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On the Origins of Speech as a Discipline: James A. Winans and Public Speaking as Practical Democracy

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This article argues that the history of the speech field is best understood by examining the primary sources for its institutional and pedagogical origins, and that public speaking instruction originates in a complex understanding of the civic implications of speech pedagogy.

One way of interrogating the discipline of rhetoric would be: What, exactly, do we teach and why? The answer depends, of course, on both our understanding of what rhetoric is, and on who "we" are. Our understanding of rhetoric is always suspended uneasily between two poles, performance and communication, where communication deals with functional or pragmatic concerns and performance with the aesthetic. These understandings are deeply intertwined—performances communicate and communication is always a performance—but they are not identical. Each picks out a different aspect of the phenomenon; normatively and descriptively, one can be highlighted or foregrounded at the expense of the other. Do we teach performance or function? The balance of this relationship has shifted over the history of the discipline, and it has taken different forms as rhetoric became institutionalized in academic departments. As it did so, "we" became institutionally multiple, and few of us fully understand this history.

Reviving this history is important, because the past has influenced and prefigured current thought in ways that are not always appreciated. When

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studied with care, the departmentalization of the field of Speech in the early twentieth century reveals some basic issues about the dominant understandings of the field and its historical origins. Was teaching speech just about coaching performance, or was it about developing "better communicators?" What was the purpose of communication skills: interpersonal, business, political? Were the discipline and its teaching based in scholarship? Was there a civic dimension to "speech," or speech teaching? We can ask in many cases the same questions of contemporary communication (or writing) instruction; as we move into the twenty-first century university, we need to be able to frame historically our understanding of disciplinarity and the meaning of rhetorical theory and instruction.

Methodologically, we could address these questions on two levels. One might be the "history of rhetoric," which is a textual and intellectual history fashioned out of the texts that have used that term over the last 2,500 years; the other would be at the level of academic fields or departments, which have existed for a little over 100 years. Although the rhetorical tradition may contain many possibilities, not all of them were (or probably could be) realized in the creation of departments of Speech and English that taught rhetoric (or departments of Classics that taught *about* rhetoric). So we have the problem of where to look for answers about concepts like "civic," "performance," "communication," and "speech." I want to propose that we need to look at departments and fields to address this question, and so we need to examine how teaching and working framed academic research. Did instruction play the marginal role in research that it does now; were teaching and research sundered in the style of the modern research university?

Consider rhetorical criticism, the dominant mode of rhetorical scholarship in Communication departments; its origins are often traced to Herbert Wichelns's 1925 essay "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," which argued that the proper approach to oratory was to look past its performative, literary qualities and focus on its functional, communicative aspects. At that time Wichelns was "Assistant Professor of Public Speaking" at Cornell University, and the essay appeared in a festschrift for Wichelns's colleague called *Studies in Rhetoric and Public Speaking In Honor of James Albert Winans*. The dedication read thus:

> To James Albert Winans upon his completion of a quarter century of teaching during which period by his work in college classrooms, by his writings and by his personal qualities, he has exercised a beneficent leadership in the field of academic instruction in public speaking, this book is offered by his pupils and colleagues. (iii)

Two intriguing things should strike us here. First, Winans is not generally remembered as an intellectual light but as a teacher—yet one of the most

significant critical essays of the early field was inspired by him. Second, the use of the term "public speaking" and the references to teaching should alert us that teaching and research were not nearly as separate as they are today. The rhetorical tradition has mainly been articulated through teaching, and the founders of the Speech field were no different in this regard (Walker 8; Keith "Response" 100–104).

In fact, I would like to argue that this point runs very deep: The intellectual origins of the Speech Communication field are embedded in the teaching practices of the new field. In particular, as a response to the demands of professionalization and the performative excesses of elocutionism, the early field reconceived rhetoric and public address through their teaching. Their reaction against the dominant mode of public/civic expression at the time, elocution, pushed them in a functional direction that seemed to obviate the civic dimension to communication. Yet, as we will see, although they stressed a functionalist interpretation of speaking, they invoked an elaborated understanding of civic interaction to preserve a civic element in public speaking; they took seriously the "public" in public speaking. Elocution had elevated oratory to a refined performance art; public speaking, while claiming to be the opposite, in its very practicality and functionality of performance, celebrated the democratic and populist aspects of American politics and life.

To explore these claims, I will first examine the origins of the field of public speaking and show how the pressures of professionalism and creating the institutional and intellectual bases for the field resulted in struggles with elocutionists and the literary scholars of the English departments. Then I will look briefly at the ways that public speaking and debate were taught and how they reflected and valorized, implicitly and explicitly, a democratic, civic sensibility.

Origins of Public Speaking and "Speech"

In November 1914, a group of ten members of the Public Speaking Section of the National Council of Teachers of English met for a day as the meeting ended, and so founded their own professional association, the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS). Their dissatisfactions, as well as the development of a professional association and departments of Speech at universities around the country, represent both a response to their current situation, and the influential reformulation of a tradition. Disciplinary status (as evidenced by a national organization) and professionalization cannot be usefully separated. The growing educated middle class wanted political and cultural validation for its work; in his history of the emerging professoriate, Burton Bledstein claims that the "culture

of professionalism incarnated the radical idea of the independent democrat . . . in contrast to the tradesman and the craftsman, the professional person defined the unique quality of a subject'' (Bledstein 86–87). Professionals deal in knowledge, theory, and principles, not in things, and this difference is also a class difference. Money can be inherited or earned, but knowledge is acquired through education, so higher education (universities as well as the professional schools of law, medicine, and so forth) was bound in a circle with idea of professionalism. Professionals needed to have fields of expertise, and those fields have to correspond to some institutional structure at a university so that a diploma could be awarded. Departments and their professional organizations multiplied in the years from 1880–1920 (Ross 62–63).

Larger issues also played a role. As progressive era political ideas unfolded at the turn of the twentieth century, the range of ''public communication'' expanded tremendously. The purely civic context of rhetoric became just one among others, and the possibility of business speaking, propaganda, public relations, and advertising as significant contexts of rhetoric, of ''speech,'' became a reality; speech teachers later struggled with this abundance of contexts, while trying to reconstruct the democratic core of communication. But right at the point where they were attempting to form a discipline, the world was changing all around them.

As is well known, late nineteenth-century speech instruction took place in two main venues. The colleges and universities provided instruction in oratory, debate, and homiletics, whereas private schools of elocution trained readers, declaimers, and other performers. At this point the two groups were not particularly in competition. University instruction in speaking (as opposed to a more theoretical approach, such as studying Cicero's works on rhetoric) was often provided by someone who had formerly been a private elocution teacher. The teachers in some cases had their own schools or departments (like Robert Cumnock at Northwestern), but in most cases as universities created departments in the late nineteenth century, or they placed speaking instruction in departments of English. This was an uneasy fit, on several levels, because teachers of reading and speaking diverged from their literary colleagues in terms of subject matter and approach to teaching, but more importantly in terms of academic prestige. Frank Rarig recalled the long-awaited separation of a speech unit from the English department at the University of Minnesota in 1927:

> The English department bade goodbye to us without any particular regret. In fact, it was in some respects a relief to the English department to be rid of us because, uh, their standards and focuses were considerably different from ours.

The problem, it seems, was almost entirely about academic status; the perceived focus on teaching, lowbrow platform performances, and debating alienated the speech teachers from the literature professors; before they separated, Rarig recalled, the hostility was palpable:

> We added little or nothing to their distinction as scholars, critics, teachers, and we didn't aspire for the kind of distinction which they aspired to. [Chairman] Elmer Stoll did stipulate that I should not be a professor of English. He didn't care much what I was; he insisted that speech was not a fit subject for a university, and was perfectly willing that I be called Professor of Speech.

The most natural disciplinary development would have been folding the elocutionists into university departments. They had formed their own professional association, the National Speech Arts Association, in 1890. Their use of the term *speech* represents an early attempt to place reading aloud, speaking, theater, and so on in a single category, and ironically the term would in fact become the defining term for the new field, even though the Speech Arts teachers were barely interested in public speaking, and not at all in debate. But even though at this time most universities had departments of "oratory" and "elocution," a new kind of teacher was emerging, one who had significant differences from the elocutionist model.

Meanwhile, public speaking and debate teachers were starting to talk to each other. At first, they interacted at the NCTE, the National Council of Teachers of English. In 1910, the Eastern Public Speaking Conference (EPSC; called until 1914 by the unwieldy name "The Public Speaking Conference of the New England and North Atlantic States") became the primary organization for college teachers of speech. The inspiration for a yearly conference came from James Winans, who recalled in a 1934 letter:

> I have no idea how many teachers were thinking of the need of an association. I know it was often in my mind in the years preceding 1920. This was partly due to my experience with the Speech Arters, and probably in part to the fact that I was sharing an office with the now celebrated economist, E.W. Kemmerer . . . naturally I heard much of the national association of the economists. . . . So rather naturally I fell to thinking: Why should not the teachers of speaking have an organization? And I fell into the habit of adding to any letter I wrote to a teacher of speaking, not *Delenda est Carthago*, but Why not build an association? . . . I do not recall that I ever got any reaction until I sent my query to Paul Pearson.

Winans articulated several important themes here. Other fields had lively and useful associations—the economists had been meeting for thirty years in one form or another. Why not public speaking? Merging with the "Speech

Arters,'' members of the National Speech Arts Association, whose lack of academic interests annoyed many public speaking teachers, did not seem to be a possibility. More so than composition teachers, elocutionists were rivals to public speaking teachers, competing for college students. Speech Arts faculty preferred the term ''Expression'' for their latest pedagogy, although in fact their teaching had not changed a great deal in forty years. In a letter to Herbert Wichelns in 1958 (nearing the 50th anniversary of the Eastern Communication Association, the successor organization to the EPSC), John H. Frizzell of Penn State recalled of an early EPSC meeting that:

> Kay, Pearson, Child, Davis, Miss Early, Redmond and I were the only ones on the program who, whatever our academic titles, were teaching ''Public Speaking,'' and that the ''elocutionists,'' and ''expressionists,'' ganged up on us to give us a bad time. That was how Wilbur Kay and I got acquainted. We had taken about all their propaganda we could stand, including an effort to change the name from Public Speaking Conference to something with ''Expression'' in it. I sneaked out and found a quiet place behind a barn where I proceeded to enjoy a comforting pipe. Presently Kay peeked around the corner, grinned, said ''Had you had enough, too?'' and we were friends.

What made the elocutionists so obnoxious? Even as the public speaking teachers thought they were attempting to give oral communication academic credibility, elocutionists were still hawking their wares in the manner of the private instructors most of them were; like the inspirational speakers of today, they had to display the qualities they were paid to develop in their students. The professionalism of the private speaking academy, where the teacher depended on attracting sufficient students, jostled uncomfortably with the academic ethos of professionalism. Winans voiced common sentiments in the same letter:

> I attended its [NSAA] meetings in 1905 and 1906; but it had little to offer a teacher of public speaking, since its chief interest was in professional entertainment. . . . Fulton of Ohio Wesleyan was its high priest. There were many fine and likable people in its membership, especially if you could get them to one side and kid them till they ceased to exude ''personality plus,'' and drop their air of selling themselves to their public. . . . Their meetings impressed one a bit like a country fair–they were there to advertise and sell their goods.

This dislike was returned in full measure, as one might expect. In 1948, John Frizzell recalled of the Eastern Conference: ''Only a few of us had ''public speaking'' in our titles; I know I did not. Most of us were members of the Departments of English . . . [The Elocutionists] sure looked down their noses at us mere public speaking folks.''

Yet the Eastern Public Speaking Conference was professionally important, not just as a respite from the NSAA hawkers, but as a way of creating an "invisible college," those disciplinary ties that made it possible to see oneself as part of a community of teachers and scholars. Without that community, sustaining faith in the new courses and methods would be increasingly difficult. Even though speech teachers might be acquainted with each other through intercollegiate debate (increasingly coached by faculty), the system was quite different from the modern system of tournaments, and they would not have had sufficient sustained contact. In any case, the isolation bothered speech teachers. Winans recalled:

> I do not suppose that the younger generation—to talk like a grandpa for a few minutes—can realize how great a change has come over us. Any time back of twenty-five years ago each teacher stayed in his own little corner, hugging to his own pet "system," and believing all the other fellows were nitwits and freaks. . . . His extreme insistence upon his own little system of eternal truth was probably in part due to the fact that he had an inferiority complex. His own community jeered at him, or at best ignored him as a one who had nothing of consequence, and to maintain self-respect he had to insist constantly that he had something very precious; and he often added that he was not as other teachers of speaking—those contemptible "elocutionists." He was often a lonely soul for lack of colleagues who took a lively interest in his work. . . . Hence conferences . . . filled a real need.

And as they met, public speaking teachers began to talk to each other about what their biggest problems were, and they concluded their problems all stemmed from begin housed in English departments; even when housed, as at Minnesota and Iowa, in "Rhetoric" departments (i.e., the unit responsible for teaching writing, especially to first year students, the "freshman rhetoric"), the aesthetic and academic goals of composition seemed to overwhelm attempts to teach argument, or public speaking as anything more than performance. The elocutionists were not particularly unhappy with English departments, because their goals were substantially similar: reproduction of aesthetically pleasing great works, the criticism of these works, and the development of technical apparatus (prosody, grammar and structure for English, voice production and articulation for elocution).

The key figure in the transition from the EPSC and the NCTE to a new organization was James O'Neill, then at the University of Wisconsin; O'Neill was a graduate of Dartmouth, where he had been taught by Jim Winans. English departments, after all, were quite diverse, containing philology,

literature, theater, rhetoric (composition), elocution, and debate. Donald Smith noted that:

> English departments seem often to have been an early, if unpremeditated, experiment in welding into a single department the work of teachers of diverse interests. The ties between speech instruction and the English department appear to have been particularly tenuous. (453)

Smith cites four factors that led to the creation of speech departments: the pressure created by the specialization of interest within English, the outspoken discontent of speech teachers working in departments of English, the claims of a neglected tradition and "new" types of coursework for a sympathetic administrative home, and finally the pressure of student interests in curricular recognition of speech. English departments were filled with scholars trained in the classics and attuned to the importance of literary study, both of which, observes Smith, "found small place for teachers of speaking and writing" (453).

Speech teachers were increasingly unhappy. The EPSC became formally affiliated with the National Council of Teachers of English in 1913, of which it had been a sub-unit since 1910 ("News" 225). Many public speaking teachers taught out of English departments, so the link to the NCTE seemed natural, yet it probably drove the wedge between speech and English deeper. As so often happens, organizational tensions are expressed in, and resolved by, changes in nomenclature. Speaking and debate teachers faced a dual problem: how to distinguish themselves from *both* composition (in the university) and elocution (outside the university). The term *rhetoric* could not solve their problem because it typically meant written composition, the opposite of speech. "Public speaking" became the general, mostly neutral, term for non-elocutionist oral communication in this emerging discipline.

At the EPSC meeting of March 1913, James O'Neill, then of Dartmouth, read a paper entitled, "The Dividing Line between Speech and English," soon reprinted in the *English Journal* and the *Public Speaking Review* (the organ of the Eastern Conference). At the moment of formal affiliation, O'Neill fired a shot directly across the bow of the English profession. Surveying of the "current situation," he examined "the catalogues and announcements of about sixty representative institutions, scattered over the northern part of the country from Maine to Iowa" (231). Some departments did not separate speech courses, others made a partial separation (usually of the performance courses), others had a complete separation of speech courses into a separate unit. He noted that the nomenclature between schools was extremely confusing, "a given kind of work is called by one name in one college and by a different name in another

college" (232). Finally, the rules regulating how speech courses will count for majors and general requirements differed widely from campus to campus. He concluded that "This *is* the situation . . . What are we going to do about it?" O'Neill knew exactly the remedy:

> Before we can hope to have the proper academic standing . . . we must bring order out of this chaos before we can with reason expect to be generally recognized as on an equal footing with teachers in other departments. . . . I believe that the first step, the big, fundamental thing, is to work for the universal recognition and adoption of a clean cut dividing line between the departments of English and Public Speaking. (233)

O'Neill conceded that the name change was not as important as the functional separation of duties and decision making. But he was not willing to let the new department be merely performance parts of the curriculum; he wanted "all of the courses that have to do with speech—with the preparation, the composition, as well as the delivery of speeches" to be in the new units, ruling out the most common arrangement, partial separation. (These transitional departments or curricula were often called "Oral English.")

According to the minutes Winans prepared, O'Neill's remarks produced an animated discussion.[1] Part of the disciplinary lore in Speech Communication is that the separation from English was predicated on labor problems, and Winans alluded to this openly in his argument for a completely separate department: "Especially in the fact that usually in case of union public speaking is made secondary to English and that many heads of English departments will refuse promotion to the teacher of speaking." So problems of status were also employment problems; O'Neill articulated the same perception when Winans reported him claiming that cooperation will only result from "independent departments treating on equal terms." Winans reported in his notes at the next year's meeting that he knew of no case of an English department promoting a teacher of speaking.

In the end, there was enough agreement that O'Neill and Frederick Robinson produced a resolution, which was passed later in the meeting:

> *Whereas*, The principle and practice which are the foundation of excellence in public speaking form a unified body of material to a large extent separate and different from the content of the usual college department of English; and

[1]James Winans, "Notes," ESCA papers, no. 1474, Box 33, folder 1, UUSC. These notes are in the records of the Eastern Public Speaking Conference meetings; at these early meetings they were written up a few days after the conference by Winans himself.

> *Whereas*, The best interest of the students are promoted by placing the instruction in all the elements of public speaking in the hands of a trained and organized department of specialists; be it
>
> *Resolved*, that it is the sense of this conference that departments of Public Speaking in American colleges should be organized entirely separate from departments of English.

Interestingly, the issues of respect, status, and conceptual coherence, which figure so prominently behind the scenes, are absent from the official resolution that began the process leading to a new association. The resolution made its case in purely professional terms.

At the 1913 NCTE convention banquet O'Neill, in a talk entitled "Public Speaking and English," responded to a rather insulting essay just published by John Clapp, from the English Department at Lake Forest College proponent of Oral English. He took Clapp to task for his assault on public speaking teachers, but began by questioning the professional relationship itself: If English teachers avoid being associated with speaking for fear of being thought Elocutionists, who is to blame?

> You are—the teachers of English! If the work in elocution and oratory is a sideshow in most American colleges, it is because you have made it so. If Public Speaking functions are to-day degenerate representations of a strong and sound tradition, you are responsible. You have had the keeping of that tradition in your hands, and you have failed to keep it worthily. If contests in oratory and debate are glib, shallow, artificial, and dishonest, the reason lies in the things that English departments have insisted on doing, or on refusing to do, or let others do. (133–134)

O'Neill challenged his audience to think of how many teachers of Public Speaking they know who are competent to direct a department of English—"I thought so! Well, I know the same number of English teachers that are competent to direct such work in Public Speaking." Finally, he challenged Clapp's assertion that further integration of Public Speaking faculty into the line of promotion in English will fix things: "The experience of those who have stood in this line for the last thirty years is not encouraging. Too many of them are standing yet." But the situation would soon change, with the founding of the new Association in 1914, at the end of the NCTE convention. Charles Woolbert, University of Illinois recalled that:

> We held our 'rump convention,' to see what we could do to make Speech separate from English. . . . The split-off was brought about by college teachers. These found little to satisfy their needs in the meetings of the English Council. They had repeatedly made an earnest attempt to get greater consideration for their peculiar needs, but with no very noticeable effect. After a particularly exasperating convention experience, a group

> remained after the adjournment of the English Council session to talk over the advisability of forming an association of our own. (O'Neill, "Thirteen Years" 248)

That association was named the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking. Although unwieldy, each part of the name made an important point. A *national association*supervened the regional associations, and put these teachers on a par with other academic fields, such as psychology, sociology, economics, and history, which were national in scope. *Academics* belonged to the goals and purposes of the modern university, and thus have left behind the hucksterism of private elocution instruction. They were *teachers*, and their primary commonality was teaching certain skills and courses; this self-definition, although obvious and practical, returned to haunt them as they later struggled to define the research that should accompany this teaching—as it must in a university context. And finally, they taught *public speaking*, not rhetoric, oratory, expression, or elocution. Although at the time, the implication of "public" may well have been little more than a nod to the platform, it would soon take on deeper meaning as the speech teachers attempted to rethink a civic tradition of speech. Although the formation of their discipline up to this point has been driven largely by concerns about professionalization, now that they have their own departments and professional associations, what will they make of them? How will they define themselves and the meaning of public speaking?

Public Speaking: Practical and Conversational

The founders of NAATPS were clearly a diverse lot, and were more united by their beefs with the NCTE than any common vision of the new field. The first ten years of the *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* were filled with debates about teaching versus research, the appropriate goals of oral communication instruction, and the connection of such teaching to society. The clearest themes that emerged were the distinction between "speech" and elocution, the differences between composition and speech, and the practical dimensions of speech, in teaching and society. Surprisingly, the evolving pedagogy did not focus much on the need for students to talk about political topics; part of elocutionist training certainly included studying British and American public address, as well as giving original declamations on political topics. The speech teachers were moving toward a more subtle point, that the forms of speech they taught needed to be consonant with democratic conceptions of civic life. The places where they made the clearest articulation of this point were in teaching public speaking and intercollegiate debate.

James Winans was president of the Eastern Public Speaking Conference when it met in May 1914.[2] He spoke on two topics, the relation of public speaking to English Departments, and "the tendency of college work in speaking." He fully favored a complete separation, and acknowledged that:

> We cannot wisely do anything to discourage the movement toward oral English, whatever that term may come to mean. But it is also true that, as we believe in our work, we cannot be content to leave it at the mercy of those who have small respect for it, who are likely to assign it to a freshman instructor without special training, or to have public speaking reduced to a little "oral method" in connection with written composition.

A discussion followed, which concluded that each department's case should probably be handled a little differently. Then Winans pointed to the future of public speaking, which would focus less on entertainment and the platform, and mostly on "practical public speech, using the word practical, broadly." Although the technical aspects of speaking would remain ("No speaker can afford to overlook the importance of a well trained voice"), the center would shift to the substantial parts of the field: expounding, Convincing, and persuading. Yet he was not suggesting a "crude, unfinished type" for the speaker produced by this training, because "Demosthenes and Webster were practical public speakers." Winans's choice of exemplars not only connects "practical public speaking" to a highbrow oratorical culture, but to a civic, democratic one. This pattern will be repeated many times; while civic humanist democracy is the core tradition to which public speaking appeals, it can be understood in many other contexts, and Winans claims that teachers have a responsibility to these as well:

> Engineers, architects and agriculturists are awakening to the fact that if they are to take the executive positions they aspire to, they must be able to think and talk on their feet. We must meet these technical and other students on their own ground, putting aside our preconceptions and, after study, give them what they need. As soon as we do this, our worth will be promptly recognized. We must fit into and serve the communities in which we are placed, rather than offer work better adapted to special schools of expression.

So the professional distinction of university instruction will consist not only in the recovery of a substantial tradition, but teaching that tradition in new contexts.

Now, who will be doing this? Part of the problem, as everyone recognized, was not only the entrenched interests of English teachers and departments,

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[2]Winans, "Notes." His keynote is preserved only in the notes he made in reporting the conference; quotations below are from these unpaginated notes.

but in fact few ''well-trained'' faculty existed. They were in the process of creating the very idea of well-trained public speaking teachers, and creating the departments in which they would credentialed. Such a paradox obtains with any new field; departments need to exist before they can offer the graduate degrees to faculty, who will then bring credibility to the new departments. In this particular case, Winans realized that academic disrespect followed to an extent from the fact that many speech teachers came from professional, non-academic backgrounds (in his role as note-taker, he refers to himself in the third-person here):

> In all this the speaker recognized that success is won by various methods, that many institutions differ greatly from his own; and also that many teachers have won their positions by the lyceum route. He believed however that in future our teachers of public speaking will come by the standard academic routes, will fit better into the scheme of things and will more readily win recognition. He expressed his belief in a better day, and that the young men now coming into our field will be better than we are.

And indeed, Winans's hope has been fulfilled. But we have perhaps lost touch with what was radical in this program. Public speaking and debate instruction have not changed all that radically since 1915, and so we have little sense of our debt to the early teachers. So the next section will examine the pedagogies of public speaking courses to see how the practical, democratic approach actually played out.

The Democratic Conversation

In teaching public speaking, the field made a transition over about fifteen years to a new understanding of teaching public speaking and emphasized the ''plain'' and ''practical'' in speaking, opposed to the elaborate and the artistic forms characteristic of elocutionists. The subtext of this change was that speaking was moving from the possession of a few—the talented, the elite, the platform performers—and in the direction of seeing public speaking as a form of communication that occurred in many contexts, and was justified by its success in those settings. In a sense, this is a move toward democratizing public speaking, in the sense that many peoples and many kinds of public counted. It included civic speaking, but in an enlarged sets of contexts, from progressive era social organizations like the Rotary or City Clubs to local government. The elocutionist focus on public address exemplified by the speeches of the national British and American politicians was subtly converted into an emphasis on the functional dimension of communication in everyday contexts.

O'Neill had argued in 1913 that teaching should be aimed at the "everyday student getting ready for everyday life," not at the platform entertainer. In fact, the prevalence of bad speaking ("ineffective, tiresome, useless, pointless, formless talking") did not derive from poor delivery, but from a failure to harmonize content and delivery, when "the speaker does not know how to say what he has in mind" (233). Winans's influential 1917 textbook, *Public Speaking*, realized these insights, and they can be seen in many subsequent textbooks.[3] For Winans, in a sense, public speaking was the most ordinary thing in the world: "I shall not enter upon any praises of the art of public speaking. It is good and it is bad; it is base and it is noble. It is part of human life, and it is what one makes it" (3). Public speaking is not an elevated "art," and is not valuable in itself:

> Indeed, this book is not designed to encourage public speaking at all. Heaven forfend! I hope it will tend toward the suppression of much public speaking—of bad public speaking, and most of it is bad. (17)

Winans addressed directly the democratizing effect of expanding the context of public speaking beyond the nineteenth-century "gentle professions," namely, lawyer, minister, and politician:

> With the call of public speakers from pulpit, bar stump and lecture platform remaining undiminished, and with the large additional call in these latter days from ever multiplying organizations, with their meetings, conventions and banquets, it comes about that there is to-day great opportunity and demand for speech-making than ever before. . . . The average man finds it greatly to his advantage in civic, organization and business affairs to be able to stand up and speak his mind. (3)

In a view characteristic of the progressive era, Winans asserts that the democratized space of the public includes much more than established political and legal institutions, as John Dewey also argued (Keith 2007: 89–111). The contexts for which teaching aimed to prepare students had greatly expanded, in number and type, including ordinary ones ignored by elocution: "No class of men dwells more earnestly on the ability to speak well than that which describes itself as consisting of 'plain businessmen.'" (Winans 8). Even technically educated professionals will be included in the functional definition of public speaking, because this training will apply to "those men of deeds, the engineers. . . . In the new generation the engineer will cease to be the hired man and will take charge of affairs" (7–8). For Winans, the professional and the civic contexts sat comfortably together,

[3]Winans, *Public Speaking* (New York: Century Co., 1916/1917). Winans also published a smaller, earlier book in 1915 through a local Ithaca press, and later a 1931 book with Hoyt Hudson.

because he claimed that there were "two motives for learning to speak. . . . Increasing one's chance to succeed and increasing one's power to serve" (8). Later, in "Is Public Speaking Out?" Winans rejected the idea that a focus on "success" or business eliminates the need for any civic dimension of public speaking; on his functional grounds, there is no way to justify such an inference.

Yet at the time Winans claimed that he was in fact *contracting* the range of the term "public speaking," which "is now being stretched to cover all oral expression" while he will "treat here of practical public speaking" (vii). This did amount to, in fact, shrinking the functions associated with the term. In particular, he wanted to create a sharp distinction between reading or interpreting and speech used for communication.

> To those who have an honest fear that this study may develop in them affectations, such as cause the objection of many sensible folk to "elocutionist," let me say that it all depends on the way the subject is taken up. . . . If we study speaking strictly as a means to an end, as the means to influencing audiences, the danger is small. (16)

His training, he said, will require that "the mind of the student is constantly directed to the necessity of interesting his audience, of being clear and convincing" (viii). So the strategic dimension of communication became the primary focus of teaching, a significant change, which shaped subsequent approaches, from Wichelns to Bitzer and more. Winans claimed that his book "has unity [and] the key word is Attention" (xiii). In his discussion of this term (chapter III), with its overtones of Jamesian psychology, we can see Winans was discussing what we would probably call "audience adaptation," because he discussed how argument, language, and delivery can work together to adapt to the interests of the audience (thus commanding their "attention"). The bulk of the book was given to topics far from delivery and style: audience analysis, persuasion, topic selection, and so forth. Over and over, Winans emphasized content and function over form: "There is no way to make a good speech without having something to say worth saying . . . besides having something to say, a speaker must be able to think" (11–12). Winans was emphatic about the pedagogical difference between public speaking and elocution:

> It is much easier, when one wants quick and showy results, to be dogmatic. The method produces contented and docile students. . . . I have insisted, throughout this book, on taking the student in to my confidence, and on trying to stimulate him to think for himself. . . . I have wished students using this book to become intelligent on the subject, not merely to learn rules. (xii)

What public speaking teachers needed, then, was a means of capturing their new vision of their subject, at once practical, familiar, teachable, and civic. The trope most characteristic of the democratizing move from elocution to public speaking is the comparison between public speaking and conversation. Elocutionists distinguished sharply between these; one was common and ordinary, lax and undisciplined, while the other was rare and elevated, requiring intensive training and no little talent. Winans's discussion of the similarities between conversation and public speaking become the prototype for many others.

> Imagine all memory of speech-making to be blotted out; so that there is no person in the world who remembers that he has ever made a speech or heard a speech. Imagine, too, all speeches and all references to speeches in literature, to be blotted out; so that there is left no clue to this art. Is this the end of speech-making? Here comes a man who has seen a great race, or has been in a great battle, or is on fire with enthusiasm for a cause. He begins to talk with a friend he meets on the street, others gather, twenty, fifty, a hundred. Interest grows intense; he lifts his voice that all may hear. But the crowd wishes to hear and see the speaker better. ''Get upon this cart!'' they cry; and he mounts the cart and goes on with his story or his plea. A private conversation has become a public speech. (20)

Winans then compared conversation and speaking point by point (20–24). Yes, a speech will generally be louder than a conversation, but a conversation with several people at a busy party might entail a fairly loud voice. Is a speech one-sided and a conversation dialogic? Sometimes, but to be fair speakers sometimes have exchanges with their audiences and conversations can at times be very one-sided; this is a difference of degree, not kind. Speakers are assumed to prepare, while conversations are spontaneous, yet on occasion conversations are planned and speeches are impromptu. Winans admited that *ordinarily* conversation and public speaking are not the same, but then spent several pages arguing that a plainer conversational style is not careless style.

This comparison between speaking and conversing was extremely common in the textbooks written before 1940. In some cases, the number of auditors was cited as the ''only real difference''; early books stressed conversation mostly in terms of delivery (Pelsma 16; Houghton 37–57). Later books liked to describe public speaking as ''amplified'' or ''heightened'' conversation'' (Thompson 1; Hoffman 4). After all, ''public speaking . . . is, in every particular, essentially the same as conversation'' (Kirkpatrick viii). Sometimes the term ''discussion'' or ''public discussion,'' was substituted for conversations, but with the same force (Shurter 1). In a paraphrase of

Cicero's *De Inventione* (I.ii), Stratton gives a sort of "caveman" history of rhetoric, beginning with the "earliest stage . . . [when] the wandering family of savages depended entirely upon what its members said to one another," forming rhetorical leaders and eventually governments (Stratton 1). In his book on public speaking for the Future Farmers of America, Lyman Judson included a pledge which students take, which includes conversation.[4] One book posited that public speaking and conversation were "kindred arts," developing the thesis with more elegance than substance (Taft 1–15).

Books with a more elocutionist orientation and a focus on delivery rejected the conversational character of speaking.

> Both speakers and talkers have the gift of speech, but each is proverbially lacking the other's art. They differ more widely than chamber-music and the oratorio. . . . Who would want to hear on the platform Socrates or Dr. Samuel Johnson, the world's two most famous conversationalists? (Phelps 5)

Generally, texts with an elocutionist orientation emphasized the practical rather than conceptual difference: "Conversationally a man may hold his own fairly well . . . but in public speaking, the conditions are by no means the same"; this author went on to explain, somewhat counter-intuitively, that conversation allow for reflection and consideration, where public speaking requires a ready command of language and speed of thought (Pertwee 1). Robert Fulton and Thomas Trueblood, well-known elocutionists, pointed out that training in public speaking may lead to improved conversation, although they are not the same (Fulton and Trueblood 1).

In a sense, until this point, form, function, and context had been only partially joined. By taking speaking off the platform, the speech teachers democratized it; it was no longer an "art" requiring impressive talent and diligent study, but an outgrowth of everyday communication. This democratization had implications, which authors did not avoid; if speaking was a "democratic" skill in the populist sense, the business and social context counted right along with civic ones. So what they accomplished in this move is preserving the civic meaning of speech while not being limited by defining the

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[4] Judson (9). The pledge also includes this uplifting promise:

> As a public speaker I want to develop and direct my talents toward giving information to the uninstructed, toward bringing my listeners some modicum of entertainment in an often too unentertaining and unhappy world, and toward persuading all with the sound of my voice to believe and to act in accord with my highest aims. I will be at once practical and idea; common and sublime. I will strive to speak in the language of the moment for the ears of posterity. (9–10)

civic narrowly in terms of speeches by politicians or speeches about political subjects. Consonant with a Deweyan appreciation of the democratic possibilities of everyday life, they relocated the political dimension of speech in its communicative form, which is the relationship between speaker and listener.

Conclusion

If pedagogy can truly be a guide to theory, we face a dilemma. The "theory" (in the sense used in the history of rhetoric context) is not particularly explicit, and moreover, it is deeply bound up with institutional and disciplinary constraints. As many articles in this journal have noted, the question of disciplinary identity is a vexed one.[5] I have argued elsewhere that forging disciplinary alliances and allegiances must happen at the level of department and curriculum, and so it matters a great deal that we have a picture of the past that is at once clear enough, and complex enough, to allow a contrast with the present. Clearly the rhetoric, in the theoretical sense, that informed the teaching of speech in the early twentieth century was not our theory. For the most part, departments of English and Speech/Communication have accepted, sometimes gladly, the burden of teaching their students skills, the task of emphasizing functional ability. And in fact a focus on the civic character of teaching and pedagogy coincided with the founding of the Speech field; pedagogy and a certain sense of politics went hand in hand.

To an extent, this is a familiar thought. When teaching public speaking and debate, teachers often tell students that they are practicing democratic forms and norms, or that their performances are part of the sweeping exchange of political ideas and arguments that comprises the great drama of democratic life. Although the speeches and debates themselves are deliberative, they are framed, rightly, for students as celebrating the democratic. "Look," we say, "as you disagree and contest, you are enacting the noblest part of the democratic process." During a time-out from his battles with James O'Neill over the character of debate in 1917, Judge Hugh Wells paused to salute the democratic purpose of debate:

> No generation has so truly needed this peculiar training as that generation which presently is to emerge from our classrooms. We stand at the portals of a new era, in which the problems which have vexed men's minds for ages must be solved . . . the world is no longer to be ruled by masters; democracy has come into her own. . . . I am filled with gratitude that I am permitted to behold these things, and with humility that I should

[5]See the exchanges between Mailloux, Keith, Leff, Miller, and Nystrand in the *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*.

> be, in even so small a degree, a contributor to the awakening. With these rich gifts, we salute thee, O America! These are our offerings to the Democracy of the Future! (172–173)

Certainly, these civic republican elements existed, as they still do, in uneasy tension with the ''practical'' and the ''business'' applications of public speaking, organizational communication, and so on. The focus on ''the practical'' can cut several ways, some of them toward the civic and some away; after all, windy oratory may waste valuable time in deliberative decision making. But it is noteworthy that we can see that in context, the pedagogy of the early field did not represent simply a move from platform entertainment to business efficiency, but a reconfiguration of the meaning of speaking, bringing out an underlying stratum of civic and democratized value. We need to understand this past as we move into our curricular futures.

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