CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

## *Rhetoric, Historical Recovery, and the New York State Asylum-School*

### Minding the Gap

Gaps in the historical record have always intrigued me. Initially, I was lured by the fact that the progressive activist and orator Helen Keller received no audience in anthologies of rhetoric. Perhaps her exclusion was due to the fact that her speeches were delivered via verbal translations of sign language—a form of delivery quite different from traditional oration. Nevertheless, aside from Lois J. Einhorn's work on Keller's rhetoric and Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe's rhetorical study on Roosevelt and his disability, there is a dearth of books on rhetoric and disability. A cadre of both scholars and activists are, however, attempting to fill in these historical and also material gaps that have privileged biological and medical meanings of disability over social, cultural, political, and historical ones. This new trend understands rhetoric as more than orality and speech giving; rhetoric and disability in this sense is embodied and at times nonverbal.

An example that further epitomizes this need for inclusion is the way in which disability activists in New York City have pushed for the city's subway system to fill in the ten- to fifteen-inch-wide platform gaps that exist between some station platforms and the train.[1] According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (1991), the subway platform gap should not exceed more than three inches. Multiple people have died as a result of the oversized gaps, and while the city has begrudgingly installed retractable walkways in a few stations, people who use wheelchairs still cannot access all trains because of inconsistent elevator service. In addition to these and

other modifications needed to create a more universally accessible physical environment, the disability rights movement has also attended to gaps in historical accounts. It is these gaps that most interest me here.

This book, while not about oversized subway platform gaps, oratory, or Helen Keller specifically *is* an attempt to expand how we think about participation across a broader spectrum of difference. A far cry from homogenous, the ways we engage as humans, citizens, and as communicators are diverse, and my aim in this book is to advance social, relational, silent, and embodied action as crucial elements of civic and rhetorical engagement. I construct a *rhetoric of remnants* from the archive and from our past that recognizes mainstream, verbal, and textual political participation as only one aspect of a wide range of ways to be civically engaged in the world.

Allied with the disability rights movement, new theories on disability and rhetoric (Brueggemann, Dolmage, Duffy, Dunn, Lewieki-Wilson, Price, Vidali), and studies of rhetoric and education (Cobb, Enoch, Gold, Logan, Royster), I look at the rhetoric in and around the first thirty years of the New York State Asylum for Idiots[2] (1854–1884) or what I call the "asylum-school." I piece together how language constructed the "idiot" in the nineteenth century into a seemingly real entity, how asylum educational practices (the art of becoming, bodily transformation, civic usefulness, control of the will, imitation, speaking, writing, listening) molded pupils in ways that inspire broader educational philosophy, and how study of the actual gaps and silences themselves in discourse can be fruitful. I retrieve remnants from the archives in order to construct a social history that brings presence to people with disabilities in New York State's history.

Today, the "asylum-school" is memorialized as the first public school for people considered "feeble-minded" or "idiotic."[3] The "idiot" had, for many centuries, been viewed in contrast to "rational man" as hopeless, degraded, even wicked, inhuman, and depraved.[2] Idiot, derived from the Greek *idiotes*, which referred to a private person who did not partake in the democratic process, had come to signify lack of intelligence and mental and physical abnormality. Though we now consider someone with intellectual differences *intellectually disabled*, the term *idiot* still carries much symbolic, rhetorical, and paradigmatic force.

Much of the rhetorical nature of "idiocy," and even intelligence itself, can be traced to the period when the asylum-school first opened in Syracuse in 1854. Pupils arrived at the school after long journeys from across the state with the pseudo-scientific label of "idiot." While Alfred Binet's metric intelligence scale,[4] which developed into the IQ test, was not officially used until 1905, the ways people looked, talked, and moved were measures used to determine intelligence in the mid-nineteenth century (Fletcher-Janzen,

407). I create this mid-nineteenth-century microhistory as a pivot point in which to recalibrate ways we conceive of presence and participation; I revive the so-called civically dead idiot of the nineteenth century into a significant historical force that complicates the physical and intellectual norms we so highly prize. Participation in civic endeavors does not always have to be verbal, nor does it have to be political. In minding gaps in the historical record, we can conceptualize rhetoric and participation in more inclusive ways.

## Rhetoric

While some think of rhetoric as political muckraking, this book ascribes a more complex meaning to the term. Rhetoric in this book signifies symbolic and persuasive action (social, relational, silent, and embodied uses of language) that *includes* people and groups but also *excludes* them. Rhetoric is the negotiation that we engage in with each other, privately and civically, individually and collectively, silently and discursively to attempt to reconcile our multiplicitous needs relating to action and engagement in the world. Throughout the book, access, presence, and participation are my guideposts in coming to terms with how symbolic and persuasive action undergird the ability not just to take part in educational and self-guided endeavors but to have worth as a person simply because one is human. People use rhetoric to gain access to a broad array of the social, relational, material, and humanizing things they want and need. People need rhetoric to access public space, mealtime, authorized leave, mobility, healthcare, self-governance, employment, support, relationships, and community. In the Ciceronian sense,[5] rhetoric offers people a way to foster "constructive relationship[s] between individuals and their community," to achieve virtue through civic commitment, and to attain some sense of collective unity and shared understanding (Agnew, 3, 33).

In carving out space in rhetorical history for people with disabilities, I develop the understanding that civic participation must be understood in ways that acknowledge imposed constraints. So while for some citizens work as a seamstress might not qualify as the civic life Cicero thought to be rhetoric's ultimate goal, for others work as a seamstress is civically vital. By disrupting the social versus civic opposition, we are guaranteed to include rhetorical practices other than just the political, and we are charged to view citizenship and its rhetorical practices across a broader spectrum of difference. In the asylum-school, modes of civic commitments extend beyond verbal communication and beyond political deliberation since words, when they are available, are often used in the most functional and utilitarian

sense. As Brenda Brueggemann and Cheryl Glenn have reiterated, our intellectual traditions are complicit in what Brueggemann calls "the audiological moment" as it valorizes spoken language and consequently pathologizes and excludes those who do not, or wish not to, speak. One example, then, of approximations of normalcy (we are all "approximately" normal, which really means there is no normal) includes the "will to speech" that Brueggemann discusses as typifying how we think about rhetoric. I concur that the speaking subject can no longer stand as the only progenitor of knowledge. Our orientation to spoken word shifts—from one camp, the question is asked: *Who speaks?* From another camp, the question is adjusted: *How have other means created access?*

I am also interested in *rhetoric* as it is enveloped in the urge to improve and transform: the rehabilitation of the famed orator Demosthenes, and his transformation from the "abnormal" to the "normal," acts as an important cultural myth.[6] Similarly, rhetoric in the asylum-school circulates through bodies as a way to showcase the marvel of progressive educational technique. Education in this instance could not function without rhetoric: both consolidate to construct the notion of "idiocy" which then compels moral, physical, social, and civic transformation. This process of transformation into a second nature is known as *phusiopoesis*. And while any educational project ideally entails such transformations, rhetoric at the asylum-school is unique because the discourses of pathology, abnormality, and deficiency are so profoundly read through the body.

The practices I discuss from the nineteenth-century asylum operate as benchmarks for how education is always deeply rhetorical and ideological in the sense that discourses move through student bodies, and education attempts to normalize them at all costs. My study demonstrates how rhetorical fitness in the form of civic participation is possible for all regardless of whether the body is able to move (or not move) and speak (or not speak) in prescribed ways. I regard rhetoric as more than speaking and writing: rhetoric is ideology that attempts to transform the subject via the body and it is the ability for that subject to establish civic and public presence even when speaking and writing are pedagogically deemphasized. In carving out space in history for people with disabilities, I develop the understanding that civic participation must be understood in ways that acknowledge imposed constraints. So while for some citizens work as a seamstress might not qualify as the civic life Cicero thought to be rhetoric's ultimate goal, for others work as a seamstress is civically vital. By disrupting the social versus civic opposition, we are guaranteed to include rhetorical practices other than just the political, and we are charged to view citizenship and its rhetorical practices across a broader spectrum of difference.

## Rhetoric and Remnants

Rather than defining rhetoric as oratory or as verbal persuasion, a revised understanding values rhetorical inquiry as a complex and multilayered epistemological and methodological tool for negotiating gaps and silences in historical evidence in order to acknowledge various versions of "reality." Rhetoric, then, includes language practices, bodily performances, and symbol usages that operate within systems of power, but it also entails barely audible traces, invisible performances, and non-extant experience that have no tangible evidence left. Rhetoric is the multiplicitous use of language (utterance or enunciation) but rhetoric is also the existence of silence that—and this is crucial—must not necessarily be confused with absence.[7]

Regrettably, I can only minimally recover the actual spoken or written words of the pupils: the remnants of a forgotten past. This is due to the fact that some did not necessarily speak in the physiologic sense, and those who did speak were often only taught to write in a rudimentary manner. As I explain further in chapter 3, asylum-school curriculum only emphasized speaking when it made sense for the individual pupil and only emphasized writing that fell within common school modes of orthography, imitation, and basic letter writing home. In order to extend rhetoric beyond speaking or writing, rhetoric includes seemingly silent practices such as "escape," traces, imprints, and inscriptions of action (like the stamping of a symbol onto a page via printing methods), joining the service, digging the Erie Canal, all that hold meaning and are in fact communicative but not through the speaking or writing of the person who experienced these things. Such practices illustrate rhetorical competence because they are meaningful expressions that alter how we think of who is a fit rhetor: fitness does not necessarily manifest through the written or spoken word. Rather, rhetorical fitness comes about less through alphabetic modes and more through objects and actions.

In my study of the asylum-school, rhetoric is all of these things—a negotiation, access, and silence. Put together, study of rhetoric at the asylum-school urges us to think more deeply about how our seemingly straightforward methods for recovering evidence can themselves erase people. In their anthology, Longmore and Umansky ask, "How can one write the history of a subject if one cannot gather much evidence about it?" (6). According to historian Henri Stiker, rehabilitation as a medical science is that which tries to make disability invisible—to make it go away. He writes, "Rehabilitation marks the appearance of a culture that attempts to complete the act of identification, of making identical. This act will cause the disabled to disappear and with them all that is lacking, in order to drown them, dis-

solve them in the greater and single social whole" (170–71). David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder go so far as to call the erasure part of an "ideology of extinction" (*Cultural Locations*, 32).

I build upon theses ideas by using methodologies that make sense amidst a technology of erasure: historical ethnography, revisionist historiography, feminist and Afra-feminist rhetorics, and feminist disability studies. These methodologies are overlapping and complementary. What is more, my historiographic work sometimes has more to do with absence than presence. This principle of absence is abundant in the historical record of the asylum-school in general but there is even more absence in the record in terms of the voices of the nondominant groups—the pupils and their families. While more than a few thousand people passed through the asylum, only Superintendent Wilbur and his mentor Dr. Edouard Seguin are identifiable by name in photographs in the archival record from the New York State Archives in Albany, the Onondaga Historical Society, and random remnants still housed at the building site. With a few exceptions, almost everyone other than Wilbur and Seguin are anonymous. Another example of absence includes the fact that the campus that was the New York State Asylum grew in the early twentieth century to include fifty buildings and structures; yet today, not one of the original structures remains. A few years ago, the last remaining structure—a small gatehouse—was demolished in order to keep local teenagers from using it as a midday escape from high school. Multiple other asylums have been demolished and while the list is long, a few include Elgin State Hospital (1993), Danvers (2006), Worcester (2007), and Willard (1995). As large state institutions or asylums began to close down in the 1990s, those that have not been demolished have been turned into prisons or state office buildings, or have sat abandoned.

Further, when inmates died at New York State Asylum for Idiots and did not have family burial arrangements they were buried in unnamed graves in Oakwood Cemetery in Syracuse. Anonymously numbering graves was a typical practice and represents the capstone of historical erasure, as the image of a gravestone from Rome Asylum for Unteachable Idiots (est. 1898 in Central New York) shows only a number.[8] A recent find in the history of asylums in Central New York occurred when, just before Willard State Hospital was demolished, a curator from the New York State Archives found suitcases that contained the possessions (including letters) of inmates of the insane asylum. From the artifacts in the suitcases, Penney Darby and Peter Stastny reconstructed the lives of the inmates in a traveling exhibit and book entitled *The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital*. The story of my book is likewise one of absence, erasure—and, also, the ensuing struggle to gather remnants and piece together lost lives.

The archival remnants of this project are well-preserved annual reports[9] of the institution (no suitcases have been found), professional journal articles

and books by educators at the asylum, pupil evaluation reports, and an endless supply of bound ledgers that list Christmas gifts received, visitors, letters received, clothes received, packages received, runaways, admittances, parole (release), as well as letters, posed photographs, text from handwriting lessons, curricular documents, inspection reports, safety procedures, other administrative documents, material produced by inmates in the print shop, and hand-sown mittens. My project weaves together these remnants from varied sources and thus develops a rhetorical history that makes something out of what was thought to be disconnected and lost. The closest thing to "case histories" included "pupil evaluation reports," which preceded extensive patient (student) case files. These reports offer minimal information in columns labeled name, age, date, residence, habits, conduct, capacity for occupation, ability to comprehend language, speak, know of colors, draw, imitate, write, read, and count.

While many records do not take me beyond the institutional voice, these difficulties serve historiographic purposes in the sense that I have attempted (at least in chapter 4) to write *about* an institution without placing the dominant voices of the institution at the forefront. This means accessing letters written by family members of inmates, uncovering agency and voice in the institutional displays and exhibits that were preserved in the archive, constructing productive labor such as the work done in the print shop as a certain type of "voice," and seeking histories through poorhouse records and census reports. When I began the project, I assumed I would have to rely heavily on medicalized sources: institutional documents and professional journal articles by "experts." I confronted what I considered obstacles that forced me to question my emphasis on these institutional sources. It was fortuitous that I stumbled upon a set of letters (*The James Thornton Correspondence*) written to the mother of a pupil. This as well as other methodological complexities I confront in the book has forced me not only to look even harder for subaltern voices, but also, in doing so, to recognize how complex asylum, pupils', and families' perspectives must have been. While I am aware throughout the book of my own position as a historian with her own particular prejudices, I attempt to be as fair and accurate as possible. I have earnestly tried to not judge the past based on my own views, especially concerning contemporary notions of disability rights and deinstitutionalization.

### The Asylum-School, Its Pupils, and the Closing of the Institution

Due to the nature of what remains in the archive, most if not all of what we know about who attended the school is from pedagogical and annual reports. There is little information written from the perspectives of pupils and their families other than from a small collection of letters and artifacts

that I discuss in depth in chapter 4. We do know that upon arrival at the school, the appearance and physiologic function, including language ability, of a pupil were described in detail. Pupils are said to have an "imperfect physical organization" (1st *Annual Report*, 44–45). Some are described as having an "unordinary" head or face (ibid). Some have vacant eyes while others have a wandering gaze. Some are reported as restless and others as partially immobile, and still others as entirely inert (ibid., 51). Reports read that seven walked imperfectly, three had partial paralysis, eleven had experienced convulsions, eight had excessive flow of saliva, seven were "inattentive to the calls of nature," five were irritable, some were unable to dress themselves, and only four were reported to be able to "feed themselves with propriety. . . . None of them could read or write, or count, or distinguish colors by name" (ibid., 44–45).

At its opening in Syracuse in 1854, the asylum-school was a relatively small educational and rehabilitative institution of about fifty pupils, none of whom were labeled "mad" or "insane." Insane asylums arose around the same period as "idiot asylums," but while the two types of institutions share various characteristics, they should not be confused. Moreover, that


Figure 1.1. A small group of asylum pupils, circa 1900. The New York State Archives, Public Domain.


Figure 1.2. Asylum Pupils, circa 1900. The New York State Archives, Public Domain.

the asylum-school educated only those considered to have what we today call intellectual disabilities is not entirely true. Nancy Ordover reports that Henry Goddard's 1912 IQ examinations concluded that more than 80 percent of all Jewish, Polish, Italian, Hungarian, and Russian immigrants that came through Ellis Island were feeble-minded defectives (11). I emphasize this thread that suggests that "idiocy" and "feeble-mindedness," rather than inscrutable scientific or biological truths, were rhetorical constructions influenced by hegemonic views on race, class, gender, and ability.[10]

The school was part of Horace Mann's movement for free and universal education; yet, also, it diverged from those principles in that some paid for their schooling at the asylum and some attended because they were not welcomed into mainstream schools. Mann, the progressive educator who played a central role in organizing the common school movement in Massachusetts, had visited Europe to tour schools in 1848 with Samuel Gridley Howe,[11] who was a close comrade to Hervey Backus Wilbur, the superintendent and founder of the asylum-school in Syracuse. With the support of Howe, Mann, and other prominent citizens,[12] Wilbur opened

an experimental school first in Albany in 1851, which then expanded to Syracuse in 1854.

In 1855, eighty-nine students attended the asylum-school. By the 1880s, industrial education took precedence over academics (*Annual Report*, 1852–1884). By 1931, 1,437 people of all ages lived and worked at the school and at thirteen allied colonies (*Census Report*). Years later, in 1969, the first group home in the community was established in Syracuse, followed by the building of a new, smaller facility (called the Syracuse Developmental Center). In 1975, residents formed their own council inside the institution and began to organize alongside the Disability Rights, Patients' Rights, and Self-Advocacy Movements (see the Self-Advocates of Central New York and Self-Advocacy Association of New York State). With a growing number of reports of abuse and neglect, and with the nationally publicized closure in 1987 of the Willowbrook Institution in Staten Island, 144 years after it opened its doors, in 1998 the last five residents moved into group homes and independent living residences. There, people receive case management, cultural integration, and medical and educational support across a broad continuum in terms of both quantity and quality (Center on Human Policy).

This shift to more recent inclusion models came about through decades of civil rights advocacy. Following this civil rights trajectory, scholarship in the field of rhetoric emerged in the 1980s and onward that included North American revisionist histories of abolitionist, women's rights, African American, Latina/o and Native American, and gay, lesbian and transgendered rhetorics. However, as *Octalog III*: *The Politics of Historiography* and its critiques confirmed, this work of inclusion has not been theorized sufficiently. This book responds to these critiques by reconceptualizing rhetoric and civic engagement in more inclusive ways that are aligned with disability studies and feminism.

### Disability Studies and Feminist Rhetorics

The disciplinary field of disability studies asks that critical study of disability be deployed as a natural supplement to the classic interpretive framework that includes race, class, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Yet, even with a surge of recent writing about diverse communities, integrating disability into our material, ideological, and historical pursuits has not been easy or expeditious. Rather, it requires large disciplinary changes in ways of thinking that, most of all, include employing (dis)ability as a positive signifier historically, culturally, theoretically, pedagogically, and personally. We need to deploy disability not within the usual physical or intellectual deficit model, but as a complex social, rhetorical, and historical ideology.

One core ideological underpinning of disability studies is the social model of disability, which contends that rather than only a biologically determinable category, disability is at least partially socially constructed and cultural and historical. A social constructivist theory is important because it splinters biological deterministic notions that say that bodily difference warrants dissimilar treatment. For example, people who cannot use stairs often have to enter through the back door of a building. But for social constructivism, what was previously attributable to biology is now ascribed to social mechanisms. Everyone, in theory, needs to enter through the front door. That is, when we think of a nineteenth-century "asylum for idiots"—after the initial giggle dissipates[13]—we must conceive of the term *idiot* as a complex, historically situated social and rhetorical construction. James Trent, Steven J. Taylor, Douglas Biklen, and multiple others argue that in fact intellectual disability is a social construction that threatens the cultural order; it is an imagined antithesis of American success. It is, as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson calls disability, the ultimate Other against which we compare ourselves.

This all begs the question, If disability has such a strong theoretical bent, how then have there not been more histories of people with disabilities? If, as Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky write, "[d]isability has been present, in penumbra if not in print, on virtually every page of American History" (2), why has it been so nominal? In their anthology entitled *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, Longmore and Umansky argue that gaps in disability scholarship are not attributable to history, but rather to how history is written. And, they contend, a good deal of the historical material available on disability is composed by people with disabilities themselves. My project, however, takes this even farther to demonstrate how difficult it may indeed be to recover particular types of primary perspectives. This work is important not just to people writing about disability but also to all historians and advocates who have the desire to access primary perspectives but find that task difficult.

This book is about locating positive significations of disability on the historical map. My purpose is to include disability studies perspectives that place disabled subjects in or near the center. James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewieki Wilson affirm the symbiotic nature of the fields of disability studies and rhetoric: "Disability studies seeks to advance the cause of the disabled and promote social change by analyzing the present social formations that contribute to maintaining walls of exclusion. Disability studies is thus a situated discourse and expresses a particular standpoint—that of the disabled. Rhetoric and composition's various methods of analysis, theories, and history can aid in this project; indeed, the goals of disability studies cannot

be achieved without rhetoric" (*Embodied Rhetorics*, 9). Disability studies, as a twenty-year-old field, is highly invested in bringing about multiple ideological and societal changes: disavowal of the understanding of disability as deficit, redistribution of cultural and economic capital, and redeployment of identity as cultural and historical.

Disability studies and rhetoric need each other in the sense that while the former pushes for expanded consideration of who can be rhetorically competent, the latter puts social change into motion through discourse. Without rhetoric, the disability rights movement could not have coalesced into a cohesive group with shared values and strategic tactics, and without rhetoric, disability studies scholars could not have argued for the establishment of disciplinary auspices in the traditions of Women and Gender Studies, African American Studies, Native American Studies, etc. Rhetoric affirms for disability studies the contingent and transformative nature of "reality"; many realities exist and are constructed through the ideologies of interested groups. For example, rhetoric constitutes the symbolic interaction that allows the medical model to exist, but more importantly, rhetoric permits other "realities" such as a cultural or historical model of disability to exist as well. Rhetoric has been instrumental, however, not only in the formation of disciplinarity and the advancement of social justice, but also in the fact that people are beginning to acknowledge that the established "truths" of disability studies are themselves subjective and in need of contestation. Rhetoric confirms the continuously fraught nature of all premises, claims, and arguments as they emerge across various contexts and circumstances.

Feminist studies in particular has much in common with disability studies, which makes the alliance a natural one: both consider social constructionism, standpoint epistemology, identity, and social justice. Both are highly invested in contextualizing discussions within cultural, material, and economic circumstance. Both disability and gender signify relations of power (Garland-Thomson; Glenn; Ervelles) that beg for analysis and contestation. Both deal with an assumed biological inferiority. But rather than a biologically inferior position, disability is argued to be "a hypothetical set of guidelines for corporeal form and function arising from cultural expectations about how human beings should look and act. Although these expectations are partly founded on physiological facts about typical humans—such as having two legs with which to walk upright or having some capacity for sight or speech—their sociopolitical meanings and consequences are entirely culturally determined" (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 7). In this book, rhetoric centers around access as it relates to embodied difference; this lens offers much in terms of expanding how we think of rhetoric.

## Review of Chapters

In the following chapter, "'Confusion into Order Changed': The Rhetorics That Govern(ed) Institutionalization" (chapter 2), I begin by explaining how and why asylums came to be. This chapter is framed around the rise of institutionalization—and by proxy the rise of notions of "idiocy"—in the United States. What constituted an "idiot?" How were those determinations made? How did rhetoric facilitate not only the notion of "idiocy" but also the development and maintenance of the "idiot asylum?" I show how it was the rhetorical (syllogistic, topical, and definitional) reasoning rather than "real" biological difference that invented the "idiot." In this chapter I look at some of the tropes (metaphors and rhetorical figures) and topoi (lines of arguments) that reified the notion of "idiocy" and developed and sustained the asylum-school at Syracuse.

In chapter 3, "In Pursuit of the Active Life: The Roots, Rhetoric, and Recursiveness of 'Special'[14] (All) Education," I interpret the curriculum through concepts and practices of civic participation, the body (deportment and countenance), phusiopoesis (the art of becoming), the will, speaking, reading/writing, listening, and decorum. I piece together the actual curriculum alongside the educational ideologies as they were devised by the reformers, educators, and administrators. The philosophy of education at the asylum-school lay not only at the root of "special" education, but liberal humanist education in a broad sense has borrowed its corporeal, sensorial, experiential, and utilitarian nature. I utilize curricular and administrative documents, annual reports, and professional journals to reconstruct the curriculum and the day to day regimen as it was envisioned by those who held administrative and pedagogical power.

Chapter 4, "In Pursuit of the Underlife of an Archive,"[15] searches for the subaltern rhetorics or the perspectives of the pupils and their families. While chapter 3 discusses how education was implemented from above, this chapter will look at complex subaltern practices from below in order to reveal the presence of pupils at the asylum-school and their families in terms of how they engaged with the education offered. In this chapter, I approach the difficult historiographic work of trying to recover historical memory of those who did not necessarily speak or write; this process of retrieval, which is part and parcel of a rhetoric of silence, I argue, can inform historical methods generally. I look at the gaps in discourse in order to reconstruct what was not recorded. The historian must, at times, read between the lines. This chapter theorizes how this is done. Finally, chapter 5 concludes the project by reflecting on how this study can point us toward a more socially just and inclusive world.

Most of all, the asylum-school pupil is a monumental example of how education can (or at least attempts to) mold and rehabilitate one's being. This overhaul is remarkably ideological. Study of education at the asylum-school is an especially illuminating site due to the fact that the pupils upon admittance were deemed civically and rhetorically unfit, even *civically dead*, and identified as in need of a radical overhaul of their bodies, intellects, modes of communication, and social relations. The broad, unstable, and cross-cultural category of "people with disabilities" endures an especially interesting relationship to rhetoric, education, speaking, and writing. This project aims to demystify some of that relationship, which invariably requires new modes of inquiry and new ways of thinking. Study of the asylum-school calls into question many of our assumptions about embodied differences as they relate to pedagogy, history, and public participation. This book will, hopefully, fill in gaps by bringing us closer to understanding those complexities.