an embodied performance piece with a familiar literary text (not usually represented in the same program)—or some other combination of music and narrative, to choose another example—which made it possible for the viewing audience to understand the story within a silent statue pose, a frozen scene, or a dance. This becomes more clear with concrete examples, which follow.

Here is the program the young women of Oxford College performed:

Part I

Overture—"Hungarian *Lustspiel*"—Keler Bela

Farce—"A Shakespearian Convention"

Cast: Lady Macbeth, Ophelia, Juliet, Portia

Reading—Sketch from "Cricket on the Hearth"—Dickens

Miss Fleming

Monologue—"Behind a Curtain"

Miss Chew

Ensemble—"*La Regata Veneziana*"—Liszt

Part II

Tableaux Mouvants: Poses Plastiques

Directed by Miss Chew.

1. The Dance of the Muses.

2. Frieze. Chain Dance.

3. Toilet of the Bride.

4. (1) Tribute to the Minotaur.

(2) Single Statues: Diana the Huntress. Artemis discovers Endymion.

5. A Train of Noble Maidens.

6. The Sacrifice of Iphigenia.

7. (1) Night, with her wings outspread over the children.

(2) Fate Opens Her Scroll to Mortals. Some are reading, others have read their destiny.

8. Single Statues: Adornment, Springing Amazon, Cymbal Player, Younger Agrippa, The Hours, Flying Mercury, Modesty.

9. The Niobe Mother and Children Warding off the Arrows of Diana and Apollo.

10. Frieze. Scene from the Battle of the Amazons.

11. A Home Scene from the Greeks.

12. Bacchus, and his Attendants.

13. (1) The Fates. Clotho spins the thread of Life; Lachesis determines its duration; Atropos cuts it off with the shears of Death.

(2) The Graces.

(3) Single Statues. Hebe pouring out the nectar of the gods; Orpheus reclaiming Eurydice from Hades.

14. The Death of Virginia.

15. A Study of Pantomime.

16. Farewell to Home.

17. First Sight of Home.

18. A Charm from the Sky.

The program clearly is in two parts: Part I consists of a variety of different types of performance, while Part II is an extended vista into what I categorize as a single performance genre, although it takes slightly different forms—what Delsartists called tableaux (*tableaux vivants* or *tableaux mouvants*), *poses plastiques*, and single statues. Another feature that separates the two halves of the program is that all the performances in the first half would have been "voiced" in some way—either in song, memorized recitation or lines read aloud—while all the pieces in the second half would have been delivered in silence. While the former genres of performance might be familiar to the twenty-first century reader, this latter type of silent "living picture" performance has been more or less lost, appearing now only in the occasional crèche scene at Christmas time, for example, or in the performance of a street mime in the artists' district of a big city. The Delsarte phenomenon known as plastic poses seems to have totally vanished (unless it has been subsumed into the world of modern dance—a distinct possibility). In any case, a brief explication of the various types of tableaux as the Delsartists understood them will perhaps be helpful.

The Tableau as Artistic and Rhetorical Expression

After types of performance more familiar to modern-day readers—instrumental music, singing, acting, and reading aloud—the Delsartists on this particular evening in 1892 staged a series of embodied, living art forms known by various names depending on

whether each was a "still life" or was set in motion, as well as by what type of art work each was recreating. The *tableau mouvant* was a living picture that moved—the actors on stage would create a recognizable painting with their bodies, then set it in motion. The very first act they performed in Part II, the "Dance of the Muses" was likely a true dance, in other words, with the nine performers striking a familiar pose at first, but then setting it in motion. (If it had been motionless, the act should properly have been called *a tableau vivant*: a living picture, but not a moving one). The performers might have been working from their memory of any number of original art works, or from a reproduction of those artworks in a book: two examples include the "Dance of the Muses" fresco painted in 1550 in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence by Guilio Romano, the Italian Mannerist, or the oil on canvas by the same name done in 1832 by Joseph Paelinck, the Belgian painter. As depicted in either version, the college women would have begun the living art form as a group of nine standing in a circle, facing inward, hands clasped (some hands up, some down seems to be conventional in this piece's various manifestations): then they would have begun slowly to dance a graceful rotation, to bring the piece of art to life.

"Single statues" were very similar to tableaux only, as their name suggests, they involved bringing a statue to life as opposed to a painting. They often required only a single performer, as is the case above with the Delsartists' representations of "Diana the Huntress," "Springing Amazon," or "Modesty," but if the original sculpture included more than one figure, then the embodied piece had to be a collaborative performance as well to reproduce it accurately: examples above include "Artemis discovers Endymion," "The Hours," and "Orpheus reclaiming Eurydice from Hades."

Finally, the category known as *poses plastiques* is really just a different form of delivery of these two performance genres. Tableaux could take a fair amount of time to arrange on stage—to get the props ready, to get the actors in position—and therefore the curtain was sometimes lowered and raised again between each piece. With so-called plastic poses, the actors would hold a piece for a minute or two, then begin to gracefully and slowly reshape themselves into the new picture or statue, while still in full sight of the audience. Their bodies were meant to appear to melt from one pose into the next.

Imagining these acts' full artistic power can be difficult without being able to see the live performances. These are often described as having been performed on an indoor

stage, or at least a raised dais, as they were in the Oxford College chapel, but outdoor amphitheatres might also have been used at times. They took place within a theatrical combination of costumes, props, light, and background music, depending on the performers were able to make or procure: all a backdrop for the strong and graceful movement of the women's bodies. Many New Elocutionists mention that the back of the "stage" should be swagged with dark cloth to provide a sharp contrast to the women's forms, draped as they were in their white, Neoclassical, toga-like costumes. Sometimes there was a massive picture frame set up on stage, and the women's bodies were arranged within that frame, obviously to try to increase the verisimilitude of the "painting" to the original. Calcium lights were also used (when available) for dramatic effect, to highlight the whiteness of the women on stage—especially while doing statues. In a painting, color is of course an important artistic element to consider, but in a marble statue, the only color you should see is white. The intent was to get the performers to look like living marble, so their hair was often heavily powdered with flour, and their faces and arms were then coated in white grease paint. The end result was meant to be striking, as the performers were supposed to remain so perfectly still as to make the viewer momentarily see the "real" statue—then that statue would begin to move.

The scene has obvious artistic intent and effect, but what of its rhetorical moves? Besides the multimodality inherent of an embodied, moving performance set to music, what other types of rhetorical expression is at work in a scene such as this?

One thing that rhetorical scholars overlook when assessing the rhetoric of these physical performances is their textual, or we might say, intertextual origin. For just as each of these performances depicts an earlier artwork, each of *those* artworks depicts some text that preceded it—some classical story or myth that inspired the artist to paint the story of the goddess Hebe or to sculpt the trio known as The Hours, say. There is a narrative continuity and complexity here that should not be dismissed, one that requires analysis as much as the spectacle of the women's physical forms, however objectified, or their costumes, however anachronistic and intriguing. To better "see" the performance as the nineteenth-century viewers might have, we must imagine the artworks they would have had access to and familiarity with.

For example, take the *tableau mouvant* the Delsartists referred to as "The Sacrifice of Iphigenia" (Part II, number 6). Briefly, the title of this tableau refers to a Greek myth about the daughter of Agamemnon, Iphigenia: she was offered as a sacrifice to the goddess, Artemis, because her father had displeased the virgin huntress. However, any number of artworks—from different centuries, from different artists and in different mediums—might have been the source for this ephemeral moving picture occurring briefly at the tail end of the century. The actors could have based it on an oil on canvas called "Sacrifice of Iphigenia" done in 1671 by Steen Jan Havicksz, an ink etching of the same name done by Pietro Testa at about the same time period (ca. 1640), or another painting, by Jacob Willemsz de Vet the Elder, again from the mid-seventeenth century. To go further back, they might have been working from a first century Roman fresco of a lost fourth century painting by Timanthes discovered at Pompeii, and later relocated to the museum of Naples (both sites on the Grand Tour taken by many young women in the late nineteenth century, including many Delsartists).

Already this list is burdensome, but while not yet exhaustive, the intertextuality that needs analysis is hardly even begun. There are at least four classical plays that refer to this tale of sacrifice, in Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, and Aeschylus. There is the play *Iphigénie* by Jean Racine, who chose to stage but not complete the promised sacrifice—he had the hapless young woman rescued, instead. Thus the Delsartists' tableau might have been based on elements found in any of these texts, or from the *productions* of those texts that they had seen performed. This tableau created by the Oxford group might well have been based on previous tableaux taken from a drama they had seen staged, for, as Jean Chothia documents in the introduction to her book, it was conventional in Victorian drama to freeze the action at the end of a scene or an act—thus creating a *tableau vivant,* in other words—just before the action changed or the curtain fell (xiii). So were they recreating a painting? If so, which one? Were they recreating a previous tableau they had seen? Or were they translating a text they had read based on their own knowledge of the story? Any of these answers seems equally possible, and without access to photographs, we in the twenty-first century have no way of knowing.

While these mimetic recreations of famous paintings or scenes from famous plays had no direct spoken component, then, nevertheless the Delsartists' silent delivery

contained an already-present textual message. I call these tableaux "silent dialogues," both because they represented a frozen moment from a dialogue silently, and because the visual rhetoric of the silent tableau could "speak" to or dialogue with the audience. For instance, viewers might have remembered the dramatic lines that they knew from previous plays (classical or contemporary) in their heads as they viewed the picture, regardless of the apparent quiet on stage. The audience's pre-existing acquaintance with one form of the story served as a hermeneutic lens through which this subsequent dramatic performance would have been understood.

Of course, the ancient art of pantomime predates the Delsartists by millennia, and continues to this day. It was not something the New Elocutionists invented, and in most moments it was not overtly political. It was, however, rhetorical, in that these mercurial performances captured the audience's imagination and allowed Victorian women the role of artist, not just muse. They could decide which artworks to stage, when and where and how to stage them, which topics or themes to focus on…. The Delsarte performers being women, it is no surprise that their public recitals often focused on stories of women's strength (Amazons, Joan of Arc), women's special obstacles (which suitor to accept, what occupation to attempt, how to submit to being sacrificed), and women's domestic lives in general (classical and nineteenth century "home scenes", like #11 and "toilet of the bride" scenes—#3—were common). Which version of the story they told is also important, and whether they altered the story or updated it in some way. In the aforementioned tale of Iphigenia, sometimes she is sacrificed for her father's indiscretion, and sometimes not. Sometimes she is rescued. Sometimes she is turned into the goddess Hecate. So what theater scholar Paul Newell Campbell terms "the rhetoric of production" becomes very important to consider here, and not just the rhetoric of the text—but we will be coming to him in chapter four.

Other statues might have been political, depending on how they were staged, but again, this is not possible for us to know without access to photographs or descriptions (which in most cases never existed or if they did, have long since vanished). Consider one final example from this recital: the tableau of Hebe, the thirteenth piece in the second half of the program. Hebe was the Greek goddess of youth: said to be the most fair of all the deities on Mount Olympus, the cupbearer brought immortality to the gods in the form

of a chalice of nectar. My point concerning this statue is not the way it was most likely produced, but the Greek myth's connection to its later Roman translation. The Roman's version of Hebe was Juventas, also the goddess of youth, but with one important diegetic shift. Her story is not well known by twenty-first century standards, not being lengthy enough nor graphic enough to look ripe for a lucrative Hollywood movie adaptation, but it was probably known at the turn of the last century, amidst the recrudescence of all things classical. Basically, in Roman mythology, Juventas was symbolically connected to the ascent of a youth into maturity. In ancient Rome, it is said, in front of the temple of Minerva, there was a temple dedicated to her worship: it was here that a boy would go to leave a coin as an offering when he put on a man's toga for the first time ("Juventas").

While the two goddesses, Greek and Roman, share the same parents, the same overall symbolic value, the same attributes and lovers, in this one small element is a world of difference. The production of this tableau is titled "Hebe," so one assumes that the tableau the Oxford girls "painted" with their living bodies was that of the cupbearer. But what a difference if the story they chose had been her counterpart, Juventas, with all its symbolic significance of youth becoming men by the wearing of their first *toga virilis*, which was understood to signify their franchise as full citizens of the Roman state ("Toga"). This is a story I believe the Delsartists could really have gotten into, if you can forgive the pun. For as we will see in the next section, the Neoclassical toga that the American Delsartists donned for their public recitals was an act for which they were roundly derided by their contemporaries, and later was the source of some additional denigration by modern-day rhetoricians, but for different reasons, I believe. The costumes for their public appearances are, in the twenty-first century, perhaps the single most misunderstood part of the Delsarte performance, unrecognized now as signifying far more than a desire to dress up in tailored sheets. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, the scorn aimed at these garments' wearers would have more likely been due to the understanding on the audience's part of the wide spectrum of socio-political critique offered up by these simple white robes.

Toga Party: Neoclassical Signifiers of Oratory, Women's Classical Education, Full Citizenship and the Franchise at the *Fin de Siècle*

In her landmark study of women's postbellum rhetorical education, scholar Nan Johnson argues that late nineteenth-century women were reinscribed into restrictive domestic roles by the very books that claimed to be preparing them to speak publicly. Examining the texts women (and men) used for private learning which she terms parlor rhetorics, Johnson finds that these books offered gendered rhetorical instruction to their various readers: serious oratory for men versus letter writing, entertaining hearth-side conversation, and comedic theatrical performance for women. In particular, Johnson holds that the rhetorical education offered by these books was ostensibly egalitarian, but that the photographs accompanying the text tell a different story: that young women who aspired to be public speakers should prepare to be laughed at. She writes,

> The images of performing bodies collectively make the opposite case: the young men should study the arts of expression and plan to claim the serious attention of their peers, and *the young women can expect to put on costumes* and embody the 'in' joke that women make fools of themselves when they try to move out of their gendered spheres. (*Gender* 36, emphasis added)

In this passage, Johnson is referring specifically to two pairs of images, each depicting rhetorical performances presented by speakers of different sexes—one pair offered by Josephine and Jeannette Stratton in their 1902 book, *The New Select Speaker*, the other taken from editions of *The Ideal Speaker and Entertainer*, also from the turn of the century. Each pair emphasizes Johnson's claim that men were to be taken seriously as orators, because they were dressed naturally, in contemporary, formal attire. The women rhetors, on the other hand, were dressed as performers in "costumes": one Gypsy Tambourine girl outfit (38), the other "a long, loose-fitting gown with neoclassical lines" (35). Despite the authors' stated purpose to provide all readers with the same elocutionary instruction and concomitant access to social uplift, then, Johnson contends that these

images signal the enormous discursive pressure put on women rhetors to stay in the home and to use their education for domestic purposes, or risk looking silly and be made fun of when they ventured out in public draped in a ersatz toga. I wish to revisit Johnson's analysis of these images and offer a different reading: one that will acknowledge the efforts of the Delsartists (not referred to by name in this book). Contrary to Johnson's assessment, I will argue that the toga worn by the Delsarte performers was not a marker of a woman willing to be ridiculed, nor was the image chosen by these book editors intended to suggest this notion; rather, in the 1890s especially, a toga such as the one this performer was wearing should be read as a polysemous rhetorical signifier which silently represented, among other things, women's classical and oratorical education, her desire and right to be an orator, even (possibly) her right to be a full voting citizen of the state.

Historians from various fields have been intrigued by the Delsartists' use of the neoclassical toga: the question of why precisely they wore it comes to be a familiar topos in any sustained analysis of their endeavors. One dance scholar opened up her book-length, seminal work on the Delsartists with this observation: "Photos of American Delsarteans in their versions of Greekish-style gowns, look quaint and somewhat silly as they imitate statues or depict melodramatic scenes from antiquity. If such illustrations had any beauty or power in their own time, it is not apparent to us today" (xiv). Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter, the author of several articles as well as this seminal monograph on the Delsartists' legacy in the dance world, goes on to locate beauty and power both in their innovative system of embodied expression, actually. Her opening quote therefore seems designed to acknowledge that first impressions are hard to overcome, and a modern-day scholar encountering these women in togas is likely to be dismissive.

Before going deeper into these garments' potential significations, however, it would perhaps be wise to discuss what they looked like (because they were not exact replicas of the Greek or Roman toga) and when the New Elocutionists wore them. Put succinctly, there seem to have been almost as many different types of "togas" as there were Delsartists. Nearly every photograph or ink sketch of these outfits seems unique in terms of its sleeves, neckline, waist, and hem. A few generalities can be applied, though: in general it is a long, white, nearly formless dress with the arms left more or less bare. Very few show signs of a corset underneath (though a few do), and beneath, the feet are

either left unshod or are adorned with sandals of a somewhat Mediterranean nature. Many have what is called a "Greek key" pattern as a border at the neckline or at the base—an additional signifier of "Greekness" added to the toga-like shape to help represent either the garment's national origin or, as I suspect, the classical period from which it derives. Some "togas" look more modern to their day, accented with small ribbons, bows or brooches; others have a small cape or mantle attached which hangs down the back. In *Werner's Magazine* in 1893, in a piece called simply "Greek Costume," one writer explained how one could get the garment to take on an antique look, instead: she suggests crimping or creasing the cloth, which could be achieved by moistening the garment and then twisting it, rope-fashion, until it dried (qtd. in Lake 180). *Werner's Magazine* was, again, the semi-scholarly publication devoted to elocution, visible speech, oratory and Delsarte study: tellingly, this journal published at least seven articles offering tips on Greek dress for female performers between 1891 and 1894 alone, at the height of this Hellenistic revival (Lake 179-80). Taken *en masse*, these costumes comprise a sartorial range of "genuine" neoclassical to only slightly Greek- or Roman-suggestive robes. The seeming authenticity of the reproduction does not appear to have been a primary concern for the average Delsarte performer: instead, the desire was to create an imagistic evocation of the classical era somewhat generically.

Still—recalling how in the last chapter, college women studying elocution in gymnasiums shed their corsets and put on various gym costumes to augment their vocal power, why did these young women not wear the same outfits on stage or on the platform, while performing in these public recitals? And why, although male practitioners of Delsarte existed in this same period, is there not a single perceivable trace (at least that I have uncovered in many years' study) of groups of men wearing this type of toga?

The answers to these two questions, I suggest, are intertwined. As Nan Johnson observed above in her analysis of the photos of male and female rhetors, the women wore these toga outfits in public while the men did not. This much is true: but if the performers suspected they were going to be the butt of society's joke as a result, why do it? (There is no doubt, also, that they *were* in fact sometimes made fun of, as I've noted before, and to this extent Johnson is quite correct. This point may lead us, however, to question more sharply why women would face such societal resistance head-on—and to what end?)

It seems likely that despite the possibility of ridicule, the female Delsartist—who as we have already observed, was highly motivated to obtain and to create formal education in elocution for herself and other women—might have wished to signal that education or that chosen career, by means of her choice of outfit. In this time frame, of course, the argument still had to be made, whether women should be allowed to speak in public at all. By putting on a Greek or a Romanesque toga, women rhetors could make that argument silently—they could *wear* the argument, if you will—by allowing the costume's prior semiotic association with classical orators to work on the audience at hand, thus freeing up their time on the platform to argue for other things.

One question that needs answering, to my mind, is whether or how often the New Elocutionists spoke from a platform while wearing the toga. For it is a well-documented fact that they performed a great many collaborative programs all over the country in this type of Greek-inspired gown: women's studies historian Susan Taylor Lake documents this helpful fact in her 2002 dissertation on the bodily discourses of American Delsartism (187-8). Lake also records that reviews of these performances nearly always include references to statue-posing, such as the ones we saw in the last section. Naturally, if one were to try to look like a Greek statue, the most helpful accessory one could find would be a toga, unless it might be a pedestal to stand on. The principle known as Occam's razor would suggest that scholars look no further for the rationale behind this choice of dress: the Delsartists wished to imitate statues; all the original, classical-era statues' subjects were sculpted wearing togas; ergo, the Delsartists would have wanted to wear togas. Simple. However, if they also wore the gown at other times, such as when speaking in public, or during the parts of their recital which did not involve statue-posing, then there might be more to this performance than mimetic entertainment. As I've observed repeatedly, however, it is difficult to find photographic proof evincing such moves. One is fortunate to find a recital program preserved—costume changes are not noted or documented, at least in the archives I have yet searched.

Bizarrely, the one intriguing example I have located of a woman wearing a neoclassical toga while engaged in the act of public speaking comes a full half-century before the Delsartists' movement began—before the French master Francois Delsarte had even created the original system of oratory. In her memoir *Domestic Manners of The*

Americans, Frances Trollope wrote of having visited Cincinnati, Ohio, in the year 1828, where she heard Frances Wright deliver a lecture on "true knowledge" from a platform. Trollope comments that her party was not sure initially about attending, but later were pleased that they "had had the courage to be among the number" who went to see Wright. (She does not explain this comment—an implication perhaps that there might have been some impropriety attendant upon merely listening to a female orator speak in public?) Trollope's description of Wright at the podium includes her apparel, which was a "garment of plain white muslin, which hung around her in folds that recalled the drapery of a Grecian statue" (58) and in another passage writes that "all [her] expectations fell far short of the splendour, the brilliance, the overwhelming eloquence of this extraordinary orator" (56).

While this is only one example, and from the wrong era, still this passage may hold some interest for us in light of the larger question of the Delsarte phenomenon. In many reference books of this period which catalogue the lives of great men, or great men and women together, there are sections on "great orators" listed. Most list no women at all; some list one token female speaker, and often under the moniker "lecturer" instead of "orator," as though to insist on the difference. In *Hill's Album of Biography and Art*, published in 1890, in this manner, there are twelve "orators" listed who are men, and one woman "lecturer," Anna Dickinson, the advocate of universal suffrage (Hill 261)—the model of the exceptional woman who rises above her sex. Surprisingly perhaps, there are many sections in the book whose categories contain as many female names as male: actors and performers for one, writers for another. But only one woman "lecturer," despite the fact that by 1890 women speakers are all across the land, agitating for all manner of human rights in the most vociferous manner—as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and many others have so thoroughly documented. For this researcher, it seems a semantic distinction was being reified, which claimed oratory as a disciplinary demarcation past which the woman could not trespass. (There are other books, again, which make this same distinction even more absolute. Women could be many things, they grudgingly agree—just not orators.) If my observations drawn from texts of the time are indeed indicative of a larger pattern of semantic discrimination happening at that time, perhaps the toga Frances Wright chose to wear was a sign that oratory was indeed happening

when she took to the podium? (In this case, there was no mention made of silent statue performance—just her speech.) Perhaps in like manner, the Delsartists were trying to draw a visual link between their chosen line of collegiate study and their garments?

But symbols are always slippery things, and these togas were no less so, in my opinion—they could have meant many things separately or all at the same time. Various scholarly commentators have imagined that this anachronistic garment appropriated by the Delsartists signified a number of meanings to the audiences they were rhetorically designed for: the purity and propriety of the performers (Marshall 61); both the respectability of the "legitimate" stage as well as, ironically, the intent of the burlesque patrons to ogle loosely-draped limbs (Marshall 113); a classical education and therefore a curriculum as rigorous as the best men's colleges, involving the study of Greek and Latin (Fahey 114); and finally, social class marking or racial superiority (Lake 52, 183-4).

The construction of a continuous legacy handed down from the classical orators of old to the New Woman of the late nineteenth century has not yet been analyzed, however, and I believe it a subject that would bear more intensive study. Did the New Elocutionists assign reading from Cicero, who offered thoughts on the right way to wear a toga? Did they read Henry Siddons's *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gestures and Action* from 1822, which maintained that the classical toga was used by Æschylus to signal the actor's dignity on the stage, "and afforded the actors many opportunities for the display of a superior taste, by the graceful folds into which they could convert it at their pleasure" (361)? More examination is yet required.

However, in college programs at Western Female Seminary and Oxford College, I have found assigned textbook lists which indicate that they did read Quintilian's *Education of an Orator* —doubtless the classical rhetorical text most interested in toga wearing and its relation to winning an oratorical dispute in the courts or agora. In book eleven, chapter three of his *Education of an Orator*, Quintilian talks for pages about how to drape the robe initially, when it is allowable to let the toga be disheveled, and at what crucial point in the exordium one may let certain pieces of it go altogether (377-80).. He finishes this section by offering the amusing mental image that, "as the voice grows more energetic and varied in tone, the dress may also assume an air of combativeness" (380).

Combative dress on stage may not have been what the Delsartists had uppermost

in mind, although as we saw in the last chapter, of course, they were engaging in what they termed oratorical "battles" at times. The public Delsarte recital was not a debate-oriented performance, however; it was more of a demonstration of women's oratorical training and their newfound skill in physical delivery (such as the tableaux and statues). It therefore seems to me that, among other things, the togas were more likely to have been worn as something of a conciliatory gesture to dubious audience members, who wanted to know number one, if this was "legitimate" entertainment they were watching (reminiscent of Trollope's comment on the "courage" it took to go watch a woman speak), and number two, whether such classical oratorical training was advisable for women, given the atmosphere of the day—one in which women public speakers had their moral virtue questioned when they spoke from a podium (Buchanan 3). The trope of the classical body and its concomitant signifiers of higher education and good taste, added to the women's silence maintained throughout much of the performance, and in place of any sort of New Woman-ish costume such as the much-maligned "reform dress," seems a sartorial olive branch to those who might have complained even more loudly, if the women rhetors had been otherwise dressed. Phrased another way, it is my contention that a "reform dress" would have been the most "combative" garment imaginable for a female public speaker at this time, in terms of the level of gender anxiety it fomented in viewers. The toga was more ambiguous in gender orientation—while it had been worn by men in the classical era, nevertheless it looked more dress-like in some ways, and was far enough removed from the contemporary argument and "agonistic" dress choices of the most adamant dress reformers. The toga could be said to propitiate or assuage any worriers in the audience that there might be some taint of progressiveness going on, on stage.

But there is still one level of signification unidentified and heretofore unanalyzed. It is my contention that these togas might also have been meant in a *less* conciliatory way, at the same time. To a culture as obsessed with and informed on all things classical as the Victorians (Prins), the toga would surely also have carried an echo of the garment's most important signifier in its own day: that of marking the rights of the Roman citizen and specifically, his right to vote. Eighteenth-century rhetorician Hugh Blair was aware of this signifying connection. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*—published in 1783, but republished in the U.S. in 1873, just prior to the New Elocutionists'

emergence—Blair included a section on figurative language and how tropes operate. He noted that in the then-famous phrase "*Cedant arma togæ; concedat laurea lingæ*" ["Let arms yield to the toga; let the laurel yield to language"], the toga is used metonymically. It was "the badge of the civil professions," he explains (qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg 969), then he moves on to another trope. He is not in other words interested in the toga *per se* as the badge of the Roman's "civil… character"; he merely demonstrates that the garment fulfills a signifying function in this way.

Another nineteenth-century source demarcates the full intended signification of the Roman robe. As the reference book, *A Dictionary of Greek And Roman Antiquities*, made clear when it was published in 1890, the toga had originally been "the dress of women as well as men and boys," but came to be associated later "as the characteristic badge of citizenship" and was therefore "the mark of the [citizen's] franchise" ("Toga"). Whether from this source, or Blair, or some other reading entirely, it seems very possible that the women who called themselves the New Elocutionists would have known that adopting a toga-like costume for their public, not private, performances might be recognized as a marker of their intent to someday be taken seriously as full citizens of the state, complete with voting rights. Taken alongside the representation of the nineteenth-century woman's longing for the right to orate (not just lecture) in a civic forum, and the visibly marked *ethos* or education that granted women the right to do that, I find the togas of the Delsartists with their over-determined meanings very stimulating "material" to be analyzing. No wonder why they chose to wear them!

In this interest I am, of course, echoing several other modern-day rhetoricians who have called for the need to do more work, not with textual rhetoric, but with the rhetor's choice of textile rhetoric—her choice of costume, in other words. Susan Jarratt reminds us that "Both rhetoric and women… [have been] trivialized by identification with sensuality, *costume*, and color—all of which are supposed to be manipulated in attempts to persuade through deception" (qtd. in Ede, Glenn and Lunsford 421, emphasis mine). Carol Mattingly has of course led the way in our field, urging her fellow scholars to consider "the importance of dress in the study of rhetoric" (143). She looks specifically at the nineteenth century and observes that "[d]ifferentiated according to gender, women found it imperative to create new methods for addressing audiences" and that in this era,

women's "deft attention to dress and appearance defined one means of adjusting rhetorical strategies to their own unique needs" (143). Lindal Buchanan analyzes the entire canon of delivery more broadly, and her observations can be well applied in the analysis of dress as well. Buchanan suggests that scholars always consider how delivery is shaped by cultural positions such as gender, noting how the social contexts or forces at work "exert enormous pressure" on any rhetor's choice of delivery mode or any specific strategy (3). Her argument regarding the "feminine style" of delivery does not refer to the style of dress the nineteenth-century woman often chose, but a form of delivery which deviated in some way from the male orator's—the male orator who was allowed to orate, in other words. Buchanan writes of women's attempts to find a way to get their message communicated through altered means: seated delivery, surrogate delivery, collaborative deliver, etc. Surely Buchanan would agree that both silent delivery and sartorial strategies could fall into this regendering of the fifth canon, and that while different, these means could nonetheless be every bit as effective as the so-called "natural" style of delivery—perhaps even more so, with some audiences. In the next section we will turn from the topic of silent delivery to the Delsartists' interest in stories of silenced women, and one canon-inverting, script-flipping drama which silences the men in the canon and lets the classical women have their say at last.

When Silence Is Voiced

This, we know, is a common fate for women's rhetorical history: to be lost, misread or silenced. It is especially ironic in the case of the *voiced* Delsarte drama or dialogue, however, because this performance genre often dealt with exactly that issue—the forgetting or silencing of half the story of classical rhetorical history: the women's half.

Unlike their silent performance genres such as living statues or living pictures, the Delsartean "dialogue" was a theatrical production involving actors who brought female characters to life on stage—what we would call a play. As a rhetorical scholar, one of the

most intriguing things that I discovered in the course of this research was the Delsartists' love of stories involving women's rhetorical accomplishments. For women who studied silence and often enacted silent performances in public, they were also, and at the same time, very enamored of heroic tales of classical women rhetors—historical figures such as Aspasia, Hypatia, Sappho, and Diotima; biblical figures such as Jephthah's daughter and Deborah; mythological figures including Athena, the Muses, The Fates, and many others…. The list could go on. When they ran low on known tales of classical women and their rhetorical cunning, the Delsartists began to write new tales: ones that challenged the received traditions of the rhetorical canon in comical yet telling ways.

The short drama, "The Ladies of Athens," is the best example of this iconoclastic genre that I have encountered. Mrs. M.A. Lipscomb, a professional elocutionist and instructor of women's finance, wrote this fictional scenario in which the wives and sisters of rhetorical icons Socrates, Aristotle and Demosthenes come together to discuss their husbands' shortcomings. Published in 1905 in Elsie Wilbor's *Delsarte Recitation Book*, Mrs. Lipscomb's drama is set at the home of Xanthippe, the real-life historical wife of Socrates.

Xanthippe addresses the audience first, delivering a short but heartfelt diatribe about how she is "shut up" within the four walls of her home, while her husband "wanders about the streets of Athens prating of justice and injustice…" yet does not concern himself with her well-being or with their crushing state of poverty. "For months I haven't had a single drachma of his earnings," she informs the audience, but "if I perchance utter a single word of complaint, I am called a scold, a termagant" (DRB 78-9). Aspasia enters next. Listed in the bill of characters as the wife, not mistress, of Pericles, Aspasia begins by praising her friend Xanthippe for having a husband that everyone in Athens is "fairly wild about." As for her own "husband," she says "…I but rarely see him now. *Once I could interest him on the subject of oratory* and we often read and studied together; but now he thinks there is no wisdom except what proceeds from the mind of Socrates" (*DRB* 79, emphasis added). Much ought to be pointed out here, from the way Xanthippe's legendary reputation as a scold is easily overturned, or how Aspasia's character—often maligned, as rhetorician Cheryl Glenn noted in her Braddock-

winning essay—is calmly reestablished as a serious woman who wants to study with her husband, as an equal. Of course we notice what she most wants to study.

Other figures enter the scene: Philesia (wife of Xenophon), Pythias (wife of Aristotle), Cleobula (sister of Demosthenes), and Nicostrata (wife of Sophocles). In the course of the afternoon, waiting for their men to get back from the agora, the ladies of Athens argue about whether philosophy is the right pursuit for a husband whose role in life is to be his wife's protector, or whether he ought to take up a practical career and get paid occasionally. The historical-fictional characters all display formal rhetorical training, employing syllogism to make points about why they should be allowed an education. (Xanthippe: "[Socrates] says that husbands should instruct their wives in all they wish to know; he gives me no instruction, and, therefore, he wishes me to know nothing.) They also demonstrate a thorough knowledge of classical reading, quoting and paraphrasing texts such as Xenophon's *Symposium*, Plato's *Apology* and *Symposium*, as well as lines of Sappho's poetry. Two of them, a contemporary of Sappho's named Damophila and her friend, Nicostrata, have brought with them "the wonderful riddle of the Sphinx" that they say is "puzzling the minds of all wise Athenians." Nicostrata says that her husband, Sophocles, wanted her to give the riddle to Xanthippe so that she in turn could pass it to her husband, Socrates to solve. Damophila suggests that the ladies try to solve it themselves, and in short order, they do, Damophila herself finding the correct answer. Nicostrata is elated, stating "When I take your answer home, Socrates will be compelled to own that the wife of one of Athens' wisest philosophers [Damophilus] is wiser than her husband. Know you not, ladies, that yesterday at a symposium at our house Sophocles gave the Sphinx riddle to a party of friends, and not one of them could divine a meaning in it?" (DRB 85).

Throughout the work, the author of this canon-inverting dialogue is at pains to show that not only did classical women want full and fair access to rhetorical education, but also that they already had found the means of educating themselves in the field, and, given the chance, would love to challenge the hoary heads of the so-called fathers of rhetoric. At the end of the story, having been gone for two days and overnight, Socrates comes home at long last; he calls for Xanthippe to come to him. Seven times in the dialogue he calls, and seven times, Xanthippe remains silent. Her friends scold her

severely for neglecting her wifely duty, but she remains firm that it is Socrates who is neglecting his duty, not she hers. After Socrates calls for her the eighth time, she gives in, but not happily. "Yes, I'll come" she says. "I'll feed you until you are well satisfied and ready to go again to the market-place to spend the night in thinking, thinking, thinking" (DRB 91).

Delsartean dialogues such as "The Ladies of Athens" delivered a number of messages to a viewing, listening audience: messages of women's abilities, desires, fears and ambitions. They spoke to contemporary women's issues that were prevalent in other, more agonistic discourses circulating at the end of the century, but in a comical way, allowing laughter to soften the blows of their rhetorical demands. These dialogues also reconfigured the rhetorical canon: they rewrote the stories of forgotten or misrepresented women rhetors, and contended that women were men's rhetorical equals. For all that, I believe they did still more. In the act of showing these classical women's concern for oratorical training, I believe the Delsarte performers sought to attract more women to the study of rhetoric and elocution in their schools.

As women clamored in the nineteenth century for more rhetorical space, then, I contend that they also argued (sometimes silently, sometimes not) for a women's history of rhetoric: an act of memory that served to preserve their rhetorical past, and to secure their rhetorical future. Modern-day rhetorical scholars would do well to listen to their silence now as audiences listened to it then… attentively.

The Muse of Oratory: See How She Speaks to Women

In Oxford, Ohio, on June 5, 1900, the graduating seniors of Oxford College had their Class Day exercises. The "class day" tradition, now lost, seems to have been a final, public celebration of the accomplishments of the graduating class: it conventionally occurred the day before Commencement and the school's conferring of degrees. Also conventional were a series of performances by the seniors, including public speaking, musical performances, and a march or procession through town in full scholarly regalia:

contemporary news articles indicate that these events were widely attended by the town's inhabitants who were happy to attend and listen a somewhat novel, if annual, form of entertainment.

The Oxford Class Day exercises were divided in two sections: Part I and Part II. Included in the first part of the program were the "Class History, Class Prophecy, Class Song, [and] Class Will," with each piece read by a different graduate, and the class song sung by all, it appears. Then came Part II, which seems to have been a move to focus on the individual abilities or accomplishments attained by the young women who were taking degrees the next day. This part was called "The Muses."

As one would expect, this section of the program contained nine different acts or performances. But while there are nine Muses represented, some of the Muses have only one representative, while others are represented by multiple "votaries" (doubtless because there were more baccalaureates than there were classical roles to play). So for example under the Muse of History, there is listed the muse herself, and also eight votaries listed, with the additional titles "Egypt, Greece, Rome… America." Because the program is not a full transcription of their performance, one must venture to guess what happened next: whether each read a brief composition on the history of that country, or a few lines of poetry or prose recognizable to the audience, or whether this was a frozen tableau of costumes meant to suggest the countries' various histories by attributes carried or worn. (Egypt might have carried a *papier maché* pyramid, Greece might have been toting a small Parthenon…. And if the girls were not in their scholarly robes, there might have been costumes to further suggest each country and its unique history.)

Altering the received Greek mythos, the turn-of-the-twentieth-century graduates made one significant change from the classical taxonomy. In addition to eight original Greek Muses—the Muse of History (Clio), the Muse of Lyric Poetry (Erato), the Muse of Astronomy (Urania), the Muse of Comedy (Thalia), the Muse of Dramatic Poetry (Calliope), the Muse of Tragedy (Melpomene), the Muse of Dancing (Terpsichore), and the Muse of Sacred Poetry (Polyhymnia)—the Delsarte-trained Oxford College graduates added one of their own devising. They subtracted out the Muse of Music, Euterpe, and added a Muse of Oratory.

Let us pause for a moment to consider this alteration. What did it mean to these college students at the turn of the millennium to have proposed and adopted such a shift away from mythopoetic tradition? Why did they forge a new Muse for themselves, in other words—and in a public exhibition no less? Euterpe might easily have stayed in the program represented by the aforementioned Class song or by some other decorative achievement like piano playing (an art which was taught at the college, then as now). Instrumental or vocal music of any sort would have been more in keeping with conventional societal roles expected of well-born, well-educated young women than the masculine-dominated domain of oratory. To me, this move suggests that the young women who were graduating wanted to showcase their newly-learned rhetorical aptitude: all the tricks of pronunciation and action that they had assiduously committed to memory. However, this shift could also have been meant to signal to the assembled listeners that this was truly the most important discipline—*or* that it was the one most important for them *as women* to have been studying. Poetry is all very well, the graduates seem to be saying with this rewrite, and dancing and history and all those other arts too, but *oratory* is the art a young female scholar needs a Muse's divine inspiration for, in the year 1900!

Happily for this historian, alongside this insertion of the new Muse is a line indicating what the Muse's earthly representative, Ada B. House, gave for her exercise. The senior read—or more likely, performed—an "extract from Emerson's address at Dartmouth College." The excerpt itself was not preserved, but the essay this line most likely refers to is Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous "Literary Ethics," a lecture delivered to the literary societies of Dartmouth in 1838, concerning the life of a scholar. Examining that speech, we may well wonder which section House gave new life to, in *her* address. One section of Emerson's contemplation on the life of the mind asks whether new knowledge may yet be created, or whether all truth has already been located and labeled: whether all ideas worth having have already been had. Emerson expresses a rather fervent belief in the former position. It is here that the speech seemed written not just for the young men he delivered it to, but rather, it almost seems designed to be appropriated by any disenfranchised individuals looking to cut a new path or stake a new claim in the world. For young women living at the height of the New Woman era—not just the millennial cusp on which the women graduates of 1900 were perched, in other words, but

closing in steadily on the new era of citizenship which they would achieve in 1919—the following selection might have seemed written with them in mind:

> *The new man must feel he is new*, and has not come into the world mortgaged to the opinions and usages of Europe and Asia and Egypt…. A false humility, a complaisance to reigning schools, or to the wisdom of antiquity, must not defraud me of the supreme possession of this hour…. Say to such doctors, We are thankful to you, as we are to history, to the pyramids, and the authors; but *now our day has come; we have been born out of the eternal silence*; and now we will live,--live for ourselves…. (emphases added)

Pure conjecture—but it does seem it would have captured the moment, doesn't it?

Conclusion

The American Delsartists were "born out of… silence" both literal and figurative. As we have seen, out of silent performance genres they communicated messages via multi-modal delivery, and out of stifling cultural convention they were beginning to find their public voice. Via the simple rhetorical expedient of conjuring up a brand-new Muse, for example, the women composing and performing this humble Commencement exercise were *enacting* the very premise Emerson offered as an exordium to all American scholars: Do not be slaves to the history of the Old World. Rewrite the old stories if they don't suit you or include you. Preserve the knowledge that *you* think is most important. For New Elocutionists educated to believe that the art of public expression was the most worthy, pragmatic and desirable art, it seems natural that a Muse of Oratory would be deemed the necessary update to the usual, classical coterie of demigoddesses who inspire. What is intriguing, of course, is that unlike the former scholars and artists who had called on the idea of the Muses in the past, these scholars and performers were young women, hoping to be inspired by (and be an inspiration to!) other women.

More importantly than this one small moment one Midwestern stage, many Delsartists all across the country were beginning to seize opportunities to make their

voices heard as citizens of the new republic. They might have been delivering their messages silently and theorizing rhetorical silence, but they had no intention of being left out of the conversations raging about women's proper sphere, whether or not women should be educated, or whether women should be allowed the franchise. As we will see in chapter four, in addition to their use of these tacit forms of delivery, they were about to add another strategy: voiced rhetorical drama.

CHAPTER FOUR

RHETORICAL DRAMA AND WOMEN WORTHIES: WOMEN'S RHETORIC AND WOMEN'S HISTORY TAKE CENTER STAGE

Introduction

As has previously been noted, women fighting for legal, cultural and political freedoms in the nineteenth century eventually realized that, without suffrage, they would never directly be able to bring about their desired changes to society: therefore, in greater and greater numbers, they began to fight for the right to vote as the key to all other rights to follow. I have suggested that we as rhetorical historians consider that there must have been another, concomitant realization that soon followed this one: as the battle for suffrage itself continued to drag on, the women pursuing this right must have seen that in order to win the vote, they would have to first win the argument (that they were both capable of and worthy of said vote). I have therefore contended that as the debate for woman's suffrage drew laboriously on into its fourth and fifth decade and the turn of the century drew near, women's interest in studying Delsarte, elocution, oratory and rhetorical performance must become obvious: they needed new weapons and a new battleground upon which to fight "the enemy"—not men, they said, but Prejudice, as we will soon see (along with yet more examples of their predilection for military and martial metaphors, which as you have seen, I often echo, out of respect for both their struggle and their triumphs, however partial or contested).

From the 1890s on, then, women began plotting new tactics. It is at this moment that women began to court different audiences—in the theater—and to use different means—dramatic ones, literally—as a new method of engaging those who reported being weary of listening to "freedom shriekers" on public platforms "ranting" about injustice and the need for change (Johnson *Gender* 64-5). American Delsartists and other women alike began to turn to theatrical performance to continue saying what they needed to say, but in a different way, hoping to reach new listeners.

From the first chapter we recall that one type of performance was the one that Richard Schechner termed "restored behaviors" (qtd. in Carlson 4) and that this kind of performance can loosely be translated as any moment when the performer is conscious of playing a role created by someone else, whether the playing of roles in real life that society wishes for us to play, or the playing of so-called "traditional" or theatrical performance roles, more commonly referred to simply as acting. While both types would no doubt be instructive to examine, this chapter will only look at the second half of this definition—the so-called "traditional" acting—but I will argue that women performing in theaters during this era were often doing more than meets the eye with this final type of performance. I define this type of "traditional" rhetorical performance thus: this sort of theater is not done solely (or perhaps even primarily) to entertain; rather, with this type of production, the performers endeavor to enter into a topic of public debate in a stimulating yet entertaining way. In other words, while there is some attempt made to make the play pleasing, funny or exciting for the viewing audience, the main purpose of the piece is to add to, respond to or rebut a thread of argumentative discourse in a thought-provoking way, from the "platform" of the stage. As we will see, at times this is done agonistically, at times irenically; at times dramatically, at times quite comically. Many types of traditional rhetorical performance are possible, so long as the performers are consciously in dialogue with some question of public debate, on stage, and have in mind the purpose of rallying their allies' support, wooing their opponents over to their way of thinking (or at least forcing a consideration of their point of view, if only for the duration of the play) or some combination of both rhetorical purposes.

Delsartean performers and other women studying elocution wrote, produced, and acted in plays of this type. Other women could read versions of these "dialogues," as they referred to them, in Delsartean handbooks or parlor rhetorics in wide circulation in the final decade of the nineteenth century, and might have read out these parts to one another, or produced these plays as home theatricals, women's club entertainments or church fundraisers. Who their audiences were is not easily deduced. Were there many men in their audiences? Many anti-suffragists of either gender? It is not easy to guess, let alone to state with confidence. How might a scholar interested in the question find records of the demographics of audience-goers attending a given play? Reviews might be located

for professional theatrical productions of note (or notoriety) in major cities but do not always exist for smaller, local productions. Moreover, while reviewers sometimes address the other persons in the crowd (and their opinions), they do not always do so, leaving a scholar uncertain of who might also have been present besides the reviewer, or what other viewers' reactions might have been. What can be known, what can be seen, is the increase in theatrical pieces being staged by women in the decades directly before and after the turn of the century in which the screenwriter and actors enter into some specific line of public policy debate (such as the franchise), or into some larger societal issue (such as the question of women's sphere generally or whether women were capable of benefitting from higher education).

I will analyze four such plays. The first, "The Excitement at Kettleville," is a humorous look at a woman lecturer coming into a new town to deliver a public speech on women's rights. Most of the action concerns assorted men in town plotting to stop her from speaking, and what happens when she discovers them in the midst of their scheming. This piece was first published in 1894. The title of the second skit, "After School, What [?]," makes its content self evident. Coming close to the "dramedy" genre we refer to today, or a hybrid of comedy and drama, this piece asks women to consider what career or useful employment they will choose after graduation. The third, "A Pageant of Great Women," is a dramatic, serious-minded piece in which the heroine known only as "Woman" goes to the throne of seated Justice alongside her opponent, "Prejudice"—both then argue the question of women's equality to men. This piece was first performed in 1909 in London. The final play I will analyze was actually the first to be staged: in 1892, the students of Oxford College put on a play for their Class Day, which was reviewed the following day in the *Oxford Ladies' Collegian*. In the absence of any extant script (or title in the newspaper review) I refer to this piece by the main protagonist's name: "The Genius of the Nineteenth Century"—a title which seems fitting to the performers' goal of proving that women have achieved great things in history and would achieve many more in days to come. The play, which functions as an encomium and a fascinating piece of epideictic rhetoric blazoning the collected college students and their professors, tells the story of an "inventress" who creates a "strange looking apparatus" called the "Chronothanatoletron"—a time machine—which allows her to

bring women forward and backward in time to ask them questions. In this play the students mark their entrance into such questions as woman's education and woman's rightful position vis-à-vis men, and more. (They also pay tribute to the women faculty who are helping them "do battle" with their foes, in rather touching ways.)

This chapter is an attempt to add to the understanding of how plays such as these, as ludic and entertaining arguments, may have functioned rhetorically. The gaps in feminist scholarship as I see them here are these: the histories of suffrage plays that I have looked at are quick to acknowledge that these plays functioned rhetorically, yet they mention this only in passing, with no attention to specific rhetorical methods or in-depth rhetorical analysis (Spender and Hayman; Chothia; Nelson). Meanwhile our disciplinary histories look at this period with a tendency to focus only on the most forensic forays into the debates for women's rights, all but ignoring plays of this nature. While lectures and orations obviously made an impact, these theatrical dialogues, comedies and dramas both, had their part to play, too, in the fight for women's equality and women's advancement in society. Still, we have not yet analyzed how the plays as texts functioned, how they were staged, or how they were enacted. We have not yet spent much time thinking about how (or why) women might have studied drama and "personation" in colleges of oratory, or why they might have turned to comedic theater as a means of persuasion in this era fraught with clashing cultures and social upheaval. My purpose in this chapter, therefore, will be to argue that female performers in this period used the rhetoric of the theater strategically, to enter and reenter into larger societal and political debates that concerned women's issues and women's lives. Additionally, near the end, I will show that the Delsartists and New Elocutionists alike often did so in an argumentative style that women writers have been particularly fond of throughout history, for the act of rewriting history: the women worthies genre, or the argument by example.

In this section, I begin by taking up the few threads of previous scholarship on the rhetoricity of theatrical productions, then I comment on the uniquely gendered nature of performances used to rhetorical effect at the *fin de siècle*. I look at the curricular conflation of acting and oratory in women's colleges during this period and suggest a rationale for the linkage. I then turn to these aforementioned women writing and acting in plays concerning suffrage specifically or women's rights more generally, attempting to

analyze them within the larger cultural discourses circulating at this period and as rhetorical texts in their own right. Finally, I show that some of these plays are far more argumentative than we have previously realized; they may have not been recognized as such, I assert, because they are inductive, not deductive arguments. I end by looking at the aforementioned specific rhetorical strategy used by many women writers in the past, the argument by example, in which "catalogs" of historical, Biblical, fictional and mythical women—also known as "women worthies"—are presented as evidence that women were already (among other things) capable, intelligent, learned, and courageous. Contending that this is a rhetorical strategy women writers have demonstrably and repeatedly been drawn to, I offer some thought as to why this may be. Finally, I remark upon the effect these "rhetorical/traditional" plays might possibly have had on groups of middle-class and upper-class white women as a means of creating and sustaining a growing community bent on change: an act which may have helped galvanize these new soldiers for renewed effort in the battle to enlarge the political, social, and educational spheres available to the woman of the coming twentieth century.

"Traditional" Performance in Delsarte Texts and Parlor Rhetorics

The majority of Delsartean handbooks written in the 1880s and 1890s offered readers what they called "dialogues" (skits) as well as a set of instructions concerning how to stage these either as public plays or home theatricals. Most parlor rhetorics of the "speaker" variety did as well. From the nature of the instructions provided in both these similar types of texts, it is clear that the texts' editors imagined as their audience groups of amateur performers wishing to put on an entertainment at home, at school, or at some social gathering. Also during this period, women were entering the realm of professional theater in greater numbers than before. Some identified themselves as Delsartists first and foremost, some as elocutionists, and some simply as actresses. With all this dramaturgical action taking place, it would be unwise to characterize it all in the same way; likewise, with so many amateur and professional women performers taking the stage, it would be

reductive to imagine that they all had the same purpose in mind, rhetorical or otherwise. Therefore, while I will argue in just a minute that all theater is by its very nature rhetorical, nevertheless it seems fair to begin by stating that the primary focus of many women performers in many of these turn-of-the-century skits and plays was surely the thought of staging an entertainment for entertainment's sake. In the hope of reducing the confusion of such similar terms, I will refer to this type of entertainment as "traditional" theater or "traditional" performance—notwithstanding the fact that we can and will be arguing it is rhetorical in nature, in other words, in precisely the same way that the late professor and rhetorician *extraordinaire* Wayne Booth has argued that all fiction is rhetorical, for example. Later, I will speak to what I call "rhetorical/traditional performance," for want of a clearer or more conceptually accurate term at this point, to indicate staged performances in which the playwright and the actors seem to be entering into the sphere of public debate in a more pre-meditated and obviously persuasive way.

That said, let us look briefly at the instructions offered by late nineteenth-century parlor rhetorics or Delsarte rhetorics alike on how to stage "traditional" theater. One example out of dozens may prove helpful: Henry Davenport Northrop's 1895 book, *The Delsarte Speaker or Modern Elocution,* includes notes on putting on home theatricals in a section called "Dialogues and Tableaux." There are tips on how to create a stage cheaply and easily from boards and boxes (437), how to rig a "drop-curtain" as opposed to "draw-curtains" because the former is easier to arrange (437), and how to provide amateur actors with costumes out of common household items and ordinary clothing. Properly dramatic visages can be created with the right make-up, the editor advises, explaining how to create "moustaches and beards… with India-ink and a fine pencil" if one does not have access to the false ones with real hair (438). The chapter even includes notes on how to produce stage effects such as lightning and "wizard flame" with various combustible chemicals, warning their readers to attempt these last with "great care" (439). Finally, they admonish all would-be performers to rehearse properly—with a "competent critic," if one is available—and to enact their characters mindfully, paying close and thoughtful attention to the scene at all times (440).

Of course, considering what we have previously seen about the nature of the Delsarte public recital, it may come as no great surprise that this advice is to be found in

elocutionary speakers. Plays were but one of the many performance genres put on by American Delsartists: their recitals regularly featured dances, readings, living statues, skits, lectures, solo music, and more. Programs encompassed a variety of expressive and mimetic forms, providing their audiences with a wide spectrum of amusements and artistic offerings.

We note, however, while still examining Northrop's *Delsarte Speaker*, that beyond mere amusement, there is an additional rationale listed for including these short plays and production advice. In addition for furnishing "excellent entertainment for special occasions in school, lodges and private parlors," it is noted that "As an educational agent *the amateur drama* cannot be too highly esteemed, for it *teaches the young performer elocution, gesticulation, ease of manner*, and a certain knowledge of human emotions and passions which could hardly be acquired elsewhere" (Northrop 437, emphases added). Stated a different way, the author feels that there are two ways in which performers might profit from staging a theatrical entertainment: just for fun with friends or classmates, but also for practice in the art of elocution—an "art" thought to be highly pragmatic at this time, useful to individuals in nearly all walks of life, as we saw in chapter two. With this statement, no mention is made of any specific or particular use to which this elocutionary practice will be put, on stage; the point being made here is simply that, through the training or practice necessary to enunciate their lines articulately and to deliver their characters' emotions through their "gesticulation" or embodied actions on stage, performers will at the same time be gaining increased elocutionary control and "ease of manner" in public speaking later.

In chapter two, we looked at ways in which, in the late nineteenth century, the study of elocution was tied to two other disciplinary fields: physical culture and oratory. Here we will turn to a closer examination of the ways in which elocution and oratory were also thought to be conjoined, in this same period, to acting.

Rhetorical Performance via Theatrical Productions

Theater, as the late Paul Newman Campbell reminds us, is always rhetorical. Written in the same vein as Wayne Booth's seminal work on the rhetoricity of all fiction, Campbell sees that all drama does persuasive work: in fact, he says, "it is the rhetorical functions of theatre that give it its identity" (11). He names "three rhetorics of theatre," some two of which of which are always present when a play is staged. The first rhetoric of theater is "the rhetoric of the text": i.e., the play's script (13). The second and the third are different varieties of "rhetoric of production": one tries to enact the original meaning in the text faithfully, the other attempts to alter or overthrow the script's meaning, sometimes to update the text for audiences who hold differing views, values or beliefs than the text's originally imagined or actual audiences (19).

Beginning with the rhetoric of the text, Professor Campbell reconstitutes the history of the field of rhetoric vis-à-vis drama, noting that Aristotle, Wayne Booth, and Kenneth Burke have all observed strong connections between the two disciplines, and have each commented on the rhetoric inherent in a dramatic text (12-13). While Campbell is in agreement with these rhetorical heavy-hitters on this point, he also cautions us that the text alone is not enough to consider, if we are looking for the suasive power of theater:

> Theatre, however, is not simply a body of texts, for those texts must be turned into performances. In the process, a second rhetoric comes into being, for the production takes, and urges, an attitude toward the text. This second rhetoric I call the rhetoric of production, and it differs in important ways from the rhetoric of the text. (13)

This "rhetoric of production" that Campbell speaks of, emanates from the choices made by all the cast and crew involved with the play—the actors, the costume designers, the music designer, the prop master, the director—anyone and everyone included in the decision-making process by which a textual artifact, namely the script, gets translated into a three-dimensional, real-time performance. For, as he explains the phenomenon to us, while the text deals in generalities, in the production itself, a general type of gesture

called for must become an actual gesture, a general type of emotion indicated must take the form of an actual and particular emotional display on an actor's face. This enactment is what gives the form its "immediacy," as he puts it; he concludes that "…the theatre always deals with examples…" (Campbell 14).

Why is this important, and how is this persuasive? Campbell explains that while theater does not offer the type of logical argument that uses syllogism and enthymeme to bring an audience around to the speaker's way of thinking (14), we would be unwise to overlook the efficacy of the argument by example. He writes: "[T]he example, as a rhetorical technique, brings with it great force…. The primary rhetorical effect of the example if the implication that something *is*; examples have an extraordinary power of immediacy, for they imply the *existence* of this or that item or process" (15, emphasis in original). In fact, he suggests that the latter form of argument can actually have a stronger impact on an audience than the former, providing an "example" of his own drawn from a play by German dramatist Bertolt Brecht: "When Mother Courage trudges off to another battlefield at the end of the play, we are not given a propositional argument about the devastating effect of the profit motive; we are presented with an example of that effect, the sheer existence of which is awesome" (15-6).

Campbell does not say this, but as I see it, this rhetorical move is striking for at least two more (related) reasons, in terms of what it may have offered to nineteenth-century women rhetors. First, it circumvents the having of an actual argument, an actual debate. While the play may be argumentative, and might be written to enter into a preexisting area of public debate, in other words, there has been no agonistic challenge to a standing point of view or an actual interlocutor, no actual *mano-a-mano* discursive boxing match must be set up to take on the opposition. The question, whatever it may be, is restated (implicitly or explicitly) and answered, on stage. The narrative of the play seeks to prove the point it is making (in Campbell's example, that Mother Courage should not have tried to profit from the war) without demanding of its speakers (the actors) that they actually debate with those who hold the opposing view. For late Victorian-era women rhetors—many of them, at least—this circumvention could have been seen as highly desirable. For while we saw in chapter two that women in this era were beginning to study the rules and parliamentary procedures of debate, and though we

observed in chapter three that they were also studying rhetorical tools such as enthymeme and syllogism necessary to successfully overcome their opponents, it seems likely that many women would have been anxious to avoid the appearance of "masculinity" that was then thought concomitant to arguing publicly in an agonistic or aggressive way. Staging a play instead, making an argument by example, would perhaps have allowed some who were unwilling to take up the oratorical platform the space to enter the debate, yet remain at a slightly safer (and more culturally acceptable) distance.

Second, any opponent, male or female, who might have challenged this argument in some other setting (such as in a courtroom or a public political forum)—that opponent is not allowed to speak once he or she buys a ticket at the playhouse. They are silenced by the conventions of the theater, as we know: only the actors may speak. All audience members must sit quietly (or risk being shushed by their fellow audience members if they do speak up). If a heckler were to persist, he or she might even be asked to leave and have to forfeit the cost of his or her seat and the evening's entertainment. For most of us, the *nomos* of the theater is not easily or lightly pushed aside: therefore for the most part, it is the actors who get to do all the talking. And if the actors are women, we might well imagine that this sort of absolute discursive sovereignty could prove a *very* welcome relief—a nearly irresistible lure for women rhetors at the turn of the nineteenth century. One scholar of Victorian theater has come to the same conclusion, noting "Unlike most Victorian women, who were told in advice literature to 'suffer and be still,' actresses were allowed the power of speech…" (Powell 10). To overturn the standard discursive proscriptions that strongly discouraged women from speaking while men debated the topics of the day: what a gift the obverse proscriptions of the stage must have seemed to women rhetors!

Campbell offers one final observation about the power of the second rhetoric, the rhetoric of production, that I wish to examine: one uniquely relevant to my thesis. It will be helpful here to quote him at length, because his point is important to my subsequent argument about what women playwrights might have been doing with all the catalogs of women they were offering female theater-goers in this period. Here then is Campbell's observation:

> The theatre constantly offers its audiences actual and concrete examples of human beings in action, and these examples constitute a rhetoric of great power. When the examples are meaningful and important to individual audience members, that rhetoric becomes even more powerful, for viewers may then assume that, by virtue of the similarity between the example and their own nature or state, the actuality of the example is, or may easily become, actuality for them as well. Put differently, examples furnish the basis for identification. Because the characters and actions portrayed seem so immediate, seem so clearly to be, spectators can project themselves into those characters. (Campbell 16)

In insisting that this "rhetoric of power… becomes even more powerful…" when the subject matter conveyed and the characters portrayed are "meaningful and important" to the audience, the late Professor Campbell underscores what I see as the striking persuasive potential of the theatrical dialogue. As I will attempt shortly to suggest, women playwrights in the 1890s and 1900s were providing American audiences with a veritable buffet of theatrical delights, but many of them were not designed merely to entertain. I contend that some of these pieces seem to have been written to sway viewers who opposed various woman's rights issues; however, just as interesting are the pieces written, I believe, to galvanize women in the audience who may already have been woman's rights advocates, yet may not have believed in their own capabilities to effect change in the world: to lobby their representatives, to write letters to congressmen, to rally for causes they believed in… in short, to raise their voices, and to take action. Many plays seem to have been written for this latter group in order to further energize and encourage the female population who needed to band together collectively to have any hope for success in legal and political arenas dominated by men. In the catalogs I end this chapter with, many examples of heroic women are offered up as champions of the past—but also as examples for women in the audience to identify with. To repeat Campbell's point, "examples furnish the basis for identification," but I wish to speculate further for the next step, I believe, is the vital one: did the identification lead to turn-of-the-century women's belief in their abilities, and (possibly) to the desire for action? If their

imaginations were sufficiently fired, and the "spectators… project[ed] themselves into those characters," what else might these spectators have been inspired to do?

Gendered Rhetorical Performance

Before turning to these catalogs, however, it will be helpful first to review other types of traditional-rhetorical performance of an obviously gendered nature. The following two plays were both written and published in the New Elocutionary era: one expresses a cogent position on woman's need to select a useful career for herself and one insists on woman's right to express herself politically by giving public lectures. In this way, both plays move beyond theater solely for entertainment's sake and enter the realm of entertaining argument.

The first play is titled "After School, What [?]" and was published in 1895 in the previously mentioned *Delsarte Speaker.* Like most of the other selections in the "dialogues and tableaux" chapter of this speaker, this piece does not list any author. The second play, "An Excitement at Kettleville," is from *The Peerless Reciter*, also edited by Henry Northrop, the year before in 1894: the piece is attributed to Epes Sargent. In both of these books, there are multiple sections of readings or "recitations," which offer a performer approximately 150-200 selections that might be read aloud or enacted on stage. Less than half list authors' names: some famous (Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott, Charles Dickens, Alfred Tennyson), many obscure. The majority of the selections do not provide any authorial attribution at all. Intriguingly, just after the table of contents, a second list immediately follows: a list of "*noms de plume* " which makes clear for example that the selection included by "Currer Bell" was penned by "Charlotte Bronte," and the one by "Christopher Crowfield" was written by Harriet Beecher Stowe (Northrop xiii).

I pause to make this point only briefly, to underscore what other historians have noted: that many of the pieces which look as though they were written by men in this era were in fact written by women. It was Virginia Woolf, of course, who reminded us that

the author who signed her name "Anonymous" was usually a woman, and in the same vein, that many women writers signed their manuscripts with a male pseudonym trying "ineffectively to veil themselves" because, as society would have them believe, "publicity in women is detestable" (AROO 50). This is well-covered theoretical ground, to be sure; however, the notion of women fearing all forms of public expression to begin with goes right to the heart of my argument that women faced especially grave fears when expressing their own, unpopular political agendas in the late nineteenth-century: fear of speaking from a public platform, fear of arguing with an opponent in a debate, fear of publishing writing. Studying Delsarte and elocution were just two of the weapons women used to fight their way past these specters: they also veiled themselves—or armored themselves, take your pick of metaphors—in anonymity or pen name, or by turning weighty and serious issues into waggish comedies, etc. For reasons that will soon become clear, I believe that in the case of these two just-mentioned plays, we have two women writers at work who desired this "veil" (or visor) of anonymity. Both the topics addressed, and the attitudes assumed toward these topics, make me believe this to be the case.

In the play "After School, What," the question implied within the title is the whole concern of the dialogue, which offers six speaking roles—all female characters—in which five young students in a classroom are discussing what they mean to do after graduation, while their teacher Miss Leslie over-listens from the next room, only offering a word of advice at the end of the play. The scene is a simple one, the action almost nonexistent: it is in point of fact merely a "dialogue" or conversation between young women about what their individual life paths will entail, after their formal schooling is over. It is not the number of female characters that makes a reader suspect a female author, however, but the perspective offered—a revisionist turn on the contemporary male point of view about the limitations of women's futures. One girl notes her distress at hearing one of her own brothers remark that the only thing "they" will have to think of is "what shall be the color of their next dress" (Northrop 484). Perhaps as a means of some comic relief, perhaps as a means of including women in the audience who were in fact interested in fashion and would not appreciate being scolded for it, the selection's author has another character, "Kate Spangle," pipe up that she sees nothing wrong with being

concerned about her clothes (484), and then all the girls exchange lively views on whether or not it is a good use of their time to dress to make an impression on men. The final verdict seems to be that it is better to be dressed simply, to be able to "brave the elements in pursuit of health and fun" in clothes that are easy to move in, and rubber boots if necessary, rather than being trussed up in "trails and flounces" and not able to move about (485). Here we hear an echo of a larger cultural disagreement amongst women regarding the desirability of dress reform, which was mentioned in chapter two.

In another part of the short comedy, the young women debate whether or not they will be glad to stop writing compositions: one thinks them the "bugbear" of her young life, one likes writing them (485). Repeatedly, however, they come back to the question of what to do with their lives and what use to make of their talents. The proposition is raised that one of the girls might marry, and in response, another seems to speak directly to the audience: "I hope she will some time. But in the meanwhile, what is she to do, to think of? I don't know why girls should sit down and wait for marriage any more than their brothers" (486). The script's author seems at this point to remember that there might potentially be men in the viewing audience, for immediately afterward, she adds the line: "Any sensible man would think better of a girl if she exercised her faculties in some way helpful to society…" (486). Depending on how this line is delivered by the actor, of course, this line could go one of two ways. This could be delivered in a positive, declarative fashion, a thoughtful way to allay a male audience member's frustration at being derided throughout most of the play; on the other hand, it could be delivered in a sarcastic tone of voice, with stress on the qualifier "sensible," which would imply that perhaps there are not very many "sensible" man who hold to this belief, and a woman had better realize this, and make her own decisions accordingly. This example may help to clarify Paul Newman Campbell's point, mentioned in the previous section, regarding the tension he argued was always inherent between the rhetoric of the text and the rhetoric of production, and how we cannot think to have analyzed the rhetorical effect of a theatrical performance by examining the text on the page alone.

This section of the dialogue veers a little close to the edge of what Campbell noted theater ought not attempt, in my opinion: the didactic or propaganda piece. He relates that this happens when the "theater of example becomes the theatre of assertion"

(18). If the character were to offer her view by way of example, as in, her own plans not to choose a husband immediately, instead of this form of indirect address, it would seem less preachy. The author seemed more capable of light-heartedness when the topic was fashionable clothing and its effect on male viewers: she resumes the discussion of career options in a rather lugubrious fashion by introducing another character, "Lizzie Helpful," who explains that she is hoping to find work as a teacher. Her father has died, and "[her] mother's income is small," she reports, so she will have to be the primary support for her brother who is to go to college. If she is a teacher, she can also school her several younger sisters at no charge to her mother (487). It is at this point that the school's instructor, Miss Leslie, enters the conversation for the first time, to wrap up the "lesson" they ought to have learned for the day, that women need occupation—whether paid or not, some useful employ—in order to have any sense of fulfillment in life. She hopes that one will write books, and another "will teach gymnastics and give lessons in hygiene" (488). She has a profession in mind for each of them in order to be "useful."

The specific tasks that their teacher thinks the students may individually take up, such as an instructor of gymnastics, obviously reflect the roles that women are beginning to assume in the real world in the tail end of the nineteenth century, as we have previously seen. However, the overall argument implied within the piece alludes in a gentler, more irenic way to other more forceful arguments for woman's right to self-determination: speeches such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Solitude of the Self." Stanton's famous essay, which she wrote in 1892, just three years previous to this play, was very widely disseminated throughout the country after she delivered it to the House Committee on the Judiciary (Kohrs Campbell 2: 371-2) and would most likely have been available to this unknown author. In the essay, Stanton speaks of woman's need to be "the arbiter of her own destiny" and notes that while the logic of separate spheres holds that women should be trained solely to be wives and mothers, many may never hold either role (Kohrs Campbell 2: 373). In the above play, when "Louise Earnest" suggests that a girl ought not to wait for marriage, but to think about her own path and how to use her own faculties rather than "let them die out for want of use," there is a similar move made to argue for women's natural rights (Northrop *Delsarte* 486), but it is embedded within a great deal of wordplay and verbal horsing around on the part of these girls,

arguing about how to dress and where to travel. The argument seems therefore at once to reinscribe more traditional or conventional roles for women (three teachers, one lady's companion, one potential wife, one undecided) and at the same time to challenge them in a non-threatening way, in the form of a young girl musing aloud about a friend's fate. Here's where the author's sex seems most certain, however, for while she's supposedly talking about the choice that one girlfriend will make, it's important to note that Louise slips into a more universal pronouncement concerning what *all* young women ought to do, namely, think and act for themselves, as if they were in control of their destinies, not their suitors. The argument, while clearly written for younger performers and audiences, and not wildly subversive, still attempts to persuade viewing audiences that there is room for improvement in the ways in which women are expected to make choices.

The other short drama comprises a similar recasting of pre-existing arguments circulating throughout late Victorian society in the United States. The plot summary of "The Excitement at Kettleville" is as follows: a woman is due to come to the town of Kettleville in order to deliver a public lecture on women's rights. Six men of the town are represented, four of them adamantly against the idea of her speaking—these four have assembled to form a plan to prevent her from addressing the rest of the town's citizens. They debate rather aimlessly how best to accomplish this thwarting for the first two-thirds of the play, then the woman lecturer appears and easily overbears them all, getting them collectively to agree that they will come hear her speak that night. As previously stated, this piece was ascribed to Epes Sargent in the table of contents of *The Peerless Reciter*: nevertheless, when reading the dialogue a reader might well suspect a woman author for at least three reasons: the topic (women's rights), the main protagonist (a woman lecturer on the road to bring the message to the masses), and finally the way in which the plot unfolds by means of a slightly fantastic device (a weapon referred to as an "air gun") in which a reader hears echoes of the military metaphors so ubiquitous to the suffrage movement in this era. In fact, I suspect more than a woman author: I suspect that a famous woman orator may be at work here—but more on this hypothesis in a moment. First let's look at the rhetoric of the text, or the play script, in its own right.

From the play's opening almost to its end, four of the male characters are unanimously and continuously farcical characters. They form a sort of chorus voicing the

various indictments leveled against women's rights advocates in the late nineteenth century, yet at the same time, these men are so broadly drawn as to be ludicrous, their points designed to make audiences laugh in realization of the absurdity of these positions. To begin with, the men are a rather scruffy lot. Bodkins is recently unemployed from a muslin and lace shop. Ditto seems to have no employment, but is "a Young Man about town, famous in private theatricals" who talks a lot yet says very little, in wildly melodramatic ways. Another is a frightfully pedantic fellow called Tincture, who is listed in the bill as "a Man with a Diploma," and following him around everywhere is Moper, "a Disappointed Candidate." Finally there is Ponder, listed as "A Man who thinks before he speaks"—who, having thought, will eventually speak in favor of women's rights—and finally a young boy named Tommy, whose only role in the dialogue is helping put up bills around town for the lecture. Out of the six characters, the first four are lampooned as instantiating variously wrong-headed ways of resisting the inevitable progress of women in the coming century. The lecturer on the other hand, Miss Haverway—a name which when spoken aloud by the actors becomes Miss Have Her Way—is all business. She is a serious contender for women's rights, only comical to the extent that the context in which she appears is highly comical. Her character in and of itself is written as a personality of imposing force, one without peer in this dialogue, and when she speaks, the men cower and attempt to hide behind one another, using each other as shields against her insight, wit, and commanding presence. Put more simply, the men are terrified of her.

Throughout this short comedy, nineteenth-century readers of the text and viewers of the production alike would have heard the distinct resonance of multiple strands of public debate concerning questions of women's rightful sphere in life. In the opening lines of the play, one of the gentlemen states emphatically, "We must put a stop to this woman's rights movement, or it will put a stop to us." (In short order, it becomes clear why he desires this, and why they all agree with him: because they are losing their jobs to harder-working, more-qualified women workers.) But in the beginning they collectively express their reservations: they don't think they can stop women fighting for their rights—why? "Because," as Moper puts it, "the women carry too many guns for us" (Northrop *Peerless* 480). Bodkins is alarmed. Does this lecturer Miss Haverway carry a gun, he wants to know? Moper responds in the affirmative: "She doesn't carry anything

else. That little morocco roll, or cylinder, in which she pretends to carry her lecture, is an air-gun, a deadly weapon" (480). This upsets them all, though they rush to proclaim that they will not be "intimidated"—a clear move foreshadowing to the amused audience that this is precisely what they will be, of course.

Here they begin to rant on life's cruel injustices. Bodkins laments that "certain audacious women" are conspiring "to oppress us, and take the bread out of our mouths" (481), while noting in the next few lines that he, not incidentally, has just lost his own "easy berth" and "snug situation in the store of Messrs. Flimsy and Gauze," merchants who sell textiles to women. He claims to be boiling with indignation at the thought of the young woman who has replaced him behind the counter, leaving him to find other employment—probably manual labor. "I am advised that the spade and the plow expect me—" he states, "me, with my delicate *physique*" (481, emphasis in original). Now each must have his say, adding a new line of indignities to the fast-growing list. Tincture as it turns out, was given his doctoring diploma by his father—who not coincidentally owns a pharmaceutical panacea company called Plantation Bitters. Tincture has recently been put out of work in the town called "Onward" by a "doctress:" presumably a young woman who has earned a real medical degree (482). Moper decides to contribute his tale of woe. He states, "I had the reputation of being the most depressing preacher ever heard…" up until a woman preacher arrived on the scene, and "the infatuated people of Onward" put her in charge of their religious affairs (482). Ditto is outraged at this list. He cries aloud, "A female woman! Be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts! Dash her in pieces! Must we endure all this?"

Unabated, the list of examples continues. Women are ousting men from serving on city school committees, and a woman has taken the place of a man setting type in a print shop, "just because she can set type twice as fast as any of the men..." (483). Bodkins cries out in frustration that men are finding competition even in their formerly-sovereign domains of literature and art. "Look at Mrs. Stowe!" he cries. "She is paid more for a single page than my friend Vivid, author of 'The Beauty of Broadway,' gets for a whole volume" (483). Working themselves into a collective state, they arrive at last at the most weighty issues of all. One notes that "they [meaning the nation] are talking now of giving women the suffrage" (484). Ponder, the one who thinks before he speaks,

has been silent through most of this collaborative diatribe, but now wants to comment. He asks if he might be permitted to ask the others a question. Bodkins responds, "Certainly. We all go for free speech; that is, for free masculine speech" (484). Leaving aside this sly comment on the characters' understanding of "natural freedoms" that are only "natural" for some, Ponder wants to know if they don't believe in the principle of no taxation without representation. They all affirm heartily: of course they believe in that. Ponder replies, "Well, then, if women are taxed, ought they not—" but gets no further. He is interrupted by Ditto, who exclaims "Gag him. Stop him. He has said enough" (484).

The dialogue continues, skillfully weaving multiple strands of both public policy and philosophical debate together into one logical and persuasive argument for women's rights. The play's intertextuality is clear; reverberations from the late nineteenth-century version of the *querelle des femmes* are on every page and in nearly every line. Despite the fact that there is no woman orator at a podium casting verbal attacks at an opponent, I submit that it is patently obvious that this type of theatrical production enters into, reiterates, and expands many arguments that originated outside the playhouse. The most cunning stroke of this type of rhetorical performance in my opinion is that the argument is made into a source of shared pleasure and laughter, not a source of anxiety or anger. While in the outside world jobs are indeed on the line—and civic roles, and material perquisites, and power—theatergoers must nonetheless have had a hard time, I believe, resisting the charm of the production, with its witty wordplay (which I have hardly touched upon here) and its tongue-in-cheek positions initially forwarded by two men, not a woman…. (I also find this latter stratagem a masterful move: one perhaps designed to emphasize that not all pro-suffrage proponents were women, after all, but perhaps *also* designed to take the women clamoring for change out of the hot seat, and make men, or male characters at least, take up the labor of swaying people's minds on this subject.)

When Miss Haverway finally arrives on the scene, the audience is well primed to expect a showdown, and the author of the text does not disappoint. The final scene begins in this way: Tommy has come on stage to put up flyers for the public lecture that night. The men, still arguing amongst themselves see him and sense a new target for their mounting irritation. They insist he stop pasting up the bills. When he refuses outright, Moper declares absurdly that he thinks he will attack the young boy (an orphan, we've

just learned) with his cane. At this moment, the champion appears. Our lecturer sees the men assembled about Tommy, and she wants to know immediately what's going on. When Tommy says he is being threatened, Miss Haverway says, "Leave them to me, Tommy…." (486). When he is safely off-stage and out of harm's way, she turns on the assembled "gentlemen" and demands to know why they had a problem with her flyers being posted. Do they have an objection to her speaking, she wants to know? Bodkins tries to pacify her (presumably delivered in a patronizing tone, though almost no stage directions are provided in the text) by starting off, "My dear lady—"

He gets no further. "Don't dear *me*, sir; and don't *lady* me, sir. Call me plain woman," Miss Haverway answers (486, emphases in original). She points the rolled-up lecture in its little morocco-leather case at them: they look alarmed. Bodkins tries again: "Well then, plain woman…." He is now stuttering, and the rest of his line is a mess of starts and stops as he attempts to make it seem as though they were just trying to think through the points of woman's rights. The audience will now be laughing at the men's manifest fear of being "shot" with the woman lecturer's "air gun," Bodkins' inability to spit out what he is trying to say (mainly because he's lying, and of course they know it), and finally because of the woman lecturer's new, unintended appellation. Miss Haverway wanted Bodkins to call her "woman," plain and simple, but the syntax of her insistence to him left the door open to him renaming her "plain woman," which will probably strike the viewers as comical, number one, and number two, contains yet another echo from the pre-existing discursive prejudices against women becoming suffragists. As was widely circulated in political cartoons and public editorials from many contemporary periodicals, suffragists had almost by definition to be spinsters, old maids, or not very attractive women—the sort who couldn't catch a man, and therefore had turned to the advocacy of women's rights by some sort of marital-status default. The play on words is deliberate, and the effect could be heightened in the rhetoric of production in a number of ways—in Bodkins' tone of voice, in the look on Miss Haverway's face as she reacts to what he's unthinkingly renamed her, or (perhaps?) in the costumer's and make-up artist's work at making Miss Haverway appear to be a very attractive, fashionable, and well-put-together young woman after all.

In the days after the production, it is easy to imagine these exchanges being revisited, perhaps even re-enacted by those in the audience who watched the production, and in so doing, wittingly or unwittingly re-examining the points made by an author who is clearly on the side on the expansion of woman's rights. The audience must surely have continued to reflect on the clever conceit of a lecturer's public rhetoric as an air gun, the "plain woman" double entendre, and the foibles and laughable qualities of the feckless male characters. There is one final twist to the play they also likely commented on, in which Ditto dramatically reveals himself to be a pro-woman's rights man and swears to be Miss Haverway's "true knight to command," pledging to defend her from anyone who would seek to harm her on her way to the podium (487). He claims that he pretended to be one of the foolish men against her "to learn their plans" and to have some fun, but now is willing to "throw off the mask" in order to assist her and insist that all the other men accompany her to the lecture. This final performance makes for an interesting end to the play, as between them—with his announced intention to fight and her armed with her oratorical air-gun—they cow the other men into coming to hear the talk (and presumably to see reason). While the lecturer looked to be needing no help in the previous scene, as the men around her were leaping behind one another to get out of her "line of fire," the "unmasking" of this pro-woman's rights supporter does a number of things for this piece as a rhetorical performance. In its high and noble register, so unlike the foolishness and inarticulacy of the preceding quarrels and complaints of the other townsmen, Ditto's courtly gesture stands out in bold relief. Miss Haverway rewards his "chivalry," as she puts it, thanking him sincerely. She now has an ally in her fight. Whether he was on her side all along, or whether he was converted to the right way of thinking by watching her in action, doesn't necessarily matter. I would offer for consideration the point that the author seems to hope to sway men in her audience one day to unmask their beliefs in the same way she has her character do, if perhaps they were hiding them out of fear of being thought too radical, unmanly, or disloyal to his gender—but note that none of these are the reasons Ditto offers for his behavior. The author would have us consider that perhaps he was trying to help all along—a co-conspirator collecting information behind enemy lines, as it were. A nice touch to convince men who might be undecided on the question

that there was something to be gained in speaking out for women: the heroic posture of chivalric knight coming to the aid of a woman in distress (even if she wasn't, really).

Throughout this analysis, I have continued to refer to the author of this text as a woman, despite the fact that the name listed in the table of contents would indicate that it was written by a man. If I were forced to hazard a guess, I would argue for the author being a woman, however, for the reasons previously stated—and yet I might go further. Examining the text carefully, I cannot help but imagine that I see many clues to the author's true identity: Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Let me begin by stating outright that I have no hard or fast evidence yet to prove this conjecture; however, there are at least six pieces of textual evidence which lead me to this initial conclusion. First, while nineteenth-century pseudonyms seem to have been designed to allow an author the "plausible deniability" to disavow creation of a text, nonetheless authors seem often to have sought some means to prove (perhaps only to some subset of the reading population: friends, family, future publishers?) that they had, in fact, written it. This required some sort of code or clue as to their true identity, but nothing too explicit. For example: often writers used half of their real name, and changed the other half. Other times they used the same initials, as in the case of Currer Bell—real name, Charlotte Bronte. So Epes Sargent could stand for Elizabeth (Cady) Stanton.

Second, the woman lecturer reads from a written script: she does not speak extemporaneously, nor does she have the text memorized, the better to orate it. This small cue—if indeed it is a cue—may recall to our minds Lindal Buchanan's insightful book, *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*. In this text, Buchanan explains the collaborative process by which the two women rhetors worked together: Anthony often did the research, Cady Stanton usually did the writing of the speech, and then Anthony delivered it (152-55). Thus the "little morocco roll, or cylinder" that "supposedly" contained Miss Haverway's lecture, in Moper's words, might cause us to recall Cady Stanton's actual journal entry referring to Anthony's "little portmanteau stuffed with facts" (qtd. in Buchanan 153)—facts which Cady Stanton used to create the texts of their *chefs d'oeuvre*—and in all likelihood, the same portmanteau which Anthony then used to carry the finished text back into the world. They worked in this way for fifty years, Buchanan reports (152). Might it be that, near the end of that

amazing coalition, nearing what they must have felt to be the end of their long and hugely productive lives, Cady Stanton wanted to offer a small tribute to her friend, as a way of paying her back for the fulfilling work they shared, all the battles they'd fought together, and all the successes they had mutually enjoyed?

The third and fourth clues—again, if they are clues—reside in the choice of the pseudonym itself. The last name "Sargent" evokes the military title "sergeant," obviously, but it is also the last name of a Californian senator, Aaron A. Sargent, that Elizabeth Cady Stanton worked with on a female suffrage amendment in 1878. It seems a real possibility that this senator may have seemed a "true knight to command" of the type that Ditto claims himself to be, when he unmasks himself—a man who is a supporter of women's rights. Also, the military resonance (in metaphors, diction, symbols) is strongly redolent throughout the American woman's suffrage movement. It would be no stretch to imagine the women running the campaign for women's rights giving themselves various military titles (though Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony would have been closer to four-star generals than sergeants, naturally).

This predilection for military metaphors shows itself again in what I see as the fifth "bread crumb" left by the author to lead the attentive reader to the author's true identity: she refers to the act of public speaking as a powerful and dangerous weapon. The play veers into the territory of magical realism as the device Miss Haverway is constantly pointing at the townsmen, her lecture in point of fact, is repeatedly described by those men as if it were a gun. No one would have known better than Anthony or Cady Stanton themselves just how fearsome their work was to others of a conservative mindset, and they did view the ideological struggle in martial terms. In fact, as Buchanan states, "Cady Stanton described [their collaborative work] in terms of lightning and explosives" (131). In one example Buchanan offers, Cady Stanton is recollecting in her own words how she felt when Anthony would describe what was going on in the world of the campaign, especially as among its opponents:

> [Anthony's] description of a body of men on any platform, complacently deciding questions in which women had an equal interest, without an equal voice, readily roused me to a determination to throw a firebrand in the midst of their assembly. Thus, whenever I saw that stately Quaker girl

> coming across my lawn, I knew that some happy convocation of the sons of Adam were to be set by the ears, by one of our appeals or resolutions. (qtd. in Buchanan 132)

This description of such "a body of men" and their complacency could almost come from a theatrical flyer for the play, "The Excitement of Kettleville," of course. Complacent, that is, until a woman shows up to throw a "firebrand" at them….

Sixth and finally, while Cady Stanton might have wanted to throw firebrands, she once referred to her friend Susan B. Anthony as a thrower of (metaphorically) volatile substances, too: not firebrands, but thunderbolts. Within the play, thunderbolts are referred to only once: by Ditto, the character who later unmasks himself as a supporter for the cause. First, however, Ditto claims to be appalled that women are making such strides in the realms of politics, commerce, religion and the arts. We may remember that, imagining the arrival of Miss Haverway, he shouted, "A female woman! Be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts! Dash her in pieces! Must we endure all this?" To return to Lindal Buchanan's analysis of Cady Stanton and Anthony's collaboratively-produced rhetoric, Cady Stanton is quoted as having written: "[I]t has been said that I forged the thunderbolts and she fired them" (qtd. in Buchanan 131).

If this dialogue was written by Cady Stanton, it would have been written near the end of her life. (The play was published in 1894; she died in 1902.) Still, it would only have been two short years after she wrote and delivered her famous speech, "Solitude of the Self," in 1892 (Kohrs Campbell 371). Why would the great author have wished for the veil of anonymity after so many prior publications? We might well ask—clearly it would not have been out of any fear of publicity of the kind that Woolf referred to. Could it be that the great author felt the skit might be judged too comical after such a solemn body of work in her advanced years? Might she also have imagined that this publication, if attributed to her, would possibly constitute a threat to any future attempt at oratorical *gravitas* on her part from the platform, if she were called to speak to a formidable audience such as Congress again? All mere speculation at this point, but perhaps some day, some future scholar of women's rhetoric will deduce the truth of it.

(Dis)Connections: Acting and Oratory from Classical Texts to the Late Nineteenth Century

So far we have looked at Delsartists' interest in traditional theatrical productions as a means of entertainment, at theories stating that all theater is inherently rhetorical, and two examples demonstrating that theatrical-rhetorical performance can be inflected by gender interests—or, put another way, how deliberately rhetorical dramas were used by women in the late nineteenth century to advance certain issues pertaining to their civil rights or exhorting girls to carefully consider the life paths that were laid out before them. Now I wish to turn briefly to the imbrication of young women's instruction in drama and oratory (alongside elocution, rhetoric, Delsarte, and literature) within the aforementioned Oxford College of Oratory for women. This attention to interdisciplinary overlap seems to me a necessary focus at this point in this chapter, although in all scholarly frankness I feel bound to admit that unraveling these young elocutionists' study of these different, commingled subjects seems a Gordian knot which is unlikely ever to be disentangled. (Would that I had one of these young, would-be Amazons' swords!) The attempt is necessary, however, in order to make clearer the relationship I believe the New Elocutionists intuited between these similar arts of expression—oratory and theater—and how both arts might be useful to sway a wider variety of different audiences: connections we contemporary scholars of rhetoric have more or less forgotten or ignored.

It is surprising to note how many canonical texts from our field deal with the observable—yet not always desirable—connection to the field of theater. Interestingly, to this researcher at least, is the way in which the pendulum of (dis)connection seems to swing back and forth from the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian; to Siddons, Sheridan, Walker; back to the British and American Elocutionists; then back again to the New Elocutionists, to name only a few—first it swings one way, making connections and urging cross-over learning between the disciplines, then it swings back, refusing to acknowledge commonalities between the two academic and artistic spheres. Obviously both arts are concerned both the *actio* and *pronuntiatio* spheres of delivery; both arts deal sometimes with the delivery of pre-written texts, but sometimes with "extemporaneous" speech or unscripted role playing (as in some repertory theater); finally, both arts also

concern themselves with the winning over of an audience—whether merely to delight or to persuade (and it can be difficult to separate these two rhetorical goals at times). Once examined, then, similarities in the two mediums, their methods, and their purposes, all become obvious, yet despite these similarities—or because of them—rhetorical theorists from Aristotle's day forward have cautioned speakers against being too dramatic, too theatrical, too much like an actor in point of fact. Cicero and Quintilian are likewise less than sanguine about a rhetor's use of theatrical delivery. Then the pendulum swings back, and authors such as Gilbert Austin, John Bulwer, and Henry Siddons who focus on delivery all target (and market) their work to orators and actors alike. The British and American elocutionary schools tend toward ambivalence: some think the two arts could productively be combined, some think any contamination of oratory by the tainted art of theater is to be avoided at all costs. As we will soon see, many of the so-called "old school' elocutionists tended to denounce—or at least distrust—the study of theater, personation, and overly stage-y delivery. The New Elocutionists, on the other hand, were more univocal in their acceptance; they embraced the two arts as disciplinary sisters: studying one to improve the other and vice versa.

While a few scholars have touched on the dramatic instruction offered in schools of oratory in this period (Fahey, McTeague, Robb), no one yet has looked at the interstices of these two comingled disciplines in women's schools of oratory. We have just observed instances of women writing and staging new and different plays than men, because they wanted to enter into larger cultural arguments circulating about issues that directly affected them. What other plays did they study, however, and in what context? What did they do with canonical plays, for example—did women perform Shakespeare differently than their male peers? Was their theatrical training and their oratorical training done separately or at the same time? What theoretical texts on acting did they read in their college curricula? These are a few of the questions this section will address, from the analysis of archival materials unearthed at one women's college which was taking a vested interest in young girls' public speaking abilities at the turn of the century.

We have previously seen how, in the 1892-93 school year, the Oxford College for Women in Oxford, Ohio founded their new College of Oratory. In the 1893-94 school catalogue, the new school lists a two-year curriculum for juniors and seniors. It includes

among other things courses in physiology, physical training and the principles of gesture; one semester's worth of rhetoric; two full years' study of the "Delsarte Philosophy of Expression;" two full years of literature; and two full years of classes in elocution, with emphasis on selected plays of Shakespeare for the purposes of "dramatic criticism" and "dramatic delivery." Two years' prior, in the 1891-92 school year, only two plays were listed for study during a course on "English Masterpieces": *Julius Caesar* and *Merchant of Venice*. Beginning in the fall of 1893, however, the number of plays is upped to thirteen.

In itself, the study of plays in a literature course would be nothing exceptional; this we see on our own campuses today. It is not until the 1898-99 school year, however, that the Oxford College of Oratory first mentions the textbook and guiding theory which causes these small curricular details take on new meaning. The '98-99 college catalog cites the use of the Delsartean textbook called *The Synthetic Philosophy of Expression* by Moses True Brown. Usually referred to in its shortened form, Brown subtitled his 1886 work *As Applied to the Arts of Reading, Oratory, and Personation*, encapsulating in this choice of phrasing all three forms of rhetorical performance that elocutionists and New elocutionists were taking up. The art of rhetorical reading, or public reading with attention to delivery, we have already looked at, and oratory too. The art of "personation" is what students of elocution called the act of creating dramatic characters. The term seems sometimes to have referred to reading dramas aloud—as in the case where a parent today might read a storybook to his or her children and "do the voices" of the characters to bring the reading to life—and sometimes to have referred to actual acting on a stage.

Brown's text is what we might call one of the few true Delsartean academic texts: a book of theory, with next to no attention paid to application. It has no pieces to recite, no skits or statues, no comments on staging. Not anywhere within the taxonomy of "popular" rhetorics that Nan Johnson created (and where almost all Delsarte texts fall), in other words, this is a "scientific" text concerning the metaphysics of Delsarte's triune theory as put in conversation with the theories of "other scientists" such as Darwin and Mantegazza, from Brown's perspective. It constitutes an addition to Delsarte's theory of expressive gesture; how the mind is uplifted through certain movements of the body, or the uplift of the soul can be achieved through striving for art. At only one point could I

find any application of theory to actual practice mentioned: the author addressed his four intended audiences directly, stating that he wanted American orators and actors (plus readers and musicians) to pay attention: he wanted *one* climax in a play or oration, not dozens of climaxes. In a sternly-worded (yet rather comic) footnote, he stated that in the United States, "Our audiences are so used to the crude exhibitions of the theater, and the actors at the theater so used to their immature audiences, that all is overdone, loud, pronounced, startling, objective,--all is climax" (64). So he cautioned all groups, but we should note here how he put the onus of the trend on the "fallen" art of theater, even as—in an attempt at scholarly fairness, perhaps—he remarked that the thespians were merely responding to what their audiences wanted and expected. A professor and at one point chair of the department of oratory at Tufts University, Moses True Brown eventually went on to establish his own school in 1884: the famous Boston School of Oratory.

To return to the women's curricula: several things are interesting about the Oxford College women's use of this text. After looking at over a dozen parlor rhetorics, this unalloyed theoretical text stands out in stark relief as many times more opaque and challenging (as well as far less appealing, for this reader at least). The book's diction, graphs and charts, physiological discourse, philosophical and scientific sources parsed, added to all the author's metaphysical ramblings about the soul, make this one tough textual nut to crack. Another thing that a reader might remark is that this is one of the few Delsarte texts which makes no mention of *women's* rhetorical performance anywhere. The "universal" male pronoun is employed by the author throughout; while that was, of course, a given in academic texts of the era, it was nevertheless a surprise to find that these college women were studying perhaps the only textbook on the market that did not address them as its primary audience. Surely it was meant to lend a certain air of *gravitas* to the girls' study of Delsarte, which as we have seen many times over, was a "discipline" often thought to be without discipline (or curricular merit, come to that).

Women Worthies: Responding to the *Querelle des Femmes* with the Argument by Catalog

In the final section of this chapter, I wish to turn our attention to a type of play that was popular in this turn-of-the-century era: the so-called "women worthies" argument, also known as the "*de claribus* tradition" (named after Boccaccio's famous *De Claris Mulieribus*, or *Concerning Famous Women*). As a literary genre, the catalog of women worthies has a rather long history. Many classical authors attempted something on the subject of women's worthiness, within the context of the *querelle des femmes*: besides Boccaccio, we also find represented Boethius, Chaucer, Vergil, Ovid, and a host of others less well known (Scudéry xxi). However, in the introduction to the 1987 edition of Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*, editor Ann McMillan points out that these authors usually included some subset of the same set of honorable women yet did not treat them in the same way. Different evidence and different conclusions were offered to buttress each author's individual argument concerning the putative worth of women; the only commonality that many of these works possessed, says McMillan, is that in the end, "all the women at last assume the role of sexual victim" (5). Another scholar commented on the curious fact that a book in the *de claribus* tradition, ostensibly written in praise of good or virtuous women, could in fact be

> unfriendly to women, for it singled out for praise [only] those women who possessed the traditional virtues of chastity, silence, and obedience. Women who were active in the public realm—for example, rulers and warriors—were depicted as usually being lascivious and suffering terrible punishments for entering into the masculine sphere. (Scudéry xxi)

This is the way that the genre looks when authored by male writers. The genre looks quite different, however, when written, published, and performed by women—as in the two examples I offer here, enacted in 1909 and 1892, respectively. "A Pageant of Great Women" and "The Genius of the Nineteenth Century" are each examples of the women worthies genre in dramatic, not literary, form. I have not yet found examples of

any women worthies arguments penned by women authors in literary form in this period. This does not mean they do not exist, of course, but I think it may be telling that at this moment when women are increasingly writing in all creative fields, the examples of catalog arguments I have run across are dialogues written to be produced in the theater, for reasons which I will soon explain. In the final analysis, however, I hope to show that these plays are not merely interesting textual artifacts, nor are they merely a few more examples of Delsartean innovation; I hope to show instead that these plays may point us toward textual and performative realms where we do not currently seek or find rhetorical treasures. Several considerations are important, here. Women playwrights were interested in female characters who possessed legendary speaking skills—not "silence," as their male counterparts were. New Elocutionist authors loved writing new stories that included Shakespeare's Portia, Dickens' Sarah Gamp, and others—characters who wielded great rhetorical power or cunning, in other words—much as we saw in the "Ladies of Athens" piece in the last chapter. Furthermore, these same authors were very interested in women characters who were "rulers and warriors," because these historical or even mythological figures served as evidence—real or symbolic—of women's ability to lead and to be brave in battles, literal or figurative.

As an additional consideration, I argue that while many classical male authors wrote in this literary style, as just noted, the catalog was and is also a literary genre that female authors have undertaken many times, and understandably. I submit that women authors have often had a fondness for this genre because the focus is on women's history: a history which we must assume has been somewhat biased by the tendency of the predominantly male historiographers (however noble or ignoble their intentions) who took it down. As Jane Austen so cleverly phrased it some seventy years before the American Delsartists existed, "The pen has been in their hands." As women began to write in increasing numbers on both sides of the Atlantic, however—as we see here in the case of one British woman playwright and one group of American college girls collaboratively writing—the opportunity to revise the lapses or slurs of past writers' textual creations and remake their foremothers' reputations, and often to add themselves or their peers into the annals of great women at the same time, well, that opportunity must have seemed too fortuitous to pass up. I will very quickly sketch a partial list of women

writers who have worked in this genre, therefore, to show the genre's varying forms under distinctly different rhetorical situations and contexts.

Finally, I contend that a drama needs to be recognized within its most important context, in order to fully assess its impact as a rhetorical tool of real power: that plays are rhetorical performances that are collaboratively produced and collaboratively received. (The effect of these related points we will see at the end of the chapter.)

Although not emerging from a Delsarte or a New Elocutionary *milieu*, or even as an American play, for that matter, Cicely Hamilton's "A Pageant of Great Women" may seem a strange or irrelevant addition to this thesis. What the play is, however, is an exceptional example of what the women worthies genre is capable of as a rhetorical performance, and another example of how this type of performance was being used in this era to debate questions such as woman suffrage from the platform of the stage. Cicely Hamilton was a British actress born in 1872 who later in life turned to play writing and suffrage activism. Among her other accomplishments, as documented by scholar Carolyn Christensen Nelson, "[s]he helped found the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL) and the Women Writers' Suffrage League (WWSL)," co-wrote two suffrage plays, authored a suffrage song, and wrote a book, *Marriage as a Trade*, which Nelson calls "an important feminist document" (xxxi). On top of these noteworthy achievements, Nelson notes that this particular drama was "one of the most popular of the suffrage plays, [and] was performed all over England" (183). Let's take a look at what might have made it so popular.

The action of this play is striking in its simplicity: the character, "Woman," has made her way to the throne of the goddess, "Justice." Woman has been pursued by the third and final main character, "Prejudice." Woman entreats Justice to grant her freedom; Prejudice claims she does not deserve it. Justice wants to hear both sides, telling Woman to "let him accuse—then answer" (223).

To speak briefly, the entire play is one great debate. The tone is serious, the register highly formal, and the atmosphere, even emanating as I came to it (on the page), is charged by the idea of all that is at stake. Taking place as it does, at the feet of a "goddess" (226), the plot functions as a fictional yet electric form of rhetorical performance of the type we saw in chapter two: the oratorical combat. Thus we begin to

come back full circle, returning to the idea of a performance that is evaluated or judged by an arbiter—but this arbiter is special, as is the orator and her chosen "weapons." Because of course, Woman's strongest weapons will be the proof of woman's worth in the past: more simply put, Woman's strongest weapons will be women. As her opponent calls out various limits to Woman's ability—reasons why she should not be granted the right of self-determination—Woman produces female characters from the past to prove that this argument is false. Before the argument is over, she will call 44 women from six different categories to come forth: learned women, artists, saintly women, heroic women, rulers and warriors. All speak eloquently for Woman's cause, and (of course) in the end, Woman will win her desired liberty.

As an example of what the catalog genre looks like when written by a woman author, Hamilton's play differs in many essentials from its literary predecessors. The most obvious difference is the women who are called forth. As we just read, previous iterations of this literary form, as penned by male authors, focused either on women who were chaste (and then raped, requiring some sort of "rescue" or revenge by the male characters in the narrative) or on women who were "public women" (with the added connotation that they were probably not chaste) or "unfaithful women" who were then made examples of in the story, enduring various punishments for the "crime" of being public figures.

Hamilton's women, on the other hand, lean heavily toward public women and learned women, especially women who published their work in lectures, university talks, books, and other social and intellectual circles. Scholars, in fact, are the single largest group in Hamilton's list. Women have accomplished much since the classical era, of course; therefore while some classical women like Hypatia (philosopher) are included, so are St. Teresa (writer and reformer), Lady Jane Grey (polyglot), Anna Louisa de Stael-Holstein (author and politician), Manon Roland ("one of the leading intellects of the French Revolution"), Madeleine de Scudéry, Jane Austen, George Sand, Caroline Herschell (astronomer who discovered 5 comets), and Marie Curie. Eight artists are listed: Sappho, Vittoria Colonna, Maria Angelica Kauffmann, Marie Louise Elizabeth Vigée Lebrun, Rosa Bonheur, Margaret Van Eyck, Marie Anne Cuppi Camargo, and Nance Oldfield (notably, Hamilton here includes a prominent English actress from the

early eighteenth century). Only four saints are listed. The choice of the four seems significant in light of the gloss on the characters offered by editor at the end of the play: McMillan explains that one of the saints, for example, was also an activist—Elizabeth Fry, who was the "[f]ounder of the Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate [who] effected great reforms in prison conditions"—and one of the others was also a politician—St. Catherine of Siena. Then Hamilton included four heroines: Charlotte Corday, Flora Macdonald, Kate Barlass, and Grace Darling, all historical figures who did something courageous. nine rulers, all queens or empresses: Elizabeth, Victoria, Zenobia, Philippa of Hainault, Deborah, Isabella of Spain, Maria Theresa, Catherine II, and Tsze-hsi-an (Empress of China).

Finally we come to the last set of characters Woman will call for: the warriors. In the order they appear (as opposed to their historical chronology), they are Joan of Arc, Boadicea, Black Agnes, Maid of Saragossa, Emilia Plater, Ranee of Jhansi, Christian Davies, Hannah Snell, Mary Ann Talbot, and finally Florence Nightingale. All of these women seem to have fought or served on literal battlegrounds except for Nightingale. Doubtless the fact that Nightingale served in hospitals that treated warriors is the reason why she was included, not to mention the unbelievably high mortality rate in some of the places she nursed. (It does not seem any exaggeration to say she was probably in more danger of dying in the Crimean War hospital in Scutari, with its death rate of over 40 per cent among the wounded who died to cholera and dysentery rather than to their wounds, than were some of the women on the actual battlefields.)

This long list, however, does no justice to the argument Woman makes before Justice's throne. I include it merely to show the prevalence of active women in Hamilton's drama: women who were not afraid of entering into public realms, who were taking on roles formerly thought to be the sole province of men—women who were revered and respected, in other words, not because they were beautiful or chaste, but because they were working to bring about progressive reform in prisons, or because they were revolutionizing nursing science, or because they had dedicated their lives to the pursuit of painting or writing or acting. These are the women that are "worthy" in this new incarnation of the genre.

So much remains that should be thoroughly analyzed, and yet I will only mention these points in passing, for now. One thought concerns the rhetorical nature of the argument by example, or the inductive argument in general. This type of argument, firstly, seems one ideally suited to those individuals without easy access to formal education, and who therefore have little if any training in formal logic—or for those writers who feel that logic is not nearly as appealing, or persuasive, as the symbolism involved in a striking and or tragic figure like the martyr Joan of Arc (who, as has repeatedly been reported, served as something of a masthead for suffrage movements on both sides of the Atlantic). Also, readers may recall a quote from earlier in this chapter; Paul Newell Campbell said, theater is designed for the argument by example, not for the argument by enthymeme—this allows writers the ability to capitalize on the medium's apparent strengths. One author of a recent rhetoric on crafting well-researched arguments notes that the deductive argument is the only one which can truly be "proven"—inductive arguments are at best only thought to be probable, and only when a sufficiently large sample of examples are provided (Maner 47-8). In the case of women writers-turned-historians, however, the "need" to provide many examples to be persuasive might have seemed like a relief—at last, the chance to retell these many women's stories that have been left out of history texts! Hamilton's argument that women are worthy of a larger sphere in the world, by way of summoning to her viewers' minds 44 different women from history that have done much for humanity—in many cases without recompense, in many cases without recognition, and in many cases, while suffering legal, political and even fatal retribution for their actions—this makes for a very strong argument concerning women's rights; it also makes for an impromptu lesson in women's history, which was not yet included in schools' curriculum.

We should also reflect on the specific type of examples that Hamilton offers in this theatrical argument. Unlike many women authors who have attempted this genre, Hamilton uses only one woman from the Bible (Deborah), and no mythological or literary figures whatsoever. These are all real historical women, in other words; unlike arguments that might be made to appeal primarily to an audience's emotions through mythological figures like Amazons and Muses, as we saw in chapter two, this is an argument that seeks to appeal to its viewers via pathos and ethos combined. Given that

she has cast aside many of the characters conventional to the women worthies genre, we might imagine that the playwright is cautious of her credibility, here. In writing only of historical figures, she allows no chink in her argument's armor to allow any counterargument by a "Prejudice[d]" opponent that these women she's citing as "worthy" of freedom were not real, and therefore that the argument was fundamentally flawed or invalid.

Another consideration that should be given its due here: theatrical productions are a form of collectively-*created* and collectively-*received* rhetoric. Many feminist rhetoricians have observed that collaboratively-*created* forms of rhetoric are often overlooked or undervalued in our field. One such rhetorician was Lindal Buchanan, who writes that "collaboration has rarely been considered in relation to delivery." She argues that the received configuration of the canon of delivery is to look only at individual speakers (Buchanan 133). Barbara Biesecker echoes this tendency: she claims we need "to recognize that the rhetorical canon is a system of cultural representation whose present form is predicated on and celebrates the individual" (156) and that by way of contrast, collaborative rhetorics, which she argues "[we] cannot fail to note, have been the most common form of women's intervention in the public sphere" are erased, expunged, or consigned "into oblivion" (157).

A final rhetorical theorist we might mention is Andrea Lunsford: in her introduction to *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, Lunsford said that one of her primary goals in assembling the anthology was to find evidence of rhetorical activity which opened up our discipline's seamless narrative, to find evidence of rhetors "…naming in personal terms; employing dialogics; recognizing and using the power of conversations; moving centripetally towards connections; and valuing—indeed insisting upon—collaboration" (6). All of these categories of women's rhetoric may seem to us to be in operation in such a catalog of women worthies as Cicely Hamilton created in "A Pageant of Great Women." Each character is called forth by name and tells a little of her own life story, all 44 characters (and the respective historical texts they are drawn from) speak dialogically through the actresses personating the figures, in a "conversation" both between the fictional interlocutors Woman and Prejudice, as between the playwright, her Actresses' Franchise League and its suffragist performers,

and British society itself. The inductive style of argument moves centripetally rather than in a linear or agonistic fashion. There is no formal logic to the way the women appear, although there is definitely a method to the playwright's madness, bringing the strongest examples on to start and close each "category" of women. (They do not come on stage in order of their birth.) Finally, the play is collaboratively enacted by a troupe of female actors who might or might not have had the nerve to appear on a platform alone, to debate women's rights in front of a hostile audience, but in the (relatively) safe arena of the stage could find strength in numbers, as they did here, and when enacting brave women of the past: heroes, rulers, and warriors.

We need also to look at the significance of drama being a collectively-received rhetoric, but this we will do at the end of the chapter.

The fourth and final piece of rhetorical performance I wish briefly to analyze is a play I will call "The Genius of the Nineteenth Century." The script itself, if it ever existed (and I imagine it did) has been lost to time; the analysis I attempt here, I will therefore piece together from a lengthy editorial review in a student newspaper produced by the young women of Oxford College. In the June, 1892 edition of the *Oxford Ladies Collegian*, there is an article titled "Class Day" that states that a play was put on for "class day exercises" by the seniors who constituted the graduating class of '92. All the college was invited, including the faculty; there were some others who may also have been in attendance, including the president of Miami University, the men's college in town. (His name is the only reference to "outsiders" to the college mentioned in the review: of course this is no clear indication that others were not present.)

One of the great frustrations of archival work is this: to find a review of a play, but not the play script itself. So much would be clearer with a text to hand, or a few grainy photographs, and that of course ignores the fundamental question of just how much a scholar must miss, who analyzes a performance that she has neither seen nor heard. With that very important qualification out of the way, I press on.

Fortunately, the review is lengthy and detailed. The play opens with two women initially sharing the stage: the Genius of the Nineteenth Century and an inventress. The inventress says she has "just perfected" a device called the "Chronothanatoletron, or Time and Death Annihilator"—in other words, a time machine. The "strange-looking

apparatus" may have been the only prop on stage: none others are listed. The device is described as "a large cabinet with double doors opening toward the audience and having at its side a large crank" (109). The inventress further explains that from this "product of her fertile brain… could be ground out at pleasure women of all ages, ranks and nation" (110).

At the request of the Genius she's talking to, the inventress "ground out" 15 women from the past—and one from the future—to speak to all those assembled on various and sundry subjects. The characters spoke on "topics apparently foreign to [the girls'] immediate college life," but also on topics intimately connected to that life, as repeatedly evidenced. The reviewer notes that "Again and again the audience was convulsed with laughter" as there were "good-natured 'hits' and 'grinds' on local characters…" (110). The triple entendre intended here may no longer be familiar to readers. To "grind" in recent dictionaries still means "to operate by turning a crank" (as in to grind a hand organ) and "to study hard" or even "study excessively," but formerly it also meant "to subject to ridicule or to satirize"—in this sense "grinding" was close if not identical to the meaning of "roasting" someone, in this era. So there is a grinding of women going on in three distinct semantic levels. (This must surely have pleased the play's authors immensely, and one imagines they made good use of the play on words, as college students even to this day love to tease their instructors about how ground down by homework they are becoming.)

To continue with the action of the play, much of the review centers on two of its distinct narrative threads. One is an emphasis on women's education and the "growing popularity of women's colleges." Specific to this subject, a history of the class of 1892 is offered: "a brilliant paper written in the biblical chronicle style" which is read aloud by one of the characters. The other emphasis is the issue of women's worth and proper sphere in the world. The author of the review notes that "It was most amusing to note the great variety of opinions concerning the relative positions of men and women in the world" (111)—but all offered by women, of course, to an audience comprising mostly women.

The other 16 characters are, in the order they are listed: "Sarah wife of Abram, Pharaoh's Daughter, Cornelia, Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth, St. Cecilia, Hypatia, Genius

of the Twentieth Century, Pocahontas, Joan of Arc, Sappho, Martha Washington, Priscilla, Genius of '92, Helen of Troy, and Sairy Gamp" (110). Some similarities to other catalogs of women worthies exist: Sappho is one of the most cited "worthy women" of antiquity, as in Hypatia, and a reader will be hard pressed to find a catalog of great women in which there is no Joan of Arc. But there are some surprises. St Cecilia is the patron saint of church musicians, having been martyred for her faith. (A choice that may be significant, among the numerable saints, due to the College of Oratory being liked through the study of Delsarte to the College of Music.) Three came forward when the audience cried out for American women: Pocahontas, Martha Washington, and Priscilla [Mullins], who married John Alden, one of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower. This last is an interesting reference, because as stories would have it, Captain Miles Standish wanted to marry Miss Mullins. He sent Alden to negotiate a marriage proposal for him, but when Alden asked, she reportedly said "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" intimating that she would have preferred to hear a different proposal. The review of the play says that "sweet Priscilla made [a] modest apology in defense of her significant suggestion," but it is notable that while the character ostensibly apologized, this suggestion is what made her worthy in the first place: the question is what she is known for—speaking up for her own desires. Of course, marriage proposals must have been on the mind of at least some of the college-age women in the play and in the audience. (I haven't seen Priscilla's name come up in any other catalog. It took me a long time to track down who they were referring to.)

The real mystery of the play for this research, however, was the final character listed: Sairy Gamp. Having looked at catalogs of one form or another written by women as different as Christine de Pizan, Madeleine de Scudéry, Virginia Woolf, multiple suffrage activists in *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, the name Sairy Gamp had never come up before. A dozen searches turned up nothing. (Funny the difference a few years will make. A simple Google search, even with the misspelling, now pops up pages of entries.) Finally, by chance, I stumbled across an old encyclopedia of literary names in our department's reading room. The entry was interesting for several reasons. Under "Sairey Gamp," with an added "e", the encyclopedia lists this entry:

> In Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a fat old woman "with a husky voice and a moist eye," engaged in the profession of nursing. She is always quoting her mythical friend Mrs. Harris, and her affection for the bottle is proverbial. She is often called Dickens's greatest piece of characterization, in the tradition which includes Falstaff and the Wife of Bath. ("Gamp" 1683).

This bit of information sent me scurrying for a copy of Dickens's novel, complete title *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*—one I'd not read before. By a stroke of very good fortune, our reading room not only possessed a copy, but possessed a copy from the year 1897—a few years after the Oxford College women penned their play, but close enough in period to make this point, taken from the novel's introduction, a relevant one: "Mrs. Gamp's sayings are familiar in our mouths as household words" (Dickens xi-xii).

Why was her character so popular? There are several reasons, I think, including the fact that she drinks heavily (the already mentioned "affection for the bottle") and this in the context of drinking on the job (Gamp is a midwife). Dickens represents her as a "professional person" again and again, but this is surely an ironic appellation, as he never introduces her without mentioning her requirements of her customers: that before she will begin to work, they provide her with food and drink… and drink… and drink. In fact, in one comic scene, she takes "three drams" before starting to "work" at all (387). Whether she is laying out the dead, or working with woman who is laying in, i.e., about to have a baby, Sarah Gamp is preparing for the job by means of a little liquid courage.

The exact comedic value of this character as she appears in the context of "The Genius of the Nineteenth Century" can only be guessed at. At a reputable, well-to-do women's college in the late Victorian era, is it possible that any of these young women took a drop themselves, now and then? As with the reference to Priscilla just a moment ago, I have not found Sarah Gamp in any other catalogs of worthy women, and her "worth" is surely not meant in terms of her enlightened and ennobled work as a nurse to the poor (who we might think would be better off without her tender ministrations, from the tone that Dickens adopts when he describes her). So is her "worth" to them the fact that here is an example of a woman who drinks? It seems at least a possibility.

Another interesting possibility arises from the context of the reported popularity of Sarah Gamp's sayings, which had become as "familiar in our mouths as household words" to those in the last decade of the nineteenth century. After some study, it finally dawned on me that her great strength as a comic character was her use of rhetorical cunning. As a "professional person," she needs to establish a reputation as a trustworthy and successful healer—however, as a woman who drinks heavily on the job, that kind of word-of-mouth advertising is not going to be easy for her to come by. To compensate for her lack of education, judgment and any real effort on her part to actually heal people, therefore, she simply invents a satisfied customer and friend, Mrs. Harris. Gamp quotes Mrs. Harris in nearly every scene, using this person she's made up to compliment her own nursing skills. Pretending that she is just repeating what "her friend, Mrs. Harris" said yesterday about her good qualities, Gamp can therefore say all sorts of things to further her own career and line her own pockets with duped customers' payments. Near the end of the novel, one of the other characters, much scandalized, blurts out the accusation that she doesn't think this Mrs. Harris exists at all (and thus Dickens lets us in on his joke). But for much of the novel, Gamp's linguistic *legerdemain* might well have fooled readers as it did clients—by a skillful use of *metis*, or perhaps we might more accurately label it "rhetrickery," as the late Wayne Booth once renamed any deliberately deceptive form of rhetoric (Booth 11). However deceptive it was, this communicative trickery is also fictional, and therefore, pretty funny stuff.

It seems self evident that these theatrical performances were not merely entertainment, but also a form of argument. The playwrights used "catalogs" of great women from the past to demand the public's acknowledgement of the potential of the women of their own time. These "women worthies"—scholars and warriors alike—were being strategically marshaled to swell the ranks of those nineteenth-century women fighting for universal suffrage and access to higher education, among other battles.

AFTERWORD

In the late nineteenth century, American women from varying backgrounds were on the move, actively seeking opportunities to advance their different cultural, economic and political interests. Into this fertile ground fell the seeds of the Delsarte system of oratory, first sown in the 1870s by Steele MacKaye, later tended and fertilized in the 1880s and 1890s by MacKaye's students: professional elocutionists like Anna Morgan and Genevieve Stebbins, then many others. The system originally been designed to teach men to speak more eloquently in public underwent several transformations, growing with explosive speed into a vast, nation-wide movement comprising multiple, interconnected strands. With a rapidity that speaks volumes concerning its felt usefulness, Delsarte was soon a household name. Beyond being a system of oratory, the public's understanding of American Delsartism came to encompass the system's course of physical education, its public entertainments and recitals, an aesthetic sense of artistic balance or physical grace, a way of interpreting literature, and more.

Within only a few years of Francois Delsarte's original course hitting the shores of the United States, this flexible amalgam of forms of verbal and physical expression was being appropriated by a wide variety of women—mostly white, upper- or middle-class women as we have observed, but others as well, as their different interests drew them into Delsartean culture. The movement afforded women opportunities hard to come by in the latter decades of the nineteenth century: opportunities to make money as public performers, but also opportunities to be recognized as legitimate professors in this nascent academic discipline or (alternatively) as students, to receive a formal education in rhetoric and oratory. Put another way, many women chose to provide or undertake Delsarte instruction in this era, and for a spectrum of reasons. It was profitable (for professional readers), it was pragmatic (for activists or career women), it was popular and fun (for students young and old).

Furthermore, from the archival evidence unearthed to date, I have argued that the women who called themselves the New Elocutionists were clearly invested in seizing control of their own rhetorical education for the first time in recorded Western history. As

a group, they were involved in creating schools of oratory for other women, creating curricula in expression and rhetorical performance, giving public recitals to showcase their classical rhetorical training, writing rhetorical handbooks, and much more. From these initial, illuminating traces, it seems evident that research into the Delsartists' history needs to be continued and expanded; it seems certain that more material is lying untouched in college archives across the country than has yet been brought to light. Rhetorical scholars have much yet to learn about these fascinating women: the first professional women rhetoricians in the Western world, the women who called themselves the New Elocutionists.

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