A History of Women's Contributions to Linguistics

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Words Gone with the Wind

By

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Motherland
My fatherland is dead
they buried it
in the fire

I live
in my motherland
Word
Rosa Ausländer

> Language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations.
> *Edward Sapir*

If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things.
Confucius

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INTRODUCTION

This book is about women whose relationship with language, with words, has been close: either because they were interested in the structure of a language, or because they were polyglots, translators or excellent orators, even if they did not deal with oratory as a discipline. In other words, this book starts from the principle of heterodoxy: there are excellent examples of proto-linguists, pre-linguists or linguists so informal that they would never go down in history as such - Carry van Bruggen would be a good example of it; the critics of her time have considered her an author of little hobby novels. Another example would be Emma Goldman, an excellent speaker who, although versed like no other in the principles of persuasion, was never interested in analysing it as such.

In this brief history of linguistics in a feminine key, I do not intend to make an inventory of those "more advanced", primarily because that would mean magnifying the lens of the present with which we judge people and events of the past. I prefer to start from the inexorable principle that each person - each woman in this case - is a child of her time, and sometimes they have managed to break the wall around the space to which they were destined, and other times, without breaking or jumping over that wall, they have achieved eminent works, circumscribed in the context and expectations of their time. There are linguistic works with a great moral or religious background which does not detract one iota from the merit of their achievements.

In the more or less official history of linguistics, there are no names of women, at least not before the end of the 19th century. Let's think of the canonical studies of Lyons, Robins or Malmberg, just to mention three of the most widely used. Therefore, it can be considered that I am dealing with a terrain where the traces have been so lightly marked that they are barely visible. This has required a firm determination to exhume, analyse, rescue, and observe. It is not the aim of this work to be detailed in terms of the biographies and works of each protagonist, but rather to record her name, her work, and thus clear the way for future studies in the field of linguistics and the contributions that women have made to it. In this respect, it should be noted that there are profound differences between the linguists, proto-

linguists and quasi-linguists mentioned here: some have already been the subject of recent studies, and some have been important among their contemporaries, while others have been cast into the black hole of oblivion. Be that as it may, our aim remains the same: to rescue, to say, to name. And thus lay the foundations - or clues - on which further research can be based. More than a desire to delve deeper, we obey a desire to dignify: the first step to bring the forgotten out of oblivion and to contribute to the brilliance of those who, deservedly, have already been revealed by previous studies. Consistent with this purpose, I thought it was essential to provide sources to go into the lives of some of these linguists and their works in greater depth.

My first temptation was to title this book "(Female) Entomologists of the Word". The truth is that the title came to me without thought. It was only later that I realised its suggestive power and its insufficiency to express what I wanted. Because in reality I obeyed the impulse to imagine the word under the implacable magnifying lens, under the indiscretion of the microscope, and I confess that I liked that image. But I love butterflies and it makes me uneasy to visualise them; not in nature, with their life hours counted, but on a table of rarities where a scientist or a pile of curiosities has eternalised them for supposed visual or intellectual enjoyment. And it happens that language is like butterflies: a living organism, full of infinite cellular connections. Words are alive and vascularised with silences and we cannot nail them to the entomologist's autopsy table. But it also happens that women, in the field of language - more precisely of linguistics - are like butterflies: light, taciturn, fragile, ephemeral. This is how history has *presented* them to us: that history which can only be narrated by those who survive, because their survival is at the cost of the death and oblivion of others. In this case, the Other understood as the Beauvoirian Second Sex.

It is not easy to determine which women can be considered linguists, or linguists in the making. - nor could we do so with their male equivalents. Unlike other disciplines in which pathology (the abnormal) is studied, in language we are concerned with its normality. In fact it is considered something so trivial, so within the (apparent) reach of everyone, so democratised, that even today its study has to be justified - let alone in times that preceded us.

And it is true that it is the element that most humanises us; unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the fact that it makes us equal. Language creates relations of asymmetry, because language is above all at the service of power: it circulates best through specialised channels, with the capacity to

penetrate and which cannot be accessed by just anyone. Not to mention other considerations, such as the fact that the linguistic is often not only linguistic, but that, by the very omnipresent essence of language, it invades other "foreign" spaces.

The manuals of the general history of linguistics have accustomed us to their divisions and subdivisions - chronological, current, thematic. When writing a history of linguistics of women, the first thing we realise is that these criteria on which the usual manuals are based are of no use to us. Mainly because when we explain history we assign it a coherence - pure or forced - through a common thread. And here we come face to face with a multiplicity of frameworks, stitches and scraps: nothing that can be unified because the reality of these women scholars, each in her own way of language, is installed in the preciousness of chance. We hardly know anything about them or their works. Oblivion has swallowed up almost all of them. The glosses on their works have generally been written by men who have admired the fact that some "manifestly inferior" beings had some kind of idiomatic endowment, of whatever kind, and that the result of their talent was a threat to the canonical intelligence - the masculine one - for the sake of secular tradition. That is why many of these linguists, or pseudo-linguists, signed many of their works with names that were not their own and for the glory of masters or husbands, or both because sometimes it was the same person. As Roberta Rosenberg argues, since for a long time - too long - women were considered minors; linguists were also subject to the scrutiny of their male relatives (Rosenberg, 2001)[1]. Women were not on showy foregrounds, such as academic platforms (Fairchilds, 2007)[2]. But this is a truism that we should be prepared to overcome in order not to consolidate a victimhood that has been feeding on its own perplexity. Now we have to get our hands into the mud and pull out what has sunk into it, deliberately or not. History is largely made up of ellipses rather than facts. And the mission of every hunter of signs is to restore to memory that which the tides of oblivion have carried away.

Within this same observation on the structure of the history of women in linguistics, it should be added that, seen as a whole, the contributions of women to language and its domains have a striking finalist component. Women speakers exercise to defend themselves or to defend other women;

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[1] R. Rosenberg, *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001).

[2] C.C. Fairchilds, *Women in Early Modern Europe 1500-1700*. (London: Pearson/Longman, 2007).

many of those versed in eloquence try to dazzle in the salons; not a few grammars have the ulterior purpose of educating girls and women. In other words, they have been initiated in disciplines and language arts for very specific purposes. Art for art's sake, pure intellectual exercise, time to invest in reflection... these seem to be exclusively male fiefdoms. Or, in any case, of very special women who were not subject to the slavery of having a family and/or who have been able to seclude themselves in order to focus their lives on knowledge.

It is not an easy task, but no one promised it would be. One difficulty that is not negligible in the slightest is the scarcity of women recorded in the official history of linguistics. To this must be added another problem of a disciplinary nature, which puts the finger on the semantic, delimitative sore spot, because linguistics as a specialty has a short and recent history (that is, strictly speaking, it is concentrated from the second decade of the 19th century), and we have to appeal to our own condescension so that translators, speakers, rhetoricians or simply thinkers who at some point were concerned about language and its uses can be included in the breadth of its concept. We must grant ourselves this generosity, because it is exactly the same as what we have done with men, but especially because it also points to heterodoxy, and heterodoxy is polyhedral: it allows for the overlapping of several points of view and is therefore all the more attractive and oxygenated. Therefore, far from shying away from heterodoxy, I pamper it and make it feel comfortable in this discourse of uneven and unequal paths: like life itself.

Finally, a confession. Regardless of the fact that this history of linguistics is conjugated in the feminine plural, I have always been more inclined towards those who have championed original thought and provided us with bold reflections than towards theorists. Let alone when theorists devise ad hoc theories to make language resemble the exact sciences, especially until the advent of artificial intelligence, it was a task that could only be undertaken with a great deal of "donquijotetism" and talent. In other words: I prefer a Whorf and a Sapir to a pair of Brothers Grimm. And I suppose that this predilection will also find its reflection in this text. It may be a weakness; but it gives me pleasure - and relief - to deviate from the pompous canonical routes. I hope you will forgive me.

CHAPTER I

ANCIENT TIMES AND THEIR MAGIC: LOGOS, LEGEND, LANGUAGE

Western Genesis: The Mediterranean World

With little evidence that Socrates was anything more than a character contrived by Plato, we have even less evidence when it comes to women in the context of the Hellenic world. In reality, we know little about ancient cultures, to say nothing of the role that women played in them. On the other hand; misinformation, myths and widespread beliefs have been crystallizing and promoting their biases. All this, together with the tendency to rewrite history, obliges us to be cautious, especially not to listen to the siren songs of the easy and well-trodden paths and, above all, to look for original and reliable sources, which is not always an easy matter. Sometimes, in the absence of bibliography and adequate documentation, we will move in a field in which historiography disputes ground with legend, myth and, ultimately, the story sustained over time. In addition, the distance, in terms of diachrony, that separates us from the object of our study, makes us group in a single category characters and events that actually occurred in very different times. It is another good reason for caution.

Nor is it clear whether the figure of Diotima was just a literary license from Plato, whom Socrates, also in the Platonic text of "The Banquet" calls "teacher". But if Socrates is, above all, a Platonic character... why shouldn't the immortal Diotima be? Deep down, even about the first Western grammarian - Dionysius of Thrace - we have reasonable doubts. At least about his authorship of "Grammatical Art", of which only a fragment of a total of six is preserved (and which does not correspond chronologically to the period in which Dionysus lived); and later sources, still referring to the character, do not attribute the authorship of it. It can be said that when we launch these figurative networks into the past, we find ourselves with shadows and myths that compete for the place of reality. And maybe it is a good thing that it does. Our knowledge, our logos, is not based exclusively on the firm ground of certainties. Rather, it is the complete opposite.

Is it true that Femonoe was, in addition to being a fortune teller, the inventor of the hexameter that Homer merely copied? It is not a thesis advanced by current feminisms, very frayed and attentive to sometimes inflated claims, but by William Williams, a supposedly Welsh historian (in reality, also a *presumed* historian) who in a year as revolutionary as 1789 published a book entitled "Primitive History, From the Creation to Cadmus"[3], in which he takes that possibility for granted. Dante Alighieri speaks of Femonoe as the first to address the Oracle of Delphi (this is recorded in the fourth volume of his works, published in 1760)[4]. Femonoe was considered a priestess (not the only one) who composed hymns and prayers at the foot of the Sibyl's stone (Herrero Valdés, 2016)[5].

Aspasia, who lived between 470 and 400 BC, was certainly a teacher of rhetoric and rhetoricians. Of careful education, she was born in Miletus and moved to Athens for unknown reasons. Satirists (Aristophanes, for example, ridicules her in her comedies) and enemies of her time maintained that she ran a brothel. She was related (maritally or at any rate romantically) to Pericles, with whom she had a son. And, through him, she frequented the groups of sophists, in which Anaxagoras was not lacking. The Ionian tradition from which she came (where young and old participated in collective debates) would largely explain her facility to access rhetorical circles, although it leaves the question as to whether she was also exposed to a more formal education. Aspasia left no written texts and her eventual link with prostitution seems to give more play than her role as adviser to Pericles or as a thinker. But she is consigned in the writings of others, i.e. in the texts of the historian Plutarchus, some allusions in Plato's "Menexenus", and four direct disciples of Socrates (Jarratt and Ong, 1995)[6]. The Platonic Socrates recites by heart her most famous speech. Just the speech that finishes as follows: "…and now that you and all the rest have already made public lamentation for the dead as the law ordains, go your ways" (op.cit. Donawerth, 2002)[7].

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[3] W. Williams, *Primitive History, from the Creation to Cadmus (*London: J. Seagrave, 1789)

[4] D. Alighieri, *Opere, Collezione Dantesca. Vol. 4* (Venice: Antonio Zatta, 1760)

[5] F. Herrero Valdés, *Edición, Traducción y Comentario de los Himnos Mágicos Griegos* (Málaga: Málaga University, 2016)

[6] S. Jarratt, S. and R. Ong, "Aspasia: Rhetoric, Gender, and Colonial Ideology". *Reclaiming Rhetorica. Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955)

[7] J. Donawerth, *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900 (*Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2002)

However, the Hellenic world has left us other legacies of women who, in one way or another, served as grammarians, as is the case of Hestaia, Agallis and Demo[8]: the former and latter from Alexandria, and Agallis from Corfu. They lived between the third and second century BC, and almost everything about their lives is unknown, except the vigorous imprint of their myth. It was said that Agallis was a disciple of Aristophanes the Grammarian (at this point there is confusion, and it seems that it was her father who was a disciple) and a glossarist of Homer, the same as Demo - in addition to being a recognized grammarian. Instead, Hestiaea (Hestaia), although recognized as a grammarian, is best known for the treatise in which she discusses the setting where the Trojan War took place[9]

Hypatia, a character that modernity has brought to the fore to admire as an exotic animal, was known above all for her comments on Ptolemy's "Mathematical Syntax". The most noble woman of Alexandria, however, seemed to be Aedesia, a relative of Sirano, the successor of the philosopher and historian Plutarch in the School of Athens in the 5th century BC. Little is known of Aufrian rhetoric, as she is immortalized in an inscription from the 2nd century and little is known, too, about Arete of Cyrene (4th and 5th centuries BC), about whom it was said that she taught moral and natural philosophy in various schools of Attica to more than a hundred disciples. It seems that the quota of her works amounts to 40 books of which none survive. In her epitaph - that memory of language in stone is often all that remains to us, as we see - it was stated that she was the splendor of Greece: that she possessed the beauty of Helen, the virtue of Thirma, the pen of Aristippus, Socrates' soul and Homer's tongue. Of all of them some slight notes are preserved - small drops of myth.

And if the Hellenistic tradition provides us with a handful of grammars, the Roman heritage is closer to other linguistic peculiarities. Such a tradition, marked by the prolific and heterogeneous work of Cicero and an atrabiliary contemporary of his, such as Marcus Terencius Varro, who devoted much of his efforts to the study of etymology, we know little about the women of those first centuries of our era. It can be affirmed that, in such a context, rhetoric stands out. Especially the rhetoricians of jurisprudence, i.e. those directly involved in cases, sentences and decisions taken by the courts. They are primarily speakers in a legal context. Perhaps the most notable were

[8] For further information please see: E. Meier Tetlow, *Women, Crime and Punishment in Ancient Law and Society*. *Ancient Greece*, Vol.II (New York: Continuum, 2005)

[9] M. Larcher, *Mémoire sur la déesse Venus* (Paris: Chez Valade, 1776)

Amaesia (Amasia, Amesia) Sentia, a lawyer, androgynous in appearance (in any case she was known as Androgynes because of her virile disposition) and famous for representing herself in a case. Gaia or Caya Afrania, from the 1st century BC, was the wife of Licinius Bruccio, also a lawyer, noted for her rhetorical skills and whose "temperament" was directly responsible for the publication of the edict forbidding women to intervene as public defenders in the causes of others. Finally, Hortensia, daughter of Quintus Hortensius - whom Cicero considered "the king of the courts" - a lawyer like the previous ones and in the same sense of the term, represented the public defense of the circle of matrons, tired of the tribute to which they were subjected (Truque Morales, 2010)[10]. However, we should note the blurred boundaries of eloquence itself, which refers both to the fact of "good speaking" and to persuasion or, finally, to the fluent command of other languages. In other words, there is a difference between the eloquence of Demosthenes, in a classical sense that preserves above all the idea of persuasion, and from which we can emphasize the case of Caia Afrania or Tullia (instructed by her mother Terentia and her father Cicero), and the drift that it takes on centuries later to mean "gift of tongues".

Pola Argentaria, instead, was a Roman poetess and broad-ranging scholar, born in Spain in the 1st century AD, granddaughter of the epigrammatist Marcus Argentarius and wife of the poet Marcus Annaeus Lucano. She is believed, among other things, to have completed his epic poem[11].

To better outline the context of what we are describing, it is worth highlighting the deep impact that some educated women from Syria had on the rhetoric of Roman women in the second and third centuries of our era. This was the case with Julia Domna (2nd-3rd centuries), married to Emperor Septimius Severus -some authors consider her as an imperial propagandist of the dynasty Severa (Conesa Navarro, 2019)[12]. She knew how to surround herself with "wise men", such as Galen or Philostratus himself. She almost always stayed out of the public sphere. The same happened with Julia Domna's own daughter, Julia Soeamias, who did get involved -rhetorically

[10] A. L. Truque Morales, "Mujer y abogacía en la Roma Antigua: tres casos célebres". *Estudios. Sección de Historia de la Cultura*, num. 23 (San José: University of Costa Rica, 2016)

[11] J. Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets. Language, Gender, and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

[12] P. D. Conesa Navarro, "Faustina la Menor y Julia Domna como matres castrorum. Dos mujeres al servicio de la propaganda imperial de las dinastías Antonina y Severa". *Lucentum*, num. 38 (University of Alicante, 2019)

speaking- in public forums and was the mother of Emperor Heliogabalus. She founded a senate for women, the *senaculum*, so that women senators would not lose their privileges as such marrying men who were not. Although the importance of oratory and rhetoric in such a scenario is suspected, no document is conserved that reliably proves it.

Another important woman from Syria who left her mark on educated Roman women was Zenobia, queen of Palmyra. She spoke Greek, Latin, and Egyptian, and also surrounded herself with men of learning, such as the Athenian Dionysius Longinus, who was said to have a truly encyclopedic culture, and who was Zenobia's minister as well as a master of eloquence. At war with the army of Heraclitus for succession reasons, she commanded troops of 70,000 men and they came to occupy Egypt and part of Asia Minor. She defended the right of her son to be emperor and when Aureliano ascended to the throne, ready to smooth things over with her and sign peace, she writes him a statement that is a true piece of rhetorical art. When later Aureliano proceeds to the long siege of Palmyra and asks her to surrender, she responds with a letter that is recorded in the Augustan History:

> From Zenobia, Queen of the East, to Aurelius Augustus. Nobody has ever made me a request like the one you make of me. In matters of war, you have to get what you want with deeds. You ask me to surrender, as if you were unaware that Cleopatra preferred to die rather than lose her dignity. We expect support from Persia, and the Saracens and Armenians are with us. The Syrian thieves hit your army, Aurelian. What will happen to you once our reinforcements arrive? Surely you will have to put aside the pride with which, as if you were a universal conqueror, you are asking me to surrender.

This letter is considered an example of rhetoric from a queen who, after her Saracen and Armenian allies were defeated by the Romans, tries to flee her besieged and starving city. She is finally captured, but instead of being condemned to death, she is given a retreat on the banks of the Tiber in Rome. She was saved by her audacity and eloquence.

In her "An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts and Tongues with an Answer to the Objections to This Way of Education", Bathsua Makin in 1673 puts us on the trail of several women who have excelled in some facet related to language (Makin, 1673)[13]. Thanks to a work that aims to be more vindictive than exhaustive,

[13] B. Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts and Tongues with an Answer to the Objections to this Way of Education* (London: J.D. Printer, 1673)

we have some information about other women who, throughout history, have shown their excellence in languages. For reasons related to her time, she points out, above all, those sovereigns whose excellence in languages and oratory was remarkable: Christina of Sweden, Queen Elizabeth I, Rosuida (of the Saxon nation in the time of Lotharius) or Elizabetha of Schonaugia, initiated precisely in the texts of the former one.

In another vein, and in the same period, legend has it that there was a woman in Córdoba - Rhodia - somehow linked to the caliph Abderramán III, who wrote several books on rhetoric, lived to be 107 years old and died in 1044. No clues can be found about her. And very few also about Thoma or Habiba of Valencia, another Andalusian, who died in 1127, reputed author of several books on grammar and jurisprudence, of which no record remains.

In the Arab tradition, Zaynab Bint Ali was born in Medina in 626, the daughter of an imam, Ali, and Fatima. Muhammad himself is said to have given her his name, meaning 'the beauty of the father'. She became known when, expelled from Kerbala after much of her family had been exterminated, and driven with other survivors to Damascus, she made moving and vivid speeches of the horror she experienced; something that deeply moved her attentive and impromptu audience. Her nickname was "the bringer of calamities". Other women from the Islamic world in the 8th century, such as Amina bint Shurayd, Asma bint Aqil and Bakkara al-Hilaliyya, were celebrated for their poetic and eloquent advocacy.

Some centuries before, around 60 AD, Boudica, queen of the Iceni tribe, took command of her people in Britannia to fight against the Romans. Despite Boudicca's ardent rhetoric and brave leadership, her army was totally defeated by Suetonius and thousands of her followers were slaughtered. Tacitus reports that 80,000 Iceni were killed in the battle at the cost of only 400 Roman lives, but these numbers are highly suspect. In any case, Boudica's forces were crushed, and the noble Queen of the Iceni chose to take poison rather than surrender to Suetonius.

It is obvious that we always move within the limits of the mythical and the historical. And it is difficult to gather information on the precursors of linguistics in the West, to know the pioneers of the East and, in general, of any scenario that exceeds the "Western measure". Trying to revive names from "decentralized cultures" is sometimes an effort as strenuous as it is unsuccessful. It is supposed that in ancient times, in India, there was a group of "grammar and brahmanical women", called "Apisalas" (also Apishalas),

a word of Sanskrit origin[14]. In other cultures, such as those of West Africa, in the Akan society, the linguists enjoyed great prestige - they were responsible for peace and order in the assemblies - and the queen mothers had the presence of female linguists to their own affairs (Appiah-Kubi, 1999)[15]. But these data, little contrasted, are lost in the mists of history.

Eastern Female Glance on Words

According to the linguist Gianninoto, China has one of the richest traditions in terms of Linguistics (lexicography, grammatology and phonology) (2021)[16]. However, women in cultural contexts, beyond their condition as courtesans, is rare in both Western and Eastern cultures. In fact, in the case of China, the imposition of a dominant discourse to keep women excluded from any form of government or just associating them with some disasters by putting the focus on female evil was not uncommon (Hinsch, 2011)[17]. However, exceptions have slipped through the cracks of history.

One of them is Pan Chao, also called Ban Zhao, China's first female rhetorician (45-116). The daughter of a historian, educated in the Confucian principles, she married at the age of 14. She was soon widowed and devoted herself entirely to learning. She was a mentor of Empress Deng Sui. She wrote treatises for women (in fact, she is considered the first ever Chinese author of a book intended for women's education), glosses, argumentations, eulogies, a small travel book, poems, etc., but little of these have survived. She also completed a historical work started by her father and continued initially by her brother.

In her book containing lessons for women, many references to language are made. And language presupposes, and leads to, virtue, respect, obedience and humility (Donawerth, 2002)[18]. Chapter IV deals with Womanly

[14] Although scarcely documented, Apisala was a student of Apisali's Grammar (or Vyakarana Grammar).
[15] A. Appiah-Kubi, *The Akan of Ghana, West Africa: a Cultural Handbook for Reference* (Cowhide Press, 1999)
[16] M. Gianninoto, "Women and Language in Imperial China". *Women in the History of Linguistics,* edited by W. Ayres-Bennett and H. Sanson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021)
[17] B. Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2011)
[18] J. Donawerth, *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, Inc, 2002)

Qualifications: womanly virtue, womanly words, womanly bearing, and womanly work (Lee Swann, 1932)[19].

With regard to womanly words, she says:

> "…Womanly words need be neither clever in debate nor keen in conversation (…) To choose her words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and not to weary others (with much conversation), may be called the characteristics of womanly words".

Women and words: an association which, as we shall see after this journey through ancient, if not remote, times, has left seeds whose fruits are only just beginning to be seen nowadays. That is how slow history is, at times, to germinate.

[19] The first translation of Pan Zhao's book was made by Nancy Lee Swann in 1932; it was reprinted in 1968.
N. Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Women Scholar of China* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1932)

CHAPTER II

ARS LOQUENDI: ITS GENEALOGY

Ars loquendi…et ars tacendi: the art of speaking beautifully and convincingly. Silence and words are two sides of the same reality. In this chapter we are going to explore the different ways of persuading and fascinating through the use of words and the role that women have played throughout history in every aspect and facet of such an art. From the female lawyers of the Roman Empire to the anarchist Emma Goldman, including some medieval ladies, like the sisters d'Andrea, women assumed argumentation, persuasion and rhetoric not only with the idea of convincing others of their discourses and ideas, but also sometimes as a form of self-defense when their "rights" were somehow denied. In ancient Greece, eloquence was closely linked to rhetoric, which is not only a matter of style or a mark of language, but also a way of suggesting behaviors and patterns of social communication.

Eloquence, for better or for worse, is an art that has accompanied human beings throughout their history; whether for sibylline use, to please, to sell, to insinuate, to tell outright truths, to tell outright lies, to hide the truth, to tell half-truths, or to explain the plausible and the implausible. Eloquence could be related to brevity, as Cicero said, or to limit oneself to expressing what is strictly necessary, as Heine suggested.

In this chapter we have separated the genres, forms and dimensions of eloquence from eloquence itself. Cicero considered that eloquence embellishes the mind, Quintilian affirmed that eloquence came from the bottom of the heart and Demosthenes held that 'facts speak for themselves', linking eloquence to truth. Plato said rhetoric was the art of ruling the minds and Aristotle stated that truth and justice were inexorably connected to oratory. For such a reason, the debate as to whether it is closer to truth or to simple persuasion (and therefore manipulation) has been kept always open.

Of course, when we talk about rhetoric, oratory, and eloquence we need to delimit what style means. Many discussions on rhetoric revolved around the

added value of style: Buffon, Pascal and, above all, Thomas de Quincey, concentrate their works on such an aspect, the latter of whom devotes a large part of his essay to this in "Style and rhetoric and other papers" (de Quincey, 1862)[20].

There are women who have cultivated rhetoric, eloquence and oratory because they have clung to the power of the word to save or condemn themselves, to save others or condemn them. This act of adherence to the power of the word may have been deliberate or a pure gesture of survival. In the end it matters little. But it is worth making a distinction between those women who have exercised any of these derivations of rhetoric, those who have devoted themselves to its study, and those who have ventured into elaborate theories.

The Hrotsvitha code was discovered at the end of the 15th century in the Regensburg monastery. This event could be attributed with certainty to Johannes Tritheim or the Celts. Tritheim himself alludes, in a rare writing of his, "De Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis" (1494, Basel)[21], to Rosuida, a noblewoman of the Saxon nation, who was eloquent (in the sense of being gifted in linguistic talent of various languages). It was not these gifts, by the way, that were most prominent in this inventory of virtues, but that is another story. What we want to point out is that when speaking of the polyglot and noble Rosuida (able to speak Greek and Latin), the meaning of eloquence is adjusted to a new semantic mould.

We noted in the previous chapter that Bathsua Makin alludes to Rosuida, among many other eloquent women, in her essay. Bathsua Reginald Makin herself was a master in eloquence, rhetoric and an extraordinary polyglotism. Perhaps that is why in her famous writing she mentions not only Rosuida, but other women who have excelled in the shifting sands of eloquence. They belong to that distinguished group Maurata, Cornelia, and, of course, van Schurman (1673)[22]: women who talked and wrote

[20] T. De Quincey, (1862): *Style and Rhetoric and Other Papers (*Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1862)

[21] E. H. Zeydel, "The Reception of Hrotsvitha by the German Humanists after 1493". *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. Vol.44, num.3, pages 239-249, 1945.

[22] B. Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues with an Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education* (London: Printed by *J. D.* to be sold by *Tho. Parkhurst*, at the Bible and Crown at the lower end of *Cheapside, 1673).*

eloquently[23]. Going back to Rosuida, she adds that the Saxon queen taught rhetoric to girls (Donawerth, 2002)[24], amply demonstrating that she was not only a master rhetorician, but also a theorist.

Makin's merit is not small: in addition to being an extraordinary theorist in various language subjects, she also allows herself to vindicate the legacy of other masters. Her plea for women and their link to knowledge is absolute, leaving no room for doubt or ambiguity:

> "Her It is objected against poor Women, they may learn Tongues and speak freely, being naturally disposed to be talkative: But for any solid Judgment or depth of Reason, it is seldom found in their giddy Crowns. I proceed therefore to shew they have been good *Logicians, Philosophers, Mathematicians, Divines*, and *Poets"*[25].

We have little documentation of the Middle Ages with regard to women and their link to language, from the perspective of eloquence and rhetoric, so a new time jump leads us to the figure of the Venetian Cassandra Fedele, who was born in the second half of the 15th century and died in the middle of the 16th century. She learned Greek and Latin at the age of twelve, when her father sent her to a monk, Gasparino Borro, to be instructed in dialectics (which is opposed to Aristotelian dialectics), eloquence, science, philosophy and classical literature. Her lecture *Oratio pro Bertutius Lambertus* was published in Modena, Venice and Nuremberg. She corresponded with intellectuals in Italy and Spain. The Catholic Spanish queen Isabella invited her to join her entourage, which she declined. She was noted for her elegance of speech and her oratorical qualities. Her success was concentrated between the ages of 22 and 23. At 24 she married and entered a tunnel of silence. She did not write for 60 years, until she wrote a kind of autobiographical manifesto at the age of 80. In 1520, returning from Crete, the ship on which she and her husband were travelling was shipwrecked, and she lost everything. The following year her husband died. They'd had no children. She wrote a letter to Pope Leo X asking for help and never received a reply. She later tried again, with Paul III, who appointed her prioress of an orphanage. In 1814 the Italian intellectual Maria Petrettini

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[23] Ibid.

[24] J. Donawerth, *Rhetorical theory by women before 1900* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002)

[25] B. Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues with an Answer to the Objections against this Way of Education*

wrote a biography of Fedele, perhaps the first one[26], although during the 19th century there was much fascination about Fedele. This means that a proliferation of biographies came after Petrettini's work, like the book "Historical Pictures Retouch: A Volume of Miscellanies" (1860)[27], from the American feminist writer Caroline Wells Healey Dall or the German historian Henry Simonsfeld's "Zur Geschichte der Cassandra Fedele" (1893)[28].

In the transition between the 15th and 16th centuries Lucía Medrano was the first woman professor in the West, a disciple and collaborator of the Spanish grammarian Antonio de Nebrija[29], and a renowned Latinist. The Sicilian professor and scholar Lucio Marineo Siculo praised her eloquence. Nothing has survived of her written work. In his "Recapitulación de las Memorias del Príncipe de la Paz" Manuel de Godoy in 1841[30] quotes her. A fate very similar to that of hers also befell Spanish peer Francisca de Lebrix (also known as Francisca de Lebrija or de Nebrija), daughter of Antonio de Nebrija. She replaced her father on several occasions in the rhetoric classes at the University of Alcalá de Henares and it is believed to have participated in several of his works. She is known because she is cited by other authors: Eduardo Orodea e Ibarra, in "Curso de Lecciones de Lecciones de Historia de España o Estudio Crítico-filosófico de Todas las Épocas y Sucesos Notables de Nuestra Historia Nacional" (1878)[31]; José de Posada de Herrera, in "Lecciones de Administración" (1843)[32]; or Vicente Díez Canseco in his "Diccionario Biográfico Universal de Mujeres Célebres" from 1844/1845[33].

From the 16th century onwards, rhetoric not only took on greater proportions as an object of academic attention, but one might even add that it began to be viewed with suspicion, since it served both as proof of brilliance and as an excuse for deceit smeared with eloquence. In 1672, "Retorica delle Monache, Arte de Loro Inganni, Norma de Semplici e

[26] M. Petrettini, *Vita di Cassandra Fedele* (Venice: Stamperia Pinelli, 1814)
[27] C. Wells Healey Dall, *Historical Pictures Retouch: A Volume of Miscellanies* (Boston: Walker, Wise and Company, 1860)
[28] H. Simonsfeld, *Zur Geschichte der Cassandra Fedele* (Leipzig: Verlag von Leopold Voss, 1893)
[29] Author of the first Spanish Grammar
[30] Madrid, Imprenta de I. Sancha, 1836-1842
[31] Valladolid. Imprenta y Librería Nacional y Extranjera de Hijos de Rodríguez, 1878
[32] Est. Tip. Calle del Sordo, 1843
[33] Madrid, Imprenta de José Félix Palacios

Specchi d'Imprudenti"[34], by an unknown author, was published, evoking Quintilian, Cicero and Aristotle on the art of good speech and persuasion. After a survey of the history of rhetoric and its learned representatives (among whom, needless to say, there is not a single woman), he points out that prostitutes also have their own rhetoric and concludes that any bawd can have her own rhetoric. In the end, he focuses on the rhetoric of nuns. According to the author, nuns need rhetoric more than the air they breathe, and he states that there is no difference between "concubinary rhetoric" and "monastic eloquence".

There was no shortage of slanderous pamphlets aimed at denigrating women in general and those gifted with eloquence in particular, be they nuns or laywomen. But the truth is that in both spheres there have been examples of brilliance in the field of eloquence and even beyond. It would suffice to mention Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695), Mexican, author of an impressive lyrical and dramatic work. She disguised herself as a man in order to gain access to university. In her diatribe "Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz"[35] (a reply to the Bishop of Puebla in which she says that it would be better for her to dedicate herself to divine verses than to human ones) she claims the right of women to education and to their own intellectual work.

However, in the same way that some works denigrated women's contribution to eloquence, there were others, like the Italian rhetorician and humanist Leonardo Bruni's "De Studiis et Litteris" [36] that in the 15th century highlighted the innovative role of women in rhetorical issues (Bruni, 1483).

At the dawn of the 17th century, Madame Scudéry (Madelaine Scudéry) becomes a prominent figure. She was the author of several gallant novels, but also of the impressive 10-volume "Morale du Monde Ou Conversations", which prefigured Rousseau. Additionally, she is the first woman to be awarded an eloquence prize by the French Academy. She signed her name Sappho and, while she portrayed a loveable idea of romantic love, she considered marriage to be a corrupt institution and, in fact, never married. Although we have mentioned her because of her eloquence, Madeleine de Scudéry and her "The Female Orators: or, the Courage and Constancy of Divers Famous Queens, and Illustrious Women, Set Forth in Their Eloquent Orations, and Noble Resolutions: Worthy the Perusal and Imitation of the Female Sex" deserves a special place among rhetorical theorists. As does,

[34] Place of publication not identified
[35] Text available at Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Project
[36] L. Bruni, *De studiis et litteris* (Padova: Matthaeus Cerdonis, 1483)

her "Les Conversations Sur Divers Sujets" (Conversations about different topics) (1685). With regard to art of conversation, and anticipating some pragmatic and contextual aspects, she wrote:

> "I conceive, she responded, that in general, it ought more often to concern the subjects of ordinary, polite conversation, rather than great events. However, I think that nothing is precluded; that (conversation) ought to be diversified, according to the times, places, and persons with whom we (converse); and that the secret is to speak always nobly of small things, very simply of great things, and graciously of the subjects of polite (conversation), without transport and affectation. Thus, though the conversation ought always to be both natural and also rational, I must not fail to say, that on some occasions, the sciences themselves may be brought in with a good grace, and that an agreeable silliness may also find its place, provided it be clever, modest, and courteous. So that, to speak with reason, we may affirm without falsehood that there is nothing that cannot be said in conversation, provided it (is managed with) wit and judgement, and one considers well, where one is, to whom one speaks, and who one is oneself. Notwithstanding that judgement is absolutely necessary in order never to say anything inappropriate, yet the conversation must appear so free as if we rejected not a single one of our thoughts (…)" (Scudéry, 1685[37]).

In the 19th century, several works were published against women in general and their eloquence in particular -they have always been viewed with suspicion- not necessarily in the wake of the aforementioned 17th century anonymous work. Pamphlets of all kinds, not free of misogyny, tried to explain the reasons in women for the power of speech. Let us recall the works of Joseph Watts Lethbridge, for example the one entitled "Women the Glory of Men", in which he attributes women's use of eloquence to something born of the heart, even to excess of zeal, much more than to an awareness or study of language. The background to that quote is Elizabeth Starling's 1835 work[38], "Noble Deeds of Woman" who, in discussing eloquence, with an interesting cast of eloquent women throughout history, asserts that when virtue is somehow contained in the ultimate goal of the eloquent act, then the woman employs it to the utmost and deploys her best

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[37] Translation of Jane Donawerth.
J. Donawerth, *Rhetorical Theory by Women before 1900* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2002)

[38] From E. Starling we have some news thanks to the work "Heroines of Domestic Life': Women's History and Female Biography", by Mary Spongberg, in *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance* (London: Red Globe Press, 2002)

resources in such an endeavour (Starling, 1835)[39]. Joseph Addison, politician, poet and playwright, in his compiled book "Addison. Selections from Addison's Papers Contributed to The Spectator" says ironically that women are great orators, especially when they resort to invectives in order to humiliate others or when it is a matter of talking for hours in order to say nothing (Addison, 1875)[40].

Ladies of Dart in the Word: Persuasion and Conviction

Persuasion is somehow connected to truth (at least in the debates generated during The Renaissance) and also the proof of such a truth. Goclenius, in his "Philosophical Lexicon"[41] from 1613 affirms this indissoluble link between the art of persuasion and the search for truth, in the same way that ancient Romans did (and in clear opposition to Plato, for whom rhetoric sacrifices veracity in the cause of persuasion)[42]. In the field of persuasion, it is worth mentioning the work of women versed in law and critical thought during the Middle Ages. We understand this point (persuasive discourse in the context of law) in the same sense as Halmari and Virtanen do:

> "In *law*, if by *law* we understand statutory *law*, however, *persuasion* as a communicative strategy is seldom marked, and persuasive elements are blended with prescriptive expressions. *Law* does not command directly but imposes duties" (Halmani & Virtanen, 2005)[43].

Bettisia Gozzadini, a Bolognese jurist from the 13th century who studied philosophy and dressed as a man, presumably to circumvent severe laws regarding the education of women and their access to the classroom (we are talking about a fairly common phenomenon of "transvestism", so although it exceeds the linguistic and approaches semiotics, we go back to it: Sor Juana Inés was also a good example of "disguised as a man woman") is

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[39] E. Starling, *Noble Deeds of Woman* (London: T. Hookman, Old Bond Street, 1835)

[40] J. Addison, *Selection of Addison's Papers Contributed to The Spectator* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875)

[41] R. Goclenius, *Philosophical Lexicon* (G. Olms, 1964)

[42] R. Goclenius, *Philosophical Lexicon (1613*)
C. Trinkhaus, "The Question of Truth in Renaissance Rhetoric and Anthropology". *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. by James J. Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, pages 207-220, 1983)

[43] H. Halmani and T. Virtanen, *Persuasion across genres* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005)

believed to be the author of glosses to Justinian's "Digest" and doctor in law in 1239. She died in the floods of the river Idice in 1261. Somewhat later, but from the same Bolognese milieu, were the sisters d' Andrea: Bettina, 1327-1355, and Novella. Novella substituted for her father in some canon law classes, as did her sister Bettina, a long-serving teacher in Padua, where she taught law and philosophy. Although they are supposed to be brilliant in the art of persuasion and argumentation there is no written proof. A German nineteenth century writer, Ludwig Fulda, dedicated a play to Novella in 1904, and the poet Léon Duplessis dedicated a play to her in 1898. Another jurist contemporary of the d'Andrea sisters was Maddalena Buonsignori, author of a treatise on the situation of women, especially from a legal point of view.

Christine de Pisan, Christine de Pizan, or simply Christine de Pisa (1364, Venice-1430, Poissy), was a poet. In fact, she is recognized by the label of "the first professional woman writer in history". She had grown up in a favorable intellectual environment, which made her a polyglot (she spoke at least Italian, French and Latin). She married as a teenager and was soon widowed, finding herself with three children to care for, which is why she decided to devote herself to writing. Among the many epistles, ballads and a sort of autobiographical manuscript entitled "Alone, Alone I Want to Be", if we bring her up in the history of women that the linguistic discipline should remember it is for her participation in ardent polemics and public, open opinions on politics. In addition, she is the author of a well-argued defense of women against the slanders raised by Jean de Meung. Probably her most prominent act was that she had to present a plea in her own defense ("Christine's Vision"). She has therefore been a person who has publicly exercised persuasion, a fact that legitimately allows us to include her in this study and, at the same time, according to the scholar Donawerth, she showed the right path to women in order to speak in a gentle, nice and a charitable way (Donawerth, 2002)[44].

In this section we cannot fail to mention Bathsua Makin again, because, from the point of view of rhetoric, she also proves to be an exceptional figure. It is inevitable to list her many talents in order to justify her - shall we say – "omnipresence" in an essay such as ours: Her well-known polyglotism (she was educated in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew and German), her proto-feminism, and her significant correspondence with Anna Maria van Schurman, an exceptional contemporary to whom we

[44] J. Donawerth, *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefiled Publishers, Inc., 2002)

will dedicate a part of this chapter. She was in fact inspired by van Schurman's treatise on educating women for her own oeuvre. Bathsua Makin considered women's writing as a "genre" in its own right and her essay is an example of lively rhetoric: in the exordium she makes use of *kairos* to appeal to the reader's sympathy; and a *pathos* specifically addressed to her female readers. She uses the syllogism as a form of argument.

Here there are some excerpts of her book:

> Women have been good Linguists.
>
> It is objected against Women, as a reproach, that they have too much Tongue: but it's no crime they have many Tongues; if it be, many Men would be glad to be guilty of that fault. The Tongue is the only Weapon Women have to defend themselves with, and they had need to use it dextrously. Many say one tongue is enough for a Woman: it is but a quibble upon the word. Several Languages, understood by a Woman, will do our Gentlemen little hurt, who have little more than their Mother-Wit, and understand only their Mother-Tongue: these most usually make this Objection, to hide their own Ignorance. Tongues are learnt in order to Things. As things were, and yet are in the World, its requisite we learn Tongues to understand Arts: It's therefore a Commendation to these Women after mentioned, that they were Mistresses of Tongues.
>
> There is an ancient Copy of the Septuagent, sent from the Patriarch of Alexandria to King James, written by a Woman called Tecla, so accurate and excellent, that the Authors of the Polyglot-Bible chose it before all other Copies written or printed, to make use of in that Impression".

And yet:

> There is one thing yet remaining, in which Women have excelled, that is, Poetry. Their excellency in this, tends as much to their vindication as any thing yet spoken to. To be a Poetaster, is no great matter; but to be a Poet-laureat, requires great natural endowments, such as man cannot lend, if God doth not give; Poeta nascitur, non fit. If a man's natural parts be low, Industry, Education, Time, and Practice, may raise to some competent height in Oratory; therefore we say, Orator fit: But all the Instruction and Education in the World, all the pains, time, and patience imaginable, can never infuse that sublime Fancy, that strong Memory, and excellent Judgment required in one that shall wear the Bayes. If Women have been good Poets, Men injure them exceedingly, to account them giddy-headed Gossips, fit only to discourse of their Hens, Ducks, and Geese, and not by any means to be suffered to meddle with Arts and Tongues, lest by intollerable pride they should run mad.

> If I do make this appear, that Women have been good Poets, it will confirm all I have said before: for, besides natural Endowments, there is required a general and universal improvement in all kinds of Learning. A good Poet, must know things Divine, things Natural, things Moral, things Historical, and things Artificial; together with the several terms belonging to all Faculties, to which they must allude. Good Poets must be universal Scholars, able to use a pleasing Phrase, and to express themselves with moving Eloquence".

Anna Maria van Schurman is a contemporary of Makin, and as we said an epistolary confidant, about whom, regarding rhetoric and many other linguistic and non-linguistic aspects, there is much to say (Fernández Díaz, 2013)[45]. She was born in Cologne by chance. She came from a Calvinist family in Antwerp. Her paternal grandparents were forced to leave their town as a result of the provisions of the dreaded Duke of Alba, whose cruelty was well-known. They settled in Germany, where her father, Frederik van Schurman, married Eva von Harff. The marriage produced four children, Anna Maria being the youngest of them all.

They moved to Utrecht, the city where Anna Maria spent most of her life. The year was 1615. They rented a house in the north of the city. Before they moved to Holland, little Anna Maria was already showing signs of uncommon intelligence. She could read perfectly at the age of four. And no amount of reading could satisfy her. The famous engraver, poet and calligrapher Anna Roemers took the young Anna Maria, then a 13-year-old teenager, under her wing, marveling at the versatility and talent displayed by her pupil. At the same time, she was beginning to compose her first poems in Latin and to correspond with important European personalities. In a later writing, from her book "Eucleria", she makes it clear that she would be nothing without the careful education that her parents provided for her and her siblings. In 1621 the family moved for a time to The Hague, but some well-informed sources suggest that this was a failed project, as the father failed to establish his work, despite his numerous contacts at court. In any case, the family was back in Utrecht by 1622.

The father's educational obsession was to place this gifted daughter in the hands of Amesius, a scholar of renowned puritanism. The whole family moved to Franeker, in the Dutch province of Friesland, so that Anna Maria could join his classrooms. But in the same year her father died. The widow then decided to buy a house in Utrecht, on the same street where they had

[45] N. Fernández Díaz, "Anna Maria van Schurman, la perfección de la inteligencia". *Atlántica XXII: revista asturiana de información y pensamiento*, Number 24, 2013