

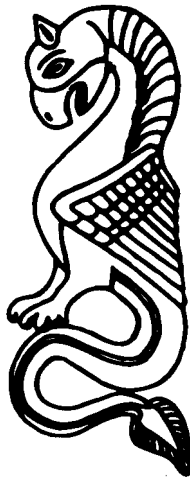
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THOMAS SHERIDAN AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RHETORIC AND BELLES-LETTRES

By WILLIAM BENZIE

The eighteenth-century Elocutionary Movement, first established in the 1760's, has continued to exert an important influence on theories of public speaking to the present day. It appears that the principal reason for the Movement's continued influence in modern times is its preoccupation with oral presentation, or what is sometimes called *pronunciatio*. For while the eighteenth-century rhetoricians, as Wilbur Howell points out, took "the Ciceronian position that rhetoric had the duty of providing a machinery for invention, arrangement, and memory, as well as for style and delivery,"¹ the elocutionists were less concerned with the problem of collecting and arranging materials for speeches and arguments than with the effective and polished delivery of the material.

Various developments led to the rise of the movement. The general attack upon British oratory in the early years of the eighteenth century, a result of the widespread reaction during the late seventeenth century against the "rhetoric of exornation" and the stylistic excesses of Ciceronian rhetoric, contained within it harsh criticism of the dullness and inertness of delivery in British courts of law and other public forums. Addison complains that

Our preachers stand stock-still in the pulpit, and will not so much as move a finger to set off the best sermons in the world. We meet with the same speaking statues at our bars, and in all public places of debate. Our words flow from us in a smooth continued stream, without those strainings of the voice, motions of the body, and majesty of the hand, which are so much celebrated in the orators of Greece and Rome.²

As a result of such attacks, speakers were urged to pay more attention to correct pronunciation, vocal expressiveness and proper gestures. In his *Letter to a Young Clergyman*, Swift singles out the weaknesses in current preaching habits, and offers the following advice to clergymen:

Let me intreat you . . . to transcribe your sermons in as large and plain a manner as you can . . . for we, your hearers, would rather you should be less correct, than perpetually stammering, which I take to be one of the worst solecisms in rhetoric.³

This concern for correctness of delivery is also seen in several of Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son*. In a letter written in 1748, Chesterfield goes to great pains to impress upon the youth the need for proper pronunciation and graceful delivery. He writes:

If you have parts, you will never be at rest till you have brought yourself to a habit of speaking most gracefully. . . . You will desire Mr. Harte, that you may read aloud to him every day; and that he will interrupt and correct you every time that you read too fast, do not observe the proper stops, or lay a wrong emphasis. You will take care to open your teeth when you speak, to articulate every word distinctly, and to beg of Mr. Harte, Mr. Eliot, or whomever you speak to, to remind and stop you if ever you fall into the rapid and unintelligible mutter.⁴

Of course, an age which valued order and refinement so highly was bound to seek correct pronunciation and graceful delivery in speech, just as it demanded standardization and regulation in written language. It is significant that many leading eighteenth-century elocutionists were also lexicographers striving to establish a standard of correctness in syntax and diction.⁵

Few books on elocution were published before the Elocutionary Movement got under way around 1760, but a large number of works on rhetoric do show a definite interest in matters of delivery. For instance, John Ward in his *System of Oratory* (1759) first makes clear his intention to follow "the finest precepts of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Longinus and other celebrated authors . . ."⁶ then proceeds to devote sixty-five pages to the treatment of pronunciation; such preoccupation with delivery is not found in the works of classical rhetoricians. Also, Fénelon and Rollin, who were being translated widely in England at this time, both stress the importance of delivery while still upholding the classical rhetorician's point of view.⁷ Of course there had been developments in the same direction during the seventeenth century. In 1617 Robert Robinson published *The Art of Pronunciation*; in 1644 John Bulwer brought out his *Chirologia*, the first elaborate treatment of the art of gesture, and Joseph Glanvill concludes his *Essay Concerning Preaching* (1678) with a discussion of voice and gesture.

By 1760, then, the ground had been well prepared for the elocutionists who were ready to start publishing their numerous books on the art of effective speaking.

Few worked with such earnestness to promote the study of elocution as Thomas Sheridan, Swift's godson and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's father. In his first and most important book, *British Education: Or, The Source of The Disorders of Great Britain* (1756), Sheridan presents his thesis that "the Immorality, Ignorance and false Taste" which so generally prevailed were the unhappy result of a defective system of education which a "Revival of the Art of Speaking and the Study of our Language" would help to put right. He therefore asks that the youth of Britain be made to study English rhetoric and encouraged to learn the art of public speaking and the art of reading. Also, he makes it clear that he intends not only to introduce the study of rhetoric and elocution into the traditional school and college course, but to set up a "vocational college"; in other words, after a normal period

of training in school, students were to pursue a course of studies specifically designed to benefit them in their future occupations.

Sheridan describes first the current system of education in which undue emphasis was given to the study of Greek and Latin at the expense of English and other useful subjects:

When a boy can read English with tolerable fluency, which is generally about the age of seven or eight years, he is put to school to learn Latin and Greek; where, seven years are employed in acquiring but a moderate skill in those languages. At the age of fifteen or thereabouts, he is removed to one of the universities, where he passes four years more in procuring a more competent knowledge of Greek and Latin, in learning the rudiments of logick, natural philosophy, astronomy, metaphysicks, and the heathen morality. At the age of nineteen or twenty a degree in the arts is taken, and here ends the education of a gentleman.⁸

Quoting from Milton's *Essay on Education* and Locke's *Thoughts on Education* in support of his argument, Sheridan emphasises how useless these studies are in practical life. He proceeds next to apply this argument to his favourite subject, oratory, and reasons that since without religion and law, the State cannot flourish, and without skill in speaking, members of the ecclesiastical and legal professions cannot properly perform their duties, the study of oratory is essential to the well-being of the British Constitution:

Upon the whole, when it is considered that the members of the two most necessary professions to society, the church and the law, to whose care all the spiritual and temporal concerns of mankind are committed; and that they who compose the grand council of the nation, upon whom the welfare and safety of the state depend, can not possibly discharge their duty without skill in speaking, it may be matter of the highest astonishment that this art has never hitherto been studied in Great Britain.⁹

At the end of *British Education*, Sheridan sums up his case for a revival of the study of oratory:

Upon a review of the whole it must be allowed, that our system of education is extremely defective, and that too in some of the most essential points . . . How far the revival of the art of oratory may contribute to remedy these defects, is submitted to the judgement of the reader . . . Should . . . an easy and practicable plan be proposed, whereby this art might be taught by as sure rules, and upon as certain principles as any other . . . should at the same time a scheme be offered for finishing the education of a gentleman, which . . . should render the English youth of fortune more accomplished, and better qualified for the proper discharge of all duties and offices in life, than any system . . . ; would the design meet with suitable encouragement?¹⁰

That his plan of educational reform through the study of public speaking did not receive the encouragement he apparently expected, is indicated by the facts of Sheridan's later life and by the accounts of his critics. For example, *The Gentleman's Magazine* reviewer seizes on the real weakness of Sheridan's theory when he writes: ". . . it is an unaccountable opinion that the consequence of expressing such ideas as are conceived with propriety, elegance, and force, will be the conception of right ideas."¹¹

Sheridan's insistence that oratory would completely reform the Pulpit, the Senate and the Bar certainly seems as ridiculous today as it did in the eighteenth century. However, if his "unaccountable opinions" are set aside, there is a great deal in *British Education* that is realistic and constructive. For instance, Sheridan does reflect the widespread concern during the period about the standard of British eloquence; and his remarks, when taken with other criticisms of a similar nature, make it quite clear that most public speakers lacked energy and propriety in their delivery. Again, at a time when Greek and Latin occupied the most prominent place in the school curriculum, Sheridan's plea for the study of the English language in schools was obviously justified, and his proposal for a scheme which ". . . should render the English youth of fortune more accomplished and better qualified for the proper discharge of all duties and offices in life."¹² is remarkably modern in spirit, with its emphasis on "vocational" training and its concern for the future needs of students.

Unperturbed by attacks on *British Education*, Thomas Sheridan began to give public lectures on elocution. In 1757, he delivered an oration on elocution and education at the Music Hall in Fishamble Street, Dublin,¹³ the immediate result of which was the founding of the Hibernian Society at Dublin in 1758. The purpose of this Society was, of course, to carry out the plan for the improvement of the education of youth first mentioned in *British Education* and later described in his *Plan of Education* in 1769.¹⁴ The scheme came to nothing. First Sheridan withdrew when his Dublin enemies insisted that as an actor, he was unfit to lead a seminary for the education of youth; later, the Hibernian Academy, which had opened in Oxmantown under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Leland, Senior Fellow of Trinity College, closed its doors when the number of subscribers began to dwindle.

Though abortive, the scheme was important for two reasons. Apart from the attention the whole affair drew to the question of education and the subject of elocution, a reading of the attacks made upon the plan,¹⁵ especially those made by schoolmasters, suggests that in both public and professional quarters there was a definite interest in the promotion of a modern curriculum. Also, in spite of the collapse of the academy, Sheridan's theories were receiving attention elsewhere in Dublin. At Sam Whyte's "Seminary for the Instruction of Youth," Sheridan's methods were adopted and his theories applied; even John Watkins, the most prejudiced of all Sheridan biographers, refers to the "flourishing school of [Mr. Whyte],"¹⁶ and from the nature of the newspaper advertisement quoted by the writer of *A True History of the Scheme for erecting a new Seminary for Education*, it is clear that the name of Sheridan had some attraction for those interested in education.¹⁷

Sheridan made further attempts to set up a school for cultivating the "Living Language and the Powers of Elocution" in 1762, 1769 and 1783-4, but these later ventures met with little or no success.

After his withdrawal from the Hibernian Scheme in Dublin, Sheridan, Walter Sichel tells us, "shook the dust off his shoes on the thankless city, and transferred his debts and harangues to London."¹⁸ In London, he continued to try to promote the study of elocution by delivering lectures in the Pewterers' Hall and at Spring Gardens. These lectures attracted enough attention to prompt Samuel Foote to satirize them in two farces, *The Orators* (1762) and *The Mayor of Garret* (1764); Foote ridicules Sheridan's proposal to teach the Scots, Welsh and Irish how to speak English with the proper pronunciation, and makes fun of his theory that the evils of the world can be cured by elocution. For example, in *The Orators* Foote, in the role of the lecturer on elocution, introduces his lecture:

My plan, gentlemen, is to be considered as a superstructure on that admirable foundation laid by the modern professor of English, both our labours tending to the same general end; the perfecting of our countrymen in a most essential article, the right use of their native language. . .¹⁹

and the play proceeds with the introduction of "Donald," a shining example of the force of Sheridan's teaching. "Donald," who speaks in almost unintelligible Scots dialect, has attended a course of lectures given by Sheridan to the Select Society in Edinburgh in 1761, and now shows what he has learned about oratory:

Donald: Dinna heed man — The topick I presum to haundle, is the miraculous gifts of an orator; wha, by the bare power of his words, he leads men, women and bairns as he lists.²⁰

Such attacks seem to have done Sheridan little harm, and, like the "Hibernian" venture, probably at best helped to bring people's attention to bear on the subject of elocution. In any case, it is clear that his lectures in various parts of Britain were very popular in their day. On the subject of the London lectures Watkins is forced to write:

[Sheridan's] reception was very flattering; and after reading his lectures to a crowded auditory at the west end of the town, he was prevailed upon to repeat them at Pewterers' Hall, in the city, and next at Spring Gardens. Incredible as it may seem, the fact is certain, that he had upwards of sixteen hundred subscribers, at a guinea each.²¹

Scots writers are similarly reluctant to record the success of Sheridan's Edinburgh lectures in which, at the invitation of the influential Select Society, he tried to teach the natives how to get rid of their Scottish accent. Nevertheless, the *Scots Magazine* tells us that for four weeks during June and July, 1761, three hundred gentlemen, "the most eminent in this country for rank and abilities,"²² attended his lectures on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 6 p.m.

In a letter from Corpus Christi College, dated 1st April, 1759, John Cowper, the poet's brother, makes the following reference to lectures on elocution Sheridan delivered at Oxford and Cambridge:

Mr. Sheridan has been down to pay us a visit, and met with a very favourable reception. No less than one hundred and ninety subscribers. I hear he had one hundred and eighty at Oxford and three hundred in Town . . .²³

A Hogarth print in the British Museum with the title "The Dublin Orator" shows Sheridan lecturing to Oxford doctors, including the Vice-Chancellor. Most of them hold the horn-books from which children learnt the alphabet! Both Oxford and Cambridge later bestowed honorary M.A.'s on Sheridan. On the subject of the Cambridge honour, Watkins concedes that

. . . the distinction plainly evinced the sense which the heads of that ancient seat of learning had of his merits.²⁴

Finally, in spite of Dr. Johnson's prognostication that "Ridicule" had "gone down before him,"²⁵ Sheridan lectured with great success at Bath and Bristol during 1763 and 1764. So favourable in fact was his reception there that he returned to Bath in 1770. A writer in *The London Magazine* reports from Bath in 1763:

While that arch wag Foote, as appears by the London papers, is preparing to give a new course of comic lectures on oratory, we are here to be instructed by the most solemn lectures, on the same important subject, from the mighty Sheridan.²⁶

In the meantime, Sheridan's London lectures continued to enjoy great success, and Watkins writes:

Such was . . . the general desire to become skilled in declamation without much study, that the lecturer proceeded with an increase of hearers and popularity.²⁷

The sardonic note heard in many accounts of Sheridan's lectures is largely the result of the extravagant claims of *British Education*. However, what is important is that the lectures did draw large audiences, sometimes of extremely influential people. This in itself indicates a lively interest in elocution and propriety of speech.

Sheridan's claim to be regarded as one of the leaders of the eighteenth-century Elocution Movement rests not so much on the popularity of his lectures as on the influence of his *Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762), a book which was popular both in Britain and America. His preoccupation with *pronunciatio*, or oral presentation, is seen from a glance at the *Lectures*. He describes elocution as "the just and graceful management of the voice, countenance, and gesture in speaking," and in Lectures II-VI he deals with articulation, pronunciation, emphasis, accent, tones (of the speaking voice), pauses, pitch and management of the voice; in the final lecture he is concerned with gesture. A survey of his major works reveals that they present the general theories he expounds in these lectures. Throughout, his main concern is clearly in the general aspects of oral delivery and in the factors which contribute to its effectiveness. Also, everywhere in his works, oral delivery is con-

ceived as applying to both public speaking and reading. No particular distinction of basic techniques is made between these two forms.

In the *Lectures*, Sheridan scrupulously avoids any mechanical rules or instructions for the exact manner in which various thoughts and emotions should be expressed. Rather than propose definite rules for gesture as well as for movements of the body and changes of countenance, he advises the speaker to follow nature:

Let him speak entirely from his feelings; and they will find much truer signs to manifest themselves by, than he could find for them . . . in order to persuade, it is above all things, necessary that the speaker should at least appear himself to believe what he utters; but this can never be the case, where there are any evident marks of affection, or art.²⁸

This is a significant point. By adopting such an approach, Sheridan dissociates himself from the methods of the so-called "Mechanical School" of elocution, whose members, such as John Burgh and Gilbert Austin, analyse gesture and issue detailed instructions on how to express various emotions. Here is an example from Burgh:

Pity, a mixed passion of love and grief, looks down upon distress with *lifted hands; eyebrows drawn down; mouth open; and features drawn together*. Its expression, as to looks, and gesture, is the same with those of *suffering* (see *Suffering*) but more moderate, as the painful feelings are only sympathetic and therefore *one remove*, as it were, more *distant* from the *soul*, than what one feels in his *own* person.²⁹

This kind of instruction shows the direct influence of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, popular at this time. Referring to one of his "heads," Lavater writes:

Everything here announces the *phlegmatic*; all the parts of the face are blunted, fleshy, rounded. Only the eye is a little too choleric; and if the eyebrows were placed higher, and not quite so thick of hair, they would be so much the more analogous to the character . . . To complete the idea of a true phlegmatic, the mouth ought to be more open, the lips softer and hanging.³⁰

An American writer on this subject states that Burgh's *Art of Speaking*, one of the earliest texts on elocution published in America, is "based upon Sheridan and adds nothing to his theory."³¹ Such a statement is quite misleading. Although the second edition of the *Art of Speaking* (1763) has a long quotation from Sheridan's *Lectures* on its title-page and expresses many of Sheridan's views on elocution, the inclusion in it of more than twenty-five pages of mechanical rules of the kind described above immediately excludes it from the Natural School of elocution. Indeed, Burgh's work is much closer to Austin's *Chironomia* (1806), which, like the *Art of Speaking*, presents very elaborate descriptions of the various emotions and their appropriate

gestures, and even provides symbols to indicate the different movements of the body.

Some writers have questioned Sheridan's alliance with the Natural School of elocution. Perhaps his position as a member of that school is best made clear by his repeated insistence that imitation is of negative value and leads only to artificiality and affectation. Another typical statement on the subject from the *Lectures on Elocution* reads:

. . . avoid all imitation of others; let him [the orator] give up all pretensions to art, for it is better to have none, than not enough; and no man has enough, who has not arrived at such a perfection of art, as to wholly conceal his art.³²

Also, by insisting that in the reading of, say, sermons and speeches the reader should strive to come as close as possible to relaxed, "off-the-cuff" speaking by using the mode of expression peculiar to conversation for both reading and speaking, Sheridan places himself firmly in the Natural School. In this regard he is opposed to conventional punctuation because it tends to direct the reader into an artificial manner of reciting:

Nothing has contributed so much, and so universally, to the corruption of delivery, as the bad use which has been made of the modern art of punctuation, by introducing artificial tones into all sentences, to the exclusion of the natural; for the teachers of the art of reading, in order to distinguish, with greater accuracy, the stops from each other in utterance, annexed to them different notes of the voice, as well as different portions of time. Those which marked an incomplete sense, had an elevated note of the voice joined to them; those which marked a complete sense, a depressed, or low note. This uniform elevation and depression of the voice, in all sentences alike, produced a new kind of tone, which may be termed the reading brogue, with which all who learned to read . . . became infected.³³

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a strong reaction against the prescriptive methods of the Mechanical School set in, and supporters of Sheridan and the Natural School attacked the methods of the former on the grounds that they produced delivery that was unnatural and insincere. This struggle between the two schools was not confined to England. In America, works on elocution kept alive the controversy and although the mechanical method remained popular there throughout the nineteenth century, Sheridan's *Lectures on Elocution* was the text used in many of the early American colleges.

During the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century there were many writers on elocution both in Britain and America, and in the main they follow closely the works of either or both Sheridan and John Walker, whose *Elements of Elocution* published in 1781 established him as leader of the Mechanical School of elocution. William Enfield's *Speaker* (1774) and his later work *Exercises on Elocution* (1780), are both based directly upon Sheridan's theories. *A Practical Treatise on Singing and Playing*, published by Anselm Bayly in 1777, contains Sheridan's rules, and in *The Alliance of Music and Poetry and Oratory* (1789) Bayly includes the whole of Sheridan's

section on delivery. William Scott in *Lessons on Elocution* (1779) makes clear his allegiance to the Mechanical School by presenting Walker's rules on elocution and Burgh's rules concerning the passions, but like Burgh in his *Art of Speaking* he expresses many of the views on elocution set forth by Sheridan in his *Lectures on Elocution*. Again, both *The Orator's Assistant* (1797) by Alexander Thomas and *The Pious Instructor* (1806) by Daniel Cooledge are based upon Sheridan.

A study of the systems of speech education which have been in use for many years now in British and American schools and colleges shows that these systems owe a great deal to the pioneering work of the early elocutionists, particularly Sheridan and Walker. Previously, the "graces of delivery" had been regarded as innate qualities and therefore not teachable; for the first time an attempt had been made to place elocution upon a scientific basis. In an article on the beginnings of English elocution, Charles Fritz writes:

The ancients . . . gave only general advice on delivery . . . Aristotle spoke of volume, rhythm and pitch, but did not analyse them. Quintilian spoke of the raising and lowering of the voice as tending to move the feelings of the hearers, but gave no suggestion as to method.³⁴

This point is also made by James Murdoch in *A Plea for Spoken Language*, published in 1883. He concludes that:

The combined influence, however, of Walker and Sheridan tended to awaken a new interest in reading, which, up to their time, had been taught in a hard, dry, mechanical manner, entirely devoid of expressive meaning. Save a strict injunction to drop the voice at the end of a sentence, no attempt had been made to give variety to its sounds, but the pupil was allowed to drone on like the buzz of a bee-hive.³⁵

In the end, Walker's influence was far greater than Sheridan's, for the more mechanical aspects of the elocutionists' teaching continued to flourish in the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, and even by the end of the eighteenth century Walker's works had more or less become the accepted guides to the art of delivery; for example, Lindley Murray accepted Walker's theories for his celebrated grammar and Walker's *The Art of Delivery* was regarded by many as the last word on the subject. Nevertheless, it is clear that Sheridan's contribution to the Elocution Movement was considerable and Murdoch's statement is not an exaggeration. James Rush whose *Philosophy of the Human Voice* (1827), along with the texts of Sheridan, Walker and Austin, was to become influential in the American elocution movement, pays the following tribute to Sheridan in his peculiar nineteenth century American English:

The works of Steele, Sheridan and Walker have made large contributions to the long neglected and still craving condition of our tongue . . . Mr. Sheridan is well known by his accurate and systematic investigation of the art of reading: and though he improved both the detail and method of his subject, in the departments of pronunciation,

emphasis, and pause, he made no analysis of intonation. A regretted omission! The more so, from the certainty, that if this topic had seriously invited his attention, his genius and industry would have shed much light of explanation upon it.³⁶

It is more difficult to see any of Sheridan's influence on the areas of public speaking he attacks in *British Education* — that is, the Senate, the Bar, and the Pulpit. In this connexion, his failure to execute his plan of education, first proposed in *British Education*, meant that the most promising avenue to the educational reforms he envisaged was closed.

The only significant example of his influence on eighteenth-century parliamentary oratory is to be found in the political career of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who naturally was thoroughly trained in elocution by his father. Percy Fitzgerald writing in *The Lives of the Sheridans* comments:

The father carried out a sort of patriarchal system of education, reading prayers every morning and expounding a portion of Scripture, after which a selection from some sterling author was read aloud with just and due elocution, which he seemed to think the only safeguard for society. The son must have profited — even malgre himself — by these wholesome exercises.³⁷

It is possible that Sheridan's rather tenuous association with the Select Society of Edinburgh resulted in his teaching having some effect on the development of Scots forensic oratory. In any event, the influence can only have been slight. The most that can be said is that through the impetus his Edinburgh lectures gave to the movement in Scotland to improve public speaking by forming debating societies in Edinburgh and at the Scottish universities, Sheridan contributed in some measure to the pre-eminence of the Scottish Bar in the later eighteenth century. In *My Own Life and Times 1741-1814*, Thomas Somerville records that:

In the summer of 1761, Mr. Sheridan . . . made a visit to Edinburgh, and delivered a course of lectures on elocution . . . He was patronized by the professors in the College, by several of the clergy, by the most eminent among the gentlemen at the bar, by the judges of the Court of Session, and by all who at that time were the leaders of public taste . . . A rage for the Study of elocution became universal, as if it were the master-excellence in every profession.³⁸

Sheridan's influence on pulpit oratory is a more tangible one. During the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century there appears to have been a general revival of interest in matters relating to the more practical affairs of the pulpit. There was a marked interest, for example, in the publication of books dealing with pulpit action and delivery, and some either quote Sheridan or follow his methods throughout.³⁹ In his *Chironomia*, Gilbert Austin, who is particularly concerned with pulpit eloquence, quotes freely from the texts of Cicero, Quintilian, Walker and Sheridan. In 1813 appeared the second edition of the Rev. William Falkner's *Strictures on Reading the Church-Service arranged from Sheridan's Art of Reading and*

Chiefly Designed for Candidates for Orders, and as late as 1858 there appeared *Church Reading containing the morning, evening, and communion services of the Church of England pointed and accented according to the method advised by Thomas Sheridan, M.A.*, by the Rev. John Halcombe, Rector of St. Andrew's, Worcester. In his Preface, Halcombe writes:

The manner of reading the Services of the Church of England having lately excited much attention, I have put forward the following pages, with the earnest desire that they may tend, in an initial measure at least, to remedy some of the faults so justly complained of . . . The work from which I have mainly quoted was published, in 1775, by Thomas Sheridan, Esq., M.A. . . . In those portions of the service on which Mr. Sheridan has not dwelt, I have endeavoured to follow out his system of pointing to the best of my power.⁴⁰

It is clear, then, that Sheridan's work relating to preaching was made use of by those who contributed directly to the general revival of interest in pulpit delivery, which came at the end of the eighteenth century and continued in the nineteenth century.

To consider the effect on the English theatre of Sheridan's efforts to promote elocution is to move to firmer ground. As a prominent member of the Natural School of elocution, his influence on English stage presentation appears to have been considerable. Lily Campbell describes the period from 1690 till 1714 as one of classicism, "marked on the stage by formalism and convention and the acceptance of tradition."⁴¹ The principal features of stage delivery in tragedy during this period of classicism were pompous utterance, a very high-flown style of declamation, and a formalism one normally associates with grand opera. This highly artificial style of declamation deriving from the influence of the French theatre and the popularity of rhymed tragedies, such as Dryden's *The Indian Emperor*, has a lot in common with the mechanical school of elocution in its lack of flexibility and its fondness for formal and "fixed" gesture. As early as 1716, Aaron Hill had complained about stage delivery being artificial and unnatural, and in 1725 Charles Macklin made an unsuccessful attempt to bring the "natural style of acting" to the English stage. Describing his failure, Macklin later wrote,

I spoke so *familiar*, Sir, and so little in the *hoity-toity* tone of the Tragedy of that day, that the Manager [Rich] told me, I had better go to grass for another year or two.⁴²

It was not until 1741 that David Garrick's performance of Richard III "in the natural manner" signalled the beginning of a new age in stage presentation, a performance which provoked Quin's famous exclamation, "By God, Sir, if this young fellow is right, then we have all been wrong."

There are various reasons for the decline of the Garrick school of acting after 1776, but one principal factor was the growing importance of the art of declamation, a direct result of Sheridan's teaching. Lily Campbell describes in emphatic terms this new influence in the theatre:

To understand the new forces that were at work in the stage affairs of 1776, it is necessary to go back to trace a new interest that was just coming into an influential place after years of struggle on the part of one man, Thomas Sheridan. It was a two-fold interest — an interest in the propriety of speech and an interest in declamation in and for itself.⁴³

From all accounts, Garrick did not excel in the art of declamation. Lily Campbell refers to this failing in the following passage:

In declamation Garrick does not seem to have attained so high a degree of excellence as in action, however. He was criticised by his contemporaries for his halting speech, for his failure to pay proper attention to stops and pauses . . . for his hurried closing of a period, for his lack of discriminating pronunciation of phrases, and for his lack of judgment in the manner of pauses.⁴⁴

Of course, Sheridan was not the first to be preoccupied with the subject of correctness in speaking. Before Garrick's time, Quin is said to have edited Shakespeare, not only correcting mistakes in his use of language but bringing up to date archaic phrases. Also, Macklin, an Irishman, had had to deal with his Irish accent early in his career in the interests of his stage pronunciation, and it is significant that he gave public lectures on elocution. Nevertheless, to quote Lily Campbell once more, "with Thomas Sheridan, the real study of the subject commenced."⁴⁵

Sheridan's close association with the London stage stemmed from his own successful career as an actor and a theatre manager. Between 1744 and 1777, he played many leading roles at Drury Lane, Covent Garden and the Haymarket, and was considered by many a rival to Garrick in certain parts. On at least one occasion Sheridan was able to use his position as theatre manager to deliver his lectures on elocution from the Drury Lane stage.⁴⁶ However, it was through his friendship with the great Mrs Siddons that Sheridan was able to influence English stage presentation to any significant degree. When he saw her perform at Bath in 1780, he recognized at once her talents as an actress and brought her back to London, where he taught her a great deal about acting, in particular the art of declamation. In his *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, James Boaden describes her method of studying a part:

As to her MODE of study, in her apartment it was *silent*. She conceived there certainly all that she meant to do; but it was only at rehearsal that she knew the effect of voice upon the conception. For some time after her return to town, she was fond of having the experience of old Mr. Sheridan to confirm her own judgment; but when he went to the theatre with her, "where *alone*," she said, "she could shew him exactly what she could do at night."⁴⁷

Elsewhere, Boaden points out that "Old Sheridan was the adviser of Mrs Siddons in the brilliant course of her first town seasons,"⁴⁸ and Walter Sichel records in his valuable if disorganized biography of the Sheridans that Mrs Siddons always referred to Sheridan as the "father of her career." It

is not surprising, then, that from 1782 to 1814 when she and her brother John Philip Kemble ruled the London stage, propriety of speech and elegance of declamation were emphasized. Lily Campbell sums up the extent of Sheridan's influence on the stage in the following words:

That this interest [in declamation] was strengthened in the stage world by his rule and by his influence exercised through Mrs. Siddons and the younger actors must be immediately evident.⁴⁹

Sheridan's influence on the Kembles was not confined to the legitimate stage. In 1769 he turned to a new venture which was really a development of his lectures, namely, readings and recitations from the works of the best English authors, an activity enthusiastically taken up by Mrs Siddons and John Kemble later.⁵⁰ Boaden gives a first-hand account of these readings in the following passage:

At the west end of the town, he [Sheridan] used what was called Hickford's great room, in Brewer-Street, Golden Square. There, perhaps he collected from about one hundred to two hundred friends and amateurs, to hear his course of lectures in three divisions; and there, assuredly, the clergy might learn to give more *exact* impression to the liturgy, the senator more *dignity* to his harangue, and the poet more *music* to his verse. He made considerable effect in the speeches of *our* Demosthenes, Lord Chatham, and of his Grecian prototype. Much of the church service, too, he stripped of the usual nasal monotony, and settled the emphasis by a sound logic. In poetry, I consider him to have made more of the *Alexander's Feast*, and the famous *Elegy* by Gray, than even *very* attentive readers could have discovered. He had all the confidence that the stage alone can bestow; much love for his art, and a long life bestowed upon it . . .⁵¹

The Sheridan MS in the British Museum contains a large number of press notices describing these "Attic Evenings." The following one is typical:

ENGLISH READING

AT HICKFORD'S GREAT ROOM, Brewer-Street on WEDNESDAY the 3rd of March, will commence a Course of Reading, which will take in the whole compass of English Composition, both in Poetry and Prose; whether the serious, the sublime, the pathetic; or the light, the gay, and the humorous. The Poetic Part, from the Works of Milton, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Shenstone and others. The Prosaic will consist of Dissertations on Language and Elocution, a Sermon of Sterne's and select Speeches of Lord Chatham.

By MR. SHERIDAN, SENIOR.⁵²

In 1780 and 1781, John Philip Kemble, by then a very popular figure in the theatre, decided to give "Attic Evenings" after the manner of Sheridan, and in 1813 Mrs. Siddons gave public readings at the Argyle Rooms. Boaden describes the scene of her readings:

In front of what was the orchestra of the Old Argyle Rooms — a reading-desk with lights was placed, on which lay her book, a quarto volume printed with a large letter. There was something remarkably elegant in the self-possession of her entrance, and the manner in which she saluted the brilliant assembly before her . . . In the reading of *Othello*, the general opinion seemed to be, that Mrs Siddons threw her whole force into Iago, a judicious choice . . . Upon the recognition by the noble Moor of the *practice* under which he had fallen, the exclamation "O fool, fool, fool!" seemed to express ALL *that* sense of rashness, false inference, unguarded trust to appearances, unbounded love, and measureless despair, which fill his mind at the moment when it is uttered. She has seldom been greater than she was at that moment.⁵³

It is significant that during the period in which they dominated the English stage, Kemble and Mrs Siddons held these "Attic Evenings" of their own, and also attended Sheridan's readings.⁵⁴ The effect that their preoccupation with declamation must have had on current stage presentation is obvious, but their contribution to the development of a general interest in elocution and recitation cannot be ignored either.

There are many accounts of Sheridan's quality as a reader. In his *Memoirs of Kemble*, Boaden writes: "His [Sheridan's] reading, though harsh, was remarkably accurate, and exemplified his theory in emphasis and pronunciation,"⁵⁵ and under the heading "Examples of the Great and Astonishing Power of eloquence," *The London Magazine* quotes the following tribute to the power of Sheridan's reading:

Mrs. Oldfield used to say, "the best school she had ever known, was only hearing Rowe read her part in his tragedies." Mr Hawkins Browne had never felt Milton, before hearing Sheridan pronounce his exordium — such readers are by far the best commentators of a great poet."⁵⁶

In 1785 Sheridan joined with Mr John Henderson, the actor, and together they gave many readings during that year in various halls in London.

The great popularity of the readings is indicated not only by private accounts in contemporary diaries and essays but also by press notices. A reviewer writes on 28th February 1785:

Alexander's Feast was crowded on Friday night with a most brilliant audience. Their numbers, however, gave no interruption to that noble performance — The Royal Visitors, as the immortal MILTON expresses it, were "*all ear!*" and the numbers which attended them adopted their laudable example.⁵⁷

The "Attic Evenings" so popular in their day were not quickly forgotten. One correspondent writes as late as 1793 of the reputation enjoyed by Sheridan and Henderson, and in the same article makes a valuable comment on the cultural climate of the period:

In an enlightened age, when the polite arts are cultivated, and learning and the *belles-lettres* shine conspicuous in the higher ranks of life, every essay to promote their study and culture should be looked upon with admiration, and esteemed a national benefit. Some of the first characters in the British Senate are also the first in the Republic of Letters. The nobility have patronised, and deigned themselves to grace a rising and improving stage. But, though writing and public speaking are thus encouraged, little has been done towards the practice and improvement in *reading*. The names of Sheridan and Henderson, now, alas! no longer to be heard of, some few years back drew crowds to attend their readings; an entertainment which would have honoured the elegant and the refined age of Athenian learning. From that time to this, La Texier's French readings have been the only entertainment of the kind given for the gratification of the more refined understandings.⁵⁸

(Le Texier gave French readings to "a fashionable circle" at his house in Lisle Street, Leicester Square, and so helped to continue the practice set by Sheridan and Henderson.)⁵⁹

These events reveal the new interest in public readings, and the value of such readings in the development of the appreciation of English literature is evident enough. How much attention was paid to details of pronunciation, emphasis and gesture, etc. by those attending the "Attic Evenings," it is impossible to say. However, it is unlikely that the readings gave no added stimulus at all to the growing interest in propriety of speech and the art of declamation, already developed by Sheridan, Walker and others, and sustained through the influence of Kemble and Mrs Siddons.

One important result of the "Attic Evenings" was the emergence during the second half of the eighteenth century of a large number of "elegant extracts," or pieces for reading and recitation, selected from the poetry and prose of the best authors. The most popular of the early anthologies was Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts*, which was first published in 1783 and went through repeated editions.⁶⁰ Knox's selections set the pattern for a great many imitations which began to appear in increasing numbers from about 1785. Most of the anthologies or "extracts" give, in addition to the selected pieces for recitation and reading, instructions to the student regarding gesture, delivery, pronunciation, etc. For example, the title page of Walker's *Academic Speaker* reads:

A selection of parliamentary debates, orations, odes, scenes, and speeches from the best writers, proper to be *read* and *recited* by youth at school, to which are prefixed elements of gesture, or plain and easy directions for keeping the body in a graceful position, and acquiring a simple and unaffected style of action explained and illustrated by plates.⁶¹

The choice of set pieces from prose or poetry is quite wide, and the pieces are generally classified for the guidance of the reader: for example, "vehement passion: Moloch's speech about war (Milton); Reflection and Argument: Cato's soliloquy on immortality (Addison); Grief, Tenderness: The Bard

(Gray).” Many of the anthologies, especially the earlier ones, include passages made popular by Sheridan and Henderson.

It is not surprising to find a large number of “elegant extracts” for the use of young ladies, since as well as sewing, dancing, genteel deportment, etc., “reading with propriety” and “speaking elegantly” were listed as a young lady’s accomplishments. In a letter to her daughter in 1760, a mother offers the following counsel:

To be able to read with propriety, is certainly a very genteel accomplishment . . . There are so many vicious ways of reading . . . Your cousin P . . . you know, reads with such hurry and rapidity, and such neglect of the proper stops and pauses, that the most attentive hearer cannot understand one sentence she pronounces . . . I would have you form yourself upon the example of your mistress . . . She reads with the same easy natural voice as she uses in conversation.⁶²

These “elegant extracts” are of special significance, because the advance towards the systematic study of English language and literature in schools and universities was marked by the increasing frequency with which English authors were recommended as models for students of language and literature.

The most powerful factor in the development of the study of English and elocution in the eighteenth century was the influence of the dissenting academies. The enormous differences in educational policy between the academies and the universities are clear: while the universities continued to provide a thoroughly classical education, the academies were offering the kind of liberal education which Sheridan advocates in *British Education* and describes in his *Plan of Education*. Unlike the classical programme with its almost exclusive preoccupation with Greek, Latin and logic, the programme of the academies, with its emphasis on “new studies,” such as modern languages, science and commercial subjects, had a utilitarian base, and was clearly concerned with the students’ future needs. In short, it is difficult to say when the study of English and elocution would have begun had the academies never existed. For this reason, the importance of teachers like Philip Doddridge (Head of Northampton Academy, 1729-51) and Joseph Priestley (Tutor in the Languages and *Belles-Lettres* at Warrington from 1761 till 1767) and their influence on subsequent educational practice cannot be over-emphasized.

It was largely due to Priestley’s efforts that the difficult business of modernizing the curriculum was begun. From the following passage found in Priestley’s *Memoirs*, it can be seen what kind of progress had been made:

At Nantwich (Cheshire) . . . for the use of my school, I wrote an *English Grammar* (printed in 1761), on a new plan . . . and to this I afterwards subjoined *Observations for the use of proficient in the language*, from the notes I collected at Warrington; where, being tutor in the languages and *Belles Lettres*, I gave particular attention to the English language. . . . My *Lectures on the theory of language and universal grammar* were printed for the use of students, but they were not published. . . . Finding no public exercises at Warrington, I introduced them there, so that afterwards every Saturday the tutors,

all the students, and often strangers, were assembled to hear English and Latin compositions, and sometimes to hear the delivery of speeches, and the exhibition of scenes in plays . . . with a view to lead the students to a facility in writing English, I encouraged them to write in verse . . .⁶³

The language of the lecture room was now English, but more important, English had become recognized as a subject to be taught in schools. Priestley's *Lectures*, published at Warrington in 1772, was adopted as a text-book at Hoxton Academy the following year, and his *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761) certainly filled a gap in manuals of English for schools. In 1774 William Enfield, who became tutor and rector at Warrington in 1770, published *The Speaker; or miscellaneous pieces selected from the best English writers . . . To which is prefixed an essay on elocution*. This anthology became a well-known text-book in schools, and by 1800 at least eleven editions of the work had appeared. The 1790 London edition was prefixed by two essays, one on elocution and one "On reading works of Taste," and in 1795 the first American edition was published in Boston. Between 1814 and 1858 ten further editions were brought out in Britain and America.

Any discussion of *The Speaker* must take into account Sheridan's contribution to the pioneering work done by the dissenting academies in the development of the study of elocution and the systematic study of English language and literature.

Written by Enfield for a course on elocution,⁶⁴ *The Speaker* is based throughout on Sheridan. In his "Essay on Elocution," prefixed to the main work, Enfield makes it clear that he is a member of the "Natural School" of elocution. He writes:

FOLLOW NATURE, is certainly the fundamental law of Oratory, without a regard to which, all other rules will only produce affected declamation, not just elocution.⁶⁵

Elsewhere, Enfield follows Sheridan on the subjects of Emphasis, Gesture, Tones, and the like, and it is not surprising to find "Sheridan on Elocution" listed in the "Select Catalogue of Books in the Library belonging to the Warrington Academy" for the year 1775. *The Speaker* also provides another example of a highly popular kind of school text-book which had its origin in the "Attic Readings" given first by Sheridan, and it is very similar to Knox's "Elegant Extracts" which appeared ten years later. Enfield, sometimes referred to as the "apostle of politeness," has gathered together 171 passages as examples of good English prose and verse, including excerpts from Milton and Shakespeare.

In 1796 appeared *Sheridan's and Henderson's Method of Reading, intended as a necessary Introduction to Dr. Enfield's Speaker*. The title page reads:

*Sheridan's and Henderson's Practical Method of Reading and Reciting English Poetry elucidated by a variety of Examples taken from some of our most popular poets and the manner pointed out in which they were read or recited by the above Gentlemen: Intended for the Improvement of Youth and as a necessary introduction to Dr. Enfield's Speaker.*⁶⁶

In his preface the compiler writes:

Many of the principal poems and extracts which will be found in the following selection, I have heard read or recited either in public or in the hour of social enjoyment, by one or other of the gentlemen I have here chosen to answer my present purpose.

The text itself furnished detailed instructions as to how the various passages should be read. Here is an example:

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn
Or busy *housewife* ply her ev'ning care,

The word *housewife* sounds rather clumsily on the ear, and Mr. Sheridan used in consequence to pronounce it as if spelt *hussif*, which has a much better effect than the other, and we shall therefore recommend the use of it to the scholar.

The continued popularity of the grammar books of Joseph Priestley, Lindley Murray and others and of Enfield's *Speaker*, with its appendices, points to a new interest being taken in spoken and written English.⁶⁷ A taste for polite literature was obviously coming to be regarded as a necessary social accomplishment; and, as far as the academies were concerned, *belles-lettres* were part of the educational programme for all students, no matter what their future occupation was to be. J. W. Adamson sums up the significance of the popularity of Murray's *Grammar* in these words:

Its success was immediate and extraordinary. In the year of its author's death (1826), it had reached its fortieth edition and, in spite of abridgements in many editions and innumerable imitations in Great Britain and America, it was still being printed in 1877. Its immediate success testifies to the great and increasing number of schools, chiefly private boarding schools, which, at the opening of the nineteenth century made an "English education" their avowed aim.⁶⁸

Clearly, the period of classical supremacy in education was coming to an end. New and "modern" subjects had become established in the curriculum and a move was afoot to provide a more practical education for the middle classes. Elocution had become a recognized subject, and English literature was being used as a storehouse for specimens of good style in the teaching of composition. In short, the displacement of Latin by English had begun.

It should be borne in mind that there were other forces at work in the development of the study of *belles-lettres* in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. As Herbert Maclachlan points out, "The term *belles-lettres* itself implicitly expressed indebtedness to the France of the 18th century, whose language, science and politics . . . exercised so potent an influence upon Englishmen, and by no means least upon Protestant Dissenters . . . during the last quarter of that century."⁶⁹ Also, in contrast to the situation in England, Scottish culture was both realistic and progres-

sive, especially after 1750, and Scottish influence was extended south of the border by Scottish-trained tutors who introduced to the English dissenting academies the methods of instruction and the text-books they had been exposed to in the universities of Scotland:

Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774) quickly established itself in common use and long retained its vogue as an authoritative anthology of "recitations" from Shakespeare, Sterne, Pope and more modern writers; its author . . . expressly intended his book to be associated with the Scottish teaching of rhetoric. Its early success points to a considerable number of schools and schoolmasters in sympathy with some recognition of the vernacular as an educational instrument.⁷⁰

Such was the work of the dissenting academies and the part played by Sheridan in the development of English studies and the teaching of elocution. With the effective introduction of modern subjects and the successful adoption of realistic methods, the groundwork had been done for the educational expansion of the nineteenth century.

Sheridan's wild claims for the powers of oratory and the dogged pomposity with which he pursued his visionary schemes to promote the study of elocution and English naturally led to his being regarded as a somewhat ridiculous figure by his contemporaries and biographers. One of Sheridan's friends, the Rev. Peter Peckard, Master of Magdalen College, makes the following reference to one of the schemes in a letter to Archdeacon Blackburne:

There is not upon this earth a man of more honour and honesty [than] my old friend Sheridan . . . He thought all the evils of Ireland, civil, moral and religious, were owing to this cause, that the bakers, tailors and shoemakers, were not brought up orators. I remonstrated as far as I could touch so delicate a subject, considered it as folly. He called me the croaking raven — I was always throwing cold water on his most favourite scheme. Some of this cold water at length fell on our correspondence.⁷¹

Walter Sichel, writing about Richard Brinsley Sheridan's fortunes in 1770, comments:

He was bound for a concert-room where his father, the pompous and indefatigable gentleman-actor and author, the teacher and exemplar of elocution, had advertised recitations and a discourse on the powers of rhetoric "with a view to the improvement of human nature."⁷²

Statements like these presumably help to explain why no serious attempt has ever been made to set a proper value on the influence of Sheridan's work. Yet we have seen that in various ways Sheridan's efforts produced significant results. For instance, there is no doubt that as a leader of the Elocutionary Movement, he made an important contribution to the development of modern theories of public address both in Britain and America. Also, through his lectures, his "Attic Evenings" and the "elegant extracts" that grew out of them, he helped to promote the study of English in schools and universities,

and at the same time exerted a notable influence on eighteenth-century social and literary culture. These are good enough reasons for looking more closely at Thomas Sheridan's achievement in the field of eighteenth-century Rhetoric and *Belles-Lettres*.

NOTES

- ¹ Wilbur S. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700* (Princeton, 1956), p. 318.
- ² Richard Hurd, ed., *The Works of Joseph Addison* (London, 1811), IV, 326.
- ³ Thomas Sheridan, ed., *The Works of Dean Swift* (London, 1803), VIII, 15.
- ⁴ John Bradshaw, ed., *The Letters of Chesterfield* (London, 1893), I, 119. Three letters written between 1739 and 1748 deal specifically with the art of speaking. For example, see Bradshaw, I, 354.
- ⁵ See Thomas Sheridan, *A General Dictionary of the English Language. . . To which is prefixed a Rhetorical Grammar* (London, 1780); John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (London, 1791); William Scott, *A Spelling, Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language* (Edinburgh, 1777), etc.
- ⁶ John Ward, *A System of Oratory* (London, 1759), I, 15.
- ⁷ See Francois de Fénelon, *Dialogues on Eloquence* (Glasgow, 1750), and Charles Rollin, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres* (London, 1749).
- ⁸ Sheridan, *British Education* (London, 1756), p. 17.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 533-34.
- ¹¹ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXIX (1769), 306. See also *The Scots Magazine*, XXIV (1762), 372.
- ¹² Sheridan, *British Education*, p. 534.
- ¹³ Thomas Sheridan, *An Oration Pronounced before a Numerous Body of the Nobility and Gentry Assembled at the Musick-hall in Fishamble Street* (Dublin, 1757). There is nothing in the *Oration* that had not been stated already in *British Education*. For a review of the *Oration*, see *The Monthly Review*, XVIII (1758), 205 ff.
- ¹⁴ See *The Proceedings of the Hibernian Society* (Dublin, 1758).
- ¹⁵ See *A Letter to a Schoolmaster in the Country* (Dublin, 1758), and *A Critical Examination of the Sense and Style and Grammar of Mr. Sheridan's Oration* (Dublin, 1758).
- ¹⁶ John Watkins, *Memoirs of R. B. Sheridan* (London, 1818), I, 95.
- ¹⁷ *A True History of the Scheme for erecting a new Seminary for Education* (Dublin, 1769), pp. 5-6. Part of the notice reads, "Mr. Sam Whyte in Grafton Street teaches English in a Method approved by Mr. Sheridan."
- ¹⁸ Walter Sichel, *Sheridan* (London, 1909), I, 242.
- ¹⁹ Samuel Foote, *The Orators* (Dublin, 1762), p. 9.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ²¹ Watkins, I, 108.
- ²² *The Scots Magazine*, XXIII (1761), 389-90.
- ²³ John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the 18th Century* (London, 1812), VIII, 563.
- ²⁴ Watkins, I, 102.
- ²⁵ James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Oxford University Press, 1934), I, 394.
- ²⁶ *The London Magazine*, XXXII (1763), 274.
- ²⁷ Watkins, I, 108.
- ²⁸ Thomas Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (London, 1762), p. 121.
- ²⁹ James Burgh, *The Art of Speaking*, 2nd ed. (London, 1763), p. 24. (First edition 1761.)
- ³⁰ John C. Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, trans. Henry Hunter (London, 1789), III, 102.
- ³¹ Charles Fritz, "From Sheridan to Rush: The Beginnings of English Elocution," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XVI (1930), 78.

- ³² Sheridan, *Lectures on Elocution*, p. 120.
- ³³ Thomas Sheridan, *Lectures on the Art of Reading* (London, 1775), I, 159-60.
- ³⁴ Fritz, "The Beginnings of English Elocution," 75.
- ³⁵ James Murdoch, *A Plea for Spoken Language* (Cincinnati, 1883), p. 26.
- ³⁶ James Rush, *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* (Philadelphia, 1833), pp. xvii-xviii.
- ³⁷ Percy Fitzgerald, *The Lives of the Sheridans* (London, 1886), I, 70.
- ³⁸ Thomas Somerville, *My Own Life and Times, 1741-1814* (Edinburgh, 1861), pp. 56-57.
- ³⁹ See, for example, *The Fashionable Preacher, or Modern Pulpit Eloquence* (London, 1792); *The Preacher's Manual* (London, 1812); *Extempore Preaching* (London, 1859).
- ⁴⁰ John Halcombe, *Church Reading* (London, 1858), pp. v-vii. Here is a specimen of Sheridan's system of "pointing," that is, his method of distinguishing the emphasis and pauses:
- O come' let us si'ng unto the Lōrd let us heartily
rejoice' in the stren'gth of our salva'tion'"
Let us come before his presence with thanksgi'ving'"
and shew ourselves gla'd in him' with psālms"
For the Lord' is a grēat Go'd" and a great ki'ng'
above 'all Gods'"
The sēa is hi's` and he` made it` and hi's hands
prepared the dŕy land'"
- Key to the system of pointing (*Art of Reading*, I, 181):
- To point out emphatic words`
To point out shortest pause`
To point out double time of the former`
To point out full stop'"
A syllable to be dwelt on some time - (over the syllable)
A pause longer than any belonging to the usual stops =
A syllable rapidly uttered`
- ⁴¹ Lily B. Campbell, "Stage Presentation in England," *PMLA*, XXXII (1917), 199.
- ⁴² William Cooke, *Memoirs of Charles Macklin* (London, 1804), pp. 12-13.
- ⁴³ Campbell, 191.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.
- ⁴⁶ See Sichel, I, 580.
- ⁴⁷ James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons* (London, 1827), I, 366-67.
- ⁴⁸ James Boaden, *Memoirs of John Kemble* (London, 1827), I, 401.
- ⁴⁹ Campbell, p. 195.
- ⁵⁰ Lily Campbell writes: "In 1769, Sheridan gave at Foote's theatre in London, 'An Attic Evening's Entertainment,' which was apparently the first of the entertainments of recitation and music so popular during the late 18th and the early 19th century" (*PMLA*, XXXII, 193). This is not strictly true, since Sheridan gave "An Attic Morning's Entertainment" at Bath when he lectured there in 1763. A notice of this is found in *The London Magazine*, XXXII (1763), 274.
- ⁵¹ Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, I, 367-68.
- ⁵² Dated 24 February, 1784. An earlier notice, dated 1769, names the pieces to be read: "At HICKFORD'S ROOM, in Brewer-Street, this Day being Friday the 7th of this Instant April, will be the second Subscription Entertainment; in which the following Pieces will be read by MR. SHERIDAN: 1. A Piece of Composition, in Prose, never before delivered. 2. The Speeches of Satan, Moloc, and Belial, at the Beginning of the second Book of Paradise Lost. 3. The Hermit, a Poem; to be found in the Vicar of Wakefield. 4. Gray's Elegy, written in a Country Churchyard. 5. The latter Part of Pope's Abeldard and Eloise. Between these several Pieces there will be Musical Performances etc."
- ⁵³ Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, II, 383-87.
- ⁵⁴ Boaden, *Memoirs of John Kemble*, I, 80-81.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 399.
- ⁵⁶ *The London Magazine*, XLV (1776), 581.
- ⁵⁷ Sheridan MS, British Museum Eg. MS 1975, f. 135d. The readings, like his lectures on elocution, did not escape the attention of the satirist. See *English Readings: A Comic Piece in One Act* (London, 1787). This farce was performed in London in 1787.

- ⁵⁸ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, LXIII (1793), 1084.
- ⁵⁹ See Boaden, *Memoirs of John Kemble*, I, 253-4.
- ⁶⁰ (a) *Elegant Extracts: or useful and entertaining passages in prose selected* (by V. K.) etc. 1783. Other editions of this anthology appeared in 1790, 1808, 1816.
- (b) *The Prose Epitome; or Elegant Extracts abridged from the larger volume* (of V. K.) appeared in 1791.
- (c) *Elegant Extracts, or, useful and entertaining pieces of poetry selected* (by V. K.), for the improvement of Youth was published in 1789. Other editions appeared in 1789, 1796, 1801, 1809, 1816; an edition was published in Boston, U.S.A., in 1842.
- (d) In 1807 appeared *The Poetical Epitome: or Elegant Extracts abridged from the large volume* (of V. K.) etc.
- ⁶¹ John Walker, *The Academic Speaker* (London, 1801), 4th ed.
- ⁶² *The Polite Lady or a Course of Female Education in a series of letters from a Mother to her Daughter* (London, 1760), pp. 7-8.
- ⁶³ *Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley to the year 1795 (by himself)* (London, 1806), pp. 44 ff.
- ⁶⁴ In his dedication, Enfield states that the work has been "undertaken principally with the design of assisting the students at Warrington in acquiring a just and graceful elocution."
- ⁶⁵ William Enfield, *The Speaker* (London, 1782), p. vi. (First edition 1774.)
- ⁶⁶ *Sheridan's and Henderson's Method of Reading* (London, 1796).
- ⁶⁷ Joseph Priestley, *The Rudiments of English Grammar* (London, 1761, 1768, 1769, 1771, 1772, 1784, 1786, 1789, 1798). For a list of grammar books published after 1760, see R. C. Alston, *A Bibliography of the English Language from the invention of printing to the year 1800* (Leeds, 1965), I, 33 ff.
- ⁶⁸ A. Ward and A. Waller, eds., *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1949), XIV, 397.
- ⁶⁹ Herbert Maclachlan, *The Unitarian Movement* (London, 1934), p. 82. Rollin's *Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres* went through eleven editions in English between 1734 and 1810.
- ⁷⁰ *Cambridge History of English Literature*, XIV, 399.
- ⁷¹ W. Fraser Rae, *Sheridan* (London, 1896), II, 5.
- ⁷² Sichel, I, 184.