"A Just and Graceful Elocution": Miscellanies and Sociable Reading

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The essays collected in this journal issue illustrate some of the various ways in which scholars can draw on miscellanies as an important, and relatively neglected, form of transmission for eighteenth-century verse. The Digital Miscellanies Index (DMI) will enable scholars to establish with more evidence, and more precision, than ever before, exactly what happened to individual works and authorial reputations, and to create for the first time a data-driven reception history of verse in this period. Yet miscellanies are, of course, more than a vehicle for their contents—they are works in their own right, which repackage literature for a range of needs and interests. Such compilations can be an index not only of textual transmission, but also, more broadly, of the popular educative and social uses of literature. Miscellanies could be educational, ribald, pious, gender-specific, topographically located, high, low, intended for social performance or for private perusal. This essay will consider the uses and reading experiences that miscellanies enabled by focusing on a subgenre—collections designed for reading aloud. These texts became popular in the second half of the eighteenth century, during and following the elocution boom of the 1760s and 1770s. Over twenty separate volumes of poems and prologues explicitly intended for recital were published between 1762 and1800—and many more contained

Eighteenth-Century Life
Volume 41, Number 1, January 2017 DOI 10.1215/00982601-3695990

selections of prose. Some of them went through multiple editions, such as William Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774), which reached nine new editions by the end of the century, and continued to be widely republished and pirated well through the nineteenth century. Elsewhere we see the repeated reworking of similar titles, as in *The Spouters Companion* (1770), *The British Spouter* (1773), *The Sentimental Spouter* (1774), *The New and Complete English Spouter* (1781), or *The Spouter's New Guide* (1796). A vogue for "spouting clubs," amateur debating and recitation societies dedicated to the practice and performance of public speaking, and for public orators and elocution tutors such as John Walker and Thomas Sheridan, created a market for accessible compilations of verse and prose for the amateur reader or orator, and these collections proliferated in subsequent decades. Yet as we shall see, in providing reading material, such collections also aimed to shape the formation of literary taste, and to provide appropriate models of social performance. Some of them aimed to teach their readers to imitate the dramatic celebrities of the day, whilst others roundly rejected theatrical models in favor of instruction in polite domestic recitation. With their explicit editorial interventions, they often told readers not only how to read a passage, but also, how to interpret it. As such, they offer an insight into the perceived social and cultural roles of literature in the later eighteenth century, and suggest some of the ways we might use miscellanies to understand the relationship between the practical, educational, and aspirational uses of poetry, and the formation of a literary canon.

Two contradictory things happen in the history of eighteenth-century reading. One is the birth of a generation of silent readers. As numerous historians of reading have argued, by the end of the century, more and more people were reading on their own, silently.[1] But at the same time there was a near obsession with learning to read out loud: this is the great age of elocution. The two phenomena were probably related: with greater literacy and increased access to cheaper and more varied reading, reading aloud became a source of aspirational entertainment rather than a necessity. And a body of advice literature grew up to support this popular interest. Rhetoric had, of course, a long and well-documented history, and was the subject of numerous treatises from the Sophists onward. But in the mid eighteenth century, ideas about delivery and linguistic effect began to be reassembled in more accessible forms for aspirational audiences eager to acquire skills of self-improvement. We can see in the publications of the period the evidence of an elocution movement that came to dominate debates about language,

performance, and every aspect of public speaking: while a vast number of books were published teaching good delivery, the essay on how to read aloud became a genre in itself.[2] The most famous elocutionists of the mid eighteenth century were Thomas Sheridan and John Walker, both of whom evangelized in print and in public lectures about the power of good oratory.[3] They shared an emphasis with other elocution works of the period on conveyed feeling over textual content. It is not merely the words that persuade, but the overall representation of a sincere expression of emotion through the combination of words, gesture, voice, and tone. Consequently, much of the practical theory on how to speak well focused on the means of infusing feeling into the text, since, as Francis Gentleman, author of a short introduction to elocution, put it: "What we read or speak *unfelt*, must be like painting without light or shade."[4] This preoccupation with how to read well played a significant part in the public understanding of pulpit oratory in the eighteenth century, and the emphasis on the passions clearly spoke to the modern preacher. The primary market for a good proportion of primers on elocution was clergymen; with some assistance, they could become charismatic leaders of their flocks. The kind of printed guidance available ranged from the early anonymous *Some Rules for Speaking and Action* (1716), to the two-volume *A System of Oratory* (1759) by John Ward, a handsomely produced octavo version of a series of lectures originally given at Gresham College, published with an inaugural oration spoken in Latin. Both ends of the market referred to classical models of rhetoric, and some, like Thomas Sheridan, went so far as to argue that good public speaking would revive the glory of ancient Greece and Rome in modern Britain. However, in the case of *Some Rules of Speaking and Action* and other cheap guides, the stress was on the rudiments: variation in tone and speed, use of pacing, and a biddable body: "The *Mouth* should not be *writh'd*, the *Lips bit* or *lick'd*, the *Shoulders shrugg'd*, nor the *Belly thrust out*."[5] One of the important terms in the literature of elocution was "ease," the idea that performed reading should seem "natural." As we shall see, mannered and stiff delivery was frowned upon. But naturalism needed to be learnt. All the guides of the period stress that the key to effective (and affective) reading was the exaggerated mimicry of a form of natural speech: readers had to find a way of channeling into public performance the intonation and expression used when they genuinely felt something. So James Fordyce, one of the most prolific and widely read conduct writers of the period, urged his readers to imagine their friends telling them a story, and how their emotions would

play out in their faces: "The various turns of their Features, the various Radiations of their Hearts, in their Eyes; to observe these glancing with all the bland Lightening of an Animated Tenderness, or melting into the mild Suffusions of Sympathy, or beaming with the cordial Smiles of Congratulation, or darting Forth the very Flame of Virtue."[6] If a speaker could learn to project some of these selfsame effects in the pulpit, the result would be transformative: the preacher's face would become "a sort of bright Mirrour to his Mind, in which we discern the successive Images of Truth and Virtue, that rise up there" (73). We see here, as elsewhere, the tension between naturalism and theatricality in eighteenth-century elocution. Preachers were advised to perform an authentic range of emotions in order to give weight to their words, drawing on the experience of natural responses to project a text dramatically for their audiences.

Elocution also had secular, as well as spiritual, uses. There were those who relied upon public speaking in their professional roles, such as lawyers and politicians, and many of the guides to public speaking name these as potential readers. Elocution was also a way of rising socially. In the 1750s, oratory became the craze for tradesmen and apprentices who formed the amateur spouting clubs, which provided a responsive audience to aid the aspirant speaker.[7] The clubs were often located in the City of London, or on the edge of it, which suggests the trading and artisanal makeup of their membership: tradesmen, merchants, and apprentices, all eager to learn to read well. One satirical account described the most famous of these clubs, the Robin Hood Club in Butcher Row on the edge of Smithfield Market, as comprising

> Bakers, Shoemakers, Journeymen-Barbers, *Fleet* Parsons, Psalm-singing Clerks, and Apprentice-Boys, who every *Monday* Night make no inconsiderable Figure on the Side of Infidelity, and deliver their Sentiments in a Diction so pure, that few, if any, can tell what they drive at.[8]

A substantial number of miscellanies aimed at domestic recitation addressed themselves, or alluded to, these clubs: *The Spouter's Companion* (1770), *The Sentimental Spouter* (1774), *The Juvenile Roscius: or Spouter's Amusement* (1770), and other compilations repackaged a broadly similar range of theatrical fare. Few of these were collections aimed at moral self-improvement, but rather, convivial male entertainment. One of the earliest, *The Spouter's Companion: or Theatrical Remembrancer* (1770), was a collection

of prologues and epilogues from celebrated recent performances, along with some character prologues. As the title suggests, the material was closely linked to contemporary theatrical performance and celebrity—the frontispiece was an engraving of David Garrick "in the Character of a Drunken Sailor" speaking the prologue to David Mallet's *Britannia*. Like other prologues and epilogues in the volume, the Mallet prologue was also published in dramatic collections such as *A Compleat Collection of the Best and Most Admir'd Prologues and Epilogues* (1771), *The Theatrical Bouquet* (1770, 1789), and *The Essence of Theatrical Wit* (1768). The epigraph on the title-page of *The Spouter's Companion* depicts the collection as a literary feast at a sociable, largely male, tavern gathering: the prefatory verse imagines the booksellers, John Cooke's Shakespeare's Head, as an inn. The public setting of the material in the volume shifted from the playhouse to the tavern, and culinary metaphors convey the playfulness of the collection:

> Then come and regale on our high-season'd book,
> Dish'd out and serv'd up by your Caterer, Cooke.
> Here's Humour and Wit ready dress'd for your ease,
> So chuse as ye fancy, and spout as ye please.

The first few prologues in the compilation are character pieces illustrating a range of male theatrical roles: the blustering bully, the fribble, and the hot-headed blood. They offered opportunities for comic performance of a series of dramatic types, in the home, tavern, or spouting club. As a social text, such collections are comparable to compilations of toasts, jestbooks, anthologies of riddles and short pieces, such as *Sir John Fielding's Jests* (1781), subtitled *New Fun for the Parlour and Kitchen*.[9] *Sir John Fielding's Jests*, a selection of comic stories and quips had, according to its editor, supposedly, migrated from the public, and largely male, environment of the alehouse: the reader is told that the jokes and stories inside are "carefully transcribed from original manuscript remarks, and notes made on such occasions, and at the Shakespeare, Bedford Arms, and Rose Taverns, . . . where the above celebrated Genius and his Jovial Companions (the drollest Wits of the Present Age) usually met to Kill Care and promote the Practice of Mirth and Good Humour." The spouting collections were closely allied with, and drew on, the appeal of the contemporary playhouse. They alluded to celebrated contemporary actors such as Samuel Foote, David Garrick, and Henry Woodward, and to the recent plays by Arthur Murphy, George Colman, and Richard Cumberland in which those actors had appeared.

Little distinction was made between the kind of performance or recitation appropriate for the stage, the social gathering, or the home.

Yet other elocution collections made strenuous efforts to distance their content, and the recital of the text, from dramatic activity. The argument in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* between the Bertrams over the performance of Elizabeth Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows* famously frames a debate about the morality of theatrical performance. In attempting to override Edmund Bertram's scruples about the *Lovers' Vows* performance, Tom Bertram reminds the assembled group that his father had always encouraged domestic recitation:

> And for any thing of the acting, spouting, reciting kind, I think he has always a decided taste. I am sure he encouraged it in us as boys. How many a time have we mourned over the dead body of Julius Caesar, and *to be'd* and not *to be'd*, in this very room, for his amusement! And I am sure, *my name was Norval*, every evening of my life through one Christmas holidays.[10]

Tom here conflates all kinds of acting and private theatricals—of which his father would not have approved—with the social recitation that was acceptable. As Margaret Weedon has shown, the works Tom alludes to were probably all taken from one of the most popular recital miscellanies of the late eighteenth-century, William Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774), which contained over 140 passages of varying length, and included narrative, didactic, and argumentative pieces, orations and harangues, dialogues, descriptive and pathetic extracts. [11] The selections were taken not from the theater, but from literary journals, and from works of individual writers, and the collection was reprinted, plagiarized, and pirated up until the middle of the nineteenth century. It was, Enfield said, designed to enable its first users, young men at the dissenting academy in Warrington, to attain a "just and graceful Elocution"—there is no mention of the playhouse here.[12] The distinction between home recital and dramatic performance fed into many other miscellanies designed for home recitation and reading. The editor of *Sheridan and Henderson*'s *Practical Method of Reading and Reciting English Poetry* (1796) urged his pupils to be expressive in their reading, yet not overly dramatic. He suggested a middle way between "the cold inanimated manner usually adopted by readers in common [and] the theatrical cant practised by most of our public performers."[13] The middle way between these two extremes was a naturalistic delivery.

Collections aimed at reading aloud in the domestic sphere, or in schools, were, however, more than mere compilations of practice pieces. John Walker's *Exercises for Improvement in Elocution, Being Select Extracts from the Best Authors* (1777) was ostensibly aimed at students in elocution who were looking for suitable works on which to hone their skills.[14] Walker, a former actor and then schoolmaster, had risen to fame for his elocution lectures and writings, in which he advocated the mechanical school of inflection, in distinction to Thomas Sheridan's "natural" school.[15] The advertisement for his *Exercises* suggested that the compilation might also provide some instruction for those seeking more general guidance in literary matters: "Mr. Addison's letters on taste, with some of the finest passages from Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination, and Pope's Essay on Criticism, not only furnish excellent lessons for reading, but form, in some degree, a system of polite knowledge" (Advertisement, n.p.). As "a system of polite knowledge," Walker's miscellany, like many others, was aimed at those who wanted to learn not just how to enunciate, but also how to think and talk about the texts being read. Elocution collections played an important role in introducing new readers to the art of literary appreciation, and to ways of understanding the texts that they were reading aloud. The advertisement for the duodecimo *Exercises in Elocution* refers to its "small size and price," and assuming that it was sold relatively cheaply, for some readers such a collection must have provided not just a handy selection of elocution pieces, but also an accessible anthology of great literary works. For many, this would have been their only point of contact with literature. The texts were arranged with the advertised literary critical passages at the front, as a guide to the kinds of concepts that were to be applied to the literary texts that followed. Addison's prefatory essays on taste and on the imagination offered abridged guidance on how to read. Like Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, these selected *Spectator* essays addressed the tricky matter of literary taste. Addison's *Spectator* 409 offered a reassuring compromise between the two traditional and conflicting notions that taste was innate, and that it could be acquired: "It is very difficult to lay down rules for the acquirement of such a taste as that I am here speaking of. The faculty must in some degree be born with us, . . . but notwithstanding this, . . . there are several methods for cultivating and improving it" (3). The *Exercises* were clearly designed to provide some of these "methods," cultivating taste and the appreciation of literary forms, and there are editorial interjections intended to shape the material for the uninitiated. But Walker's interventions were also intended

to emphasize the spiritual aspects of human improvement, sometimes in ways that run counter to the original text. For instance, Addison's *Spectator* essays are followed by a Lenten sermon by Laurence Sterne, urging congregation and readers to pay attention to the due function of sobriety and virtue in their conduct. This, in turn, was followed by passages from *Paradise Lost*, which began with Satan's address to the fallen angels, and his apparently heroic mien, but ended with "Adam's prospect of the future miseries of his posterity" (66). Walker, who was a converted Catholic schoolmaster, effectively used his editorial role to refashion canonical texts to fit the message of the whole miscellany—that is, the linking together of cultural, personal, and spiritual education. Introducing extracts from Mark Akenside's long poem, *Pleasures of Imagination*, Walker explains that he has supplemented Akenside's words with passages from Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* in order to paint a fuller picture of human existence. He says of Akenside:

> His picture of man is grand and beautiful, but unfinished. The immortality of the soul, which is the natural consequence of the appetites and powers she is invested with, is scarcely once hinted at in the poem: this deficiency is amply supplied by the masterly pencil of Dr. Young; who, like a good philosopher, has invincibly proved the immortality of man, from the grandeur of his conceptions, and the meanness and misery of his state; for this reason, a few passages are selected from the Night Thoughts, which, with those from Akenside, seem to form a complete view of the powers, function, and end of man. (67)

Walker excerpted Akenside's poem into short sections, each of which he subtitled to emphasize the moral dimension of the imagination: these sections are headed "Primary pleasures of imagination"; "Superiority of moral excellence"; "Natural beauty a mark of divine beneficence." Young's poem is similarly treated. This is a recurring feature of the miscellanies discussed here and elsewhere in this special issue, many of which suggest an apparent irreverence towards authorial intention. As the essays by Chris Salamone and Louise Curran illustrate, texts are happily remolded to suit new ends. Akenside's *Pleasures* was given a focus on the spiritual afterlife that it did not originally possess, and revised to fit a wider agenda.

Exercises in Elocution is a good example of the way in which elocutionary texts were seen as a medium for cultural and theological instruction. Despite its editor's background as a teaching elocutionist, *Exercises* was a work that put conceptual content over practical delivery. It seems to have

been designed for adult readers. Unsurprisingly, we find a similar shaping of educational and moral content in collections designed for younger readers, particularly those aimed at young women. In his *Sermons to Young Women*, clergyman James Fordyce made the role of the oratory movement in female education very explicit. He advised his readers to learn how to read verse well aloud, and was very clear about the kinds of women he hoped would acquire this skill. Mindful of the daughters of aspirational tradesmen, he observes:

> But what can be more ridiculous than to see our city girls, not excepting the daughters of plain tradesmen and honest mechanics, taught for years together, at great expence, a smattering of that which soon after they leave the Boarding-school is generally forgotten; while they are left ignorant of the superior beauties and just pronunciation of our mother-tongue?[16]

The Juvenile Speaker (1787) was explicitly aimed at those "in seminaries for female education" who were too young for Enfield's *The Speaker*, and who would benefit from some simpler guide to reading aloud. Edited by Mary Weightman, the author of a number of improving works for young people, the *Juvenile Speaker* began with a preface claiming that practice of the passages within would help banish the "unnatural tones of voice" and "dull monotony" that plague childish reading.[17] But beyond that, Weightman claimed that good reading style also enabled early readers to learn from the texts that they read, or which were read aloud to them, "For while they are ignorant of the easy and natural, in reading, they are unable to relish what they read, and . . . a vast field of improvement is shut from them" (iv). This compilation was prefaced by a series of dialogues between two boys, suggesting that reading aloud was an accomplishment essential to both men and women. Their initial exchange implied that learning to read well was the key to avoiding social embarrassment:

> FREDERICK: Why, are you ashamed of being in genteel company, or would you behave foolish, because you were not at home, but amongst strangers?
> GEORGE: No, brother, I should be sorry to appear so ill-bred, but when you hear Henry, you will own I have reason to be ashamed of my manner of repeating, he speaks with so much freedom, and so easy and agreeable. (3)

George later reveals that he is afraid of being ridiculed by the assembled company, and might "perhaps have been laughed at all my life after," a high price to pay for a poorly executed recitation! From the discussion that

follows, it emerges that the first trait to avoid is reading "with a fine tune," that is, in a sing-song fashion (6). The boys go on to discuss the matching of the voice to the tone and genre of the passage, the reader's use of punctuation, and the differences between verse and prose. After this discourse follow the excerpted works, which are a series of prose pieces, largely drawn from eighteenth century clergymen and authors of conduct books, and then sections of poetry. As in the *Exercises in Elocution*, these passages were thematically arranged to reflect the moral precepts that they illustrated, and were selected for their ostensible suitability for their young female readers. The prose was drawn from contemporary educational and moral works, such as the Bluestocking Catherine Talbot's letters and dialogues instructing young women on how to occupy their spare time, or the Presbyterian minister Hugh Blair's sermon "The Duties of the Young."[18] Excerpts were labeled: "Introduction to the Oeconomy of Human Life"; "On Contentment, Employment of Time, &c"; "On Pleasing in Company"; and "On industry and the Improvement of Time." The verse passages are similarly selected and titled: "An Address to the Deity"; "Sweetness, an Ode"; "Meditations in a Grove."

Many of the poetic passages Weightman selected for elocutionary training had also appeared in *Poems on Various Subjects Selected to Enforce the Practice of Virtue* (1780, eight editions before 1800), edited by Thomas Tomkins. So although Weightman's selection is clearly designed to fit an elocution agenda, the material was also appropriate filling for a compilation aimed at moral improvement. We can begin to understand through this example the ways in which the subgenres of poetic miscellanies in this period related to one another: in this case, a similar body of poetry and prose circulated between different types of miscellany, some of which were explicitly designed as elocution primers, and some of which were morally educative. In this case, the practice of elocution was inseparable from the wider issues of social refinement and moral improvement. Miscellanies fused contemporary educational and theological writings with recent and canonical verse, producing a format through which *all* the virtues of reading were spelt out for those unfamiliar with the world of books and culture. As Louise Curran demonstrates, such publications effectively reshaped the reputations of many major eighteenth-century writers, offering a form of cultural transmission that extended far beyond mere compilation. We might also consider such miscellanies in relation to habits of excerpting and revising, as Chris Salamone's discussion of Shakespeare "in bits" sug-

gests. Since *Exercises in Elocution* and *The Juvenile Speaker* assembled gobbets of texts, specifically for improving social behaviour and teaching how to read aloud, texts needed to be manageably short. Yet major poems of the eighteenth century, such as Thomson's *Seasons* and Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, ran into thousands of lines, and therefore had entirely different posthumous identities as short excerpts, in miscellany culture. So, for example, Thomson's *Seasons* had various afterlives in the form of commonly chosen poetic extracts ranging from the narratives of Celadon and Amelia, along with Palemon and Lavinia, to set pieces extracted and retitled "A Prayer to the Deity," or "A Description of the Sun Rising." The frequent republication of these sections of verse would have dominated readers' sense of Thomson's lengthy poem.. In shortening longer works, editors could effectively reshape them to reflect moral or thematic concerns, and many miscellanies privilege thematic rather than authorial taxonomy. It is notable that the paratextual presentation of excerpts often stresses the editorially invented title of a passage, while the author's original name is not given, or given only in abbreviated form, often in a much smaller font, at the end of the passage. This trend is visible in John Drummond's 1762 *Collection of Poems for Reading and Repetition*.[19] This compilation is organized alphabetically, by theme, from "Advice," "Affliction," and "Age," through to "Wit," "Woman," and "Words". In this sense, it is comparable to early eighteenth-century commonplace miscellanies such as Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*, which offered selections of very short quotations from poems, organized thematically, resembling a manuscript commonplace book in printed form.[20] The difference is that the selections in the *Collection of Poems for Reading and Repetition* are much longer, up to thirty lines, and none of those in the first, alphabetical section of the collection is attributed to its author. Each heading could include several passages, or "sentences," that were drawn from a number of different authors, without indicating their original syntax or separate provenance. So, for example, under "Providence" we are given six lines each from Bevil Higgons's *The Generous Conqueror* (1702), James Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora* (1739), and Samuel Johnson's *Irene* (1749). Readers coming across these works in this form would have had no sense of the different authorial voices or literary contexts for each piece. There was also no distinction made between poetical lines drawn from plays in verse or poems; in being mined for sententiae, or memorable moments, the literary canon was entirely decontextualized. This lack of background gave readers only the text on the page

with which to infer the appropriate voice or tone for their reading, which was presumably thought enough. In his prefatory comments, Drummond explained why he omitted the names of the "most celebrated British Poets" whose works he included, noting that those who had aided him in compiling these passages could not always remember the author, although clearly, they could remember the passage (vii). This practice of anonymous excerpting was not unusual in miscellany culture, as many of the essays in this special issue have shown: it is clear that, for many editors and readers, the status of literature was not always linked to the name of the author, and the experience of reading a passage isolated from a sense of its literary origins was probably common.

Despite their claims to offer guidance for would-be reciters, none of the collections discussed so far offered particularly practical advice on how to render their contents in an engaging manner. Later reading primers, perhaps filling a gap at the lower end of the market, afforded a greater sense of elocutionary hand-holding, by including running commentaries on how to read aloud specific sections of a work. Such collections offer remarkable insights into popular ways of thinking about literary form, and give us an idea of how literature might have been read aloud. Again, these works combined two forms of instruction: they told the readers how to deliver a piece, but also told them what was moving, significant, or affecting about it. *Sheridan and Henderson's Practical Method of Reading and Reciting English Poetry* (1796), published two decades after the heyday of the elocution movement, described itself as a "a necessary introduction to Dr Enfield's Speaker," the most famous elocution or recitation collection of the era. In the preface to *Sheridan and Henderson's Practical Method*, the editor lamented the "dry method of theoretical forms" previously available in elocutionary texts, and explained his new approach, which was to mark the particular place where "some great master of elocution has afforded considerable pleasure in the delivery," Like the spouting collections, *Sheridan and Henderson's Practical Reader* draws on association with celebrity: in this case, the actors John Henderson, sometimes known as "the Bath Roscius'," and the actor, writer, theater manager, and elocutionist, Thomas Sheridan. The editor stakes his claim to special access to these theatrical celebrities: "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" (vii). We are told, for example, that he has heard Mr. Henderson read David Mallet's "William and Margaret" "in private" (42).

The reader was intended to recreate a performance by emulating a celebrity's delivery of a canonical text as witnessed and recorded by the editor, and some of the commentary takes the form of a reconstruction of performances by Sheridan and Henderson. We are led through *Hamlet* to the Ghost, as delivered by Sheridan:

> Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
> With a *low*, *solemn*, *awful* voice, as if repeating a short prayer. Then pausing ere you proceed, you raise your voice a little, not forgetting the great solemnity of *tone* and *manner*:
> Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
> Bring with thee airs from heav'n, or blasts from hell,
> Be thy intent wicked, or charitable,
> Thou com'st in such a *questionable* shape,
> That I will speak to thee.
> In all these lines observe the same solemnity as before-mentioned, and the word *questionable* to be spoken with a peculiarly marked *strong emphasis*, a kind of *burst of expression*, as if feeling a degree of confidence on the supposition that the ghost may be *questioned* without impropriety
> I'll call thee Hamlet,
> King, father, royal Dane:
> Here Mr. Sheridan used to stop for a considerable time, as if waiting for an answer, and then, with a kind of burst of exclamation proceeded –
> Oh! answer me;
> Let me not *burst* in ignorance;
> "*burst*"—he used to particularly mark. (14–15)

This combination of interpretation and memorial reconstruction offers a fine example of the historical performance of Shakespeare, as well as showing us what the domestic reciter was encouraged to do. Later on in the volume, we find more recent eighteenth-century texts and genres. The editor offers some advice especially relevant to reading in company—to take especial care not to let the reading of a long poem to "hang heavy and tedious on the ear" (63)—and he urges his users to be vigilant about the styles of reading demanded by different genres and authors. Readers were led through the delivery of fables by John Gay, which were to be read with a "neat flippancy" of expression, giving due attention to the places that needed an injection of "strength and energy" (82). The performance of lighthearted material seemed to require special elucidation: the author was clearly worried that his users would be so intent on perfect elocution that they would forget that the poem in front of them was supposed to be

funny. He was harsh in his advice here: "This mouthing-out what ought to go flippantly and trip from the tongue at once destroys the poet's intention, and is peculiarly disgusting" (106). There was a whole range of genres included in the collection: dramatic vignettes, sentimental tales, fables, comic dialogues, pastorals, and hymns. There were also songs and ballads, which were given their own set of instructions for spoken delivery, suggesting that musical forms were not always sung, but often read in performance. Would-be speakers here were told to avoid all that was "laboured or heavy" and to learn to distinguish between which pieces treat of sorrow and grief, necessitating a "slow and tardy mode of utterance" (202), and which demand warmth and animation. Elsewhere, he dealt with the pronunciation of unfamiliar words. How was one supposed to pronounce "jocund"? (as if it were spelt "jocund"). Did one pronounce "sans" in the seven ages of man speech from *As You Like It* the French way or English? (English) (4, 14). As these instructions suggest, this collection was not aimed at a readership that approached the world of letters confidently. However, this did not deter the editor of the *Practical Reader* from encouraging these readers to emend their texts according to their own judgment. There was nothing sacrosanct about the literary copy-text. So, glossing Sheridan's rendition of Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, the editor cites the lines "For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn, / Or busy housewife ply her ev'ning care," and then comments "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 therefore recommend the use of it to the scholar" (3). Likewise, discussing treatments of Hamlet's "To be, or not to be," soliloquy, he considers the lines "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, /And by opposing, end them?," and he comments,

> Henderson used, and with great propriety, the word *siege* instead of *sea*, for although a "*sea of troubles*" fully expresses the author's meaning, yet the metaphor being thus broken, the alteration by the above gentleman is evidently just.—To take *arms* against a *sea*, is an incorrect expression, the figure being thereby destroyed. (17)

And readers are also urged not to take too much notice of authorial punctuation: "We advise the scholar not to pay much attention to the common punctuation he meets with, but to stick close to the *spirit* and *meaning* of the author, and in so doing his own *taste* and *judgment* will of themselves

point out the necessary stops to be made" (92). There is a tension in this miscellany—as in others, such as the *Exercises in Elocution*—between n the close interpretative guidance of the practical approach, which seems to dictate in quite specific terms how texts should be read and recited, and the reliance, as here, to readerly judgement. Over and over again, the editor invokes the "genius of the reader" and the "discriminating powers of the reader himself," yet this is a collection based on the presupposition that the reader is wanting or unconfident in these critical faculties, and it is notable that in all the examples given, it is the editor who provides the emendation, rather than inviting readers to do so themselves.

Sheridan and Henderson's Practical Reader did not just deal with enunciation—gesture and the physical articulation of passion were fundamental parts of recitation, since "action, when applied, gives great *life* and *spirit* to reading" (199). So, for example, when leading readers through a rendition of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Hermit*, the editor writes "If you point your finger when you repeat the third line, as if observing the light, alluded to by the poet, the effect will be pleasing" (43). At times, this gestural advice seems to border on the ridiculous: discussing a line from Thomas Parnell's *The Hermit*, "The sage stood wond'ring as the seraph flew," he notes "Speak the last two lines as if you were in the act of observing the *angel ascending into heaven*" (63). It is hard to know how one would respond physically, to a literal ascension, but clearly, one had to try. Many of these instructions sound, to a modern reader, impossibly stagey and artificial. Did readers really clap their hands over their heart at every tender moment? Did they remember to look up and down at the appropriate times? These glosses, and those found in other reading primers and elocution guides, remind us that informality is a relative concept. The elocutionary movement privileged ease and naturalism, but that took the form of what seem now to us very artificial manifestations of feeling. The *Sheridan and Henderson* editor cautioned his readers to "steer between the actor and the reader" in delivering lines (32), again implying a middle way, and the conduct author James Fordyce urged readers to speak "as near the ordinary Way of speaking in common Conversation as possible. Let them not declaim, not imitate the Theatrical Manner, which over-does, or leads out of Nature, but speak easily."[21] At the same time, however, even in the non-theatrical collections, prominent performers on the stage were seen as good models for imitation, and as authorities on delivery. Few of the elocution miscellanies do not at some point invoke Garrick. The actress Charlotte

Charke considered a scheme to use her experience on the stage to teach domestic play reading, declaring that she would found an academy "Where Ladies and Gentlemen shall be, to the utmost of my Power, instructed in both the Art of Speaking and Acting; that though they should never come on the Stage, they shall be enabled even to read a Play more pleasingly to the Auditor, by a few necessary Hints."[22] On the other hand, much theatrical influence made a reading too artificial. Too mannered, too frigid, too inanimate, too flippant, not flippant enough, unsentimental or just plain boring—these were the potential minefields for all budding speakers of the period. Reading aloud in the eighteenth century was harder than it sounded.

Later eighteenth-century miscellanies reflect a widespread preoccupation with the improvement of oral delivery. Far from being a dying practice of preliterate communities, reading out loud *well* was a crucial element of polite accomplishment. Reading aloud became increasingly a matter of social preference rather than a necessity. Recitation miscellanies not only showed readers how to achieve affect, but they also gave them collections of literature to appreciate, and some introduction to the terms on which they might value the texts that they encountered. Editors shaped their representations of literature in ways that had a profound effect on readerly interpretation. In examining the numerous recital collections of this period, we can see not only the close connection between miscellany publication and the contemporary social vogue for reading aloud, but also the ways in which miscellany texts mediated a whole range of cultural concerns, from social aspiration to moral rectitude. Much work remains to be done on the readership of such collections. Although some were initially intended for a particular social group—the dissenting students at the Warrington Academy, or the daughters of aspirant tradesmen envisaged by James Fordyce—the wide circulation and republication of a collection such as Enfield's *The Speaker* suggests their appeal beyond the lower middling sort. *The Speaker* might have begun life as an aid to social aspiration, but it became the most popular anthology of its day, cited by many with far more sophisticated literary tastes.[23] The elocution movement shaped not only how words were spoken, but also what was spoken, and what was read, and is an essential context for understanding later eighteenth-century poetic collections. Whilst the DMI will enable powerful new quantitative analysis of its contents, we should not just count and list miscellanies, but also, read them.

Notes

1. On the shift from reading aloud to silent reading habits in this period, see Elspeth Jajdelska, *Silent Reading and the Birth of the Narrator* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 2007); Robert Darnton, "First Steps toward a History of Reading," in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (London: W. W. Norton, 1990), 154–87; Rolf Engelsing, *Das Burger als Leser, 1500–1800* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974); and David Hall, "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600–1850," in *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts, 1996), 36–78.

2. For excellent accounts of the rise of oratory in this period, see Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2005), especially 2–40; Patricia Howell Michaelson, *Speaking Volumes* (Stanford: Stanford Univ., 2002); and Jacqueline George, "Public Reading and Lyric Pleasure: Eighteenth-Century Elocutionary Debates and Practices," *ELH* 76 (2009): 371–97.

3. For a consideration of the competing theories, see Philippa M. Spoel, "Rereading the Elocutionists: The Rhetoric of Thomas Sheridan's *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*," *Rhetorica* 91 (2001): 49–91, and John Walker's *Elements of Elocution* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1799).

4. Francis Gentleman, *The Orator or English Assistant. Being an Essay on Reading and Declamation* (Edinburgh, 1771), 31

5. William Mears, *Some Rules for Speaking and Action; To be Observed at the Bar, in the Pulpit, and the Senate* (London: Printed for W. Mears, 1716), 14–15.

6. James Fordyce, *An Essay on the Action Proper for the Pulpit* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1753), 72–73.

7. Betty Rizzo, "Male Oratory and Female Prate: 'Then Hush and Be an Angel Quite'," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29.1 (2005): 23–49, especially 27..

8. Timothy Scrubb [John Kelly], *Genuine and Authentick Memoirs of the Stated Speakers of the Robin Hood Society. With Specimens Of several of their Speeches* (London: F. Stamper, 1751), 4.

9. Sir John Fielding [fictional author], *Sir John Fielding's Jests: or, New Fun for the Parlour and Kitchen: Being the Smartest, Wittiest, and Drollest Collection of Original Jests, Jokes, Repartees, &c* (London: Printed for the Editor, 1781).

10. Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. John Wiltshire (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2005), 149.

11. Margaret Weedon, "Jane Austen and William Enfield's *The Speaker*," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 11 (1988): 159–62.

12. William Enfield, *The Speaker: Or, Miscellaneous Pieces, Selected from the Best English Writers, And Disposed Under Proper Heads* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1774).

13. *Sheridan and Henderson's Practical Method of Reading and Reciting English Poetry* (London: E. Newbery, 1796), ix.

14. John Walker, *Exercises for Improvement in Elocution, Being Select Extracts from the best Authors, for the Use of those who study the Art of Reading and Speaking in Public* (London: T. Becket, 1777).

15. On Walker's influence as an elocutionist, see J. H. Lamb, "John Walker and Joshua Steele," *Speech Monographs* 32 (1965): 411–19, and E. K. Sheldon, "Walker's Influence on the Pronunciation of English," *PMLA* 62 (1947): 130–46.

16. James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, 2 vols. (London: A. Millar, 1766), 2:32.

17. Mary Weightman, *The Juvenile Speaker: or, Dialogues, and Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse; for the Instruction of Youth in the Art of Reading* (London: W. Bent, 1787), ii. Weightman's other publications include *The Polite Reasoner: In Letters Addressed to a Young Lady, at a Boarding School in Hoddesdon, Hartforshire* (1787), and *The Friendly Monitor; or, Dialogues for Youth Against the Fear of Ghosts and other Irrational Apparitions* (1791).

18. Chapter 10 of Weightman's *Juvenile Speaker*, on the habits of reading and use of spare time, is drawn from Catherine Talbot, *Essays on Various Subjects* (1772); chapter 5, "On the Advantages of Virtue," is drawn from Hugh Blair, *Sermons by Hugh Blair, D.D.* (1777).

19. *A Collection of Poems for Reading and Repetition. Selected from the most celebrated British Poets*, ed. John Drummond (Edinburgh: Printed for the Editor, 1762).

20. See Stephen Jarrod Bernard, "Edward Bysshe and *The Art of English Poetry*: Reading Writing in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46 (2012): 113–29, and A. Dwight Culler, "Edward Bysshe and the Poet's Handbook," *PMLA* 63 (1948): 858–85.

21. James Fordyce, *Dialogues Concerning Education*, 2 vols. (London, 1745), 2:297.

22. Charlotte Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (London: W. Reese, 1755), 174.

23. See Weedon, "Austen and Enfield's *The Speaker*."