



Mistress of Her Art: Anne Laura Clarke, Traveling Lecturer of the 1820s

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ONE of the most curious absences in U.S. oratorical history is memory of Anne Laura Clarke's professional lectures from 1822 through the mid-1830s. During these years, Clarke, a multi-talented schoolteacher, writer, and visual artist, lectured on topics ranging from English grammar to biblical and American history in numerous cities from Baltimore to Bangor and Boston to Buffalo. Her vocational choice was unusual enough for a woman of her time and place, but her performances were innovative in another respect as well: she illustrated her speeches with her own handcrafted historical charts and commercially produced slide projector images. In addition to providing visual aids for her lectures on Western history, she used her slides to discuss world clothing customs. Although Clarke was not the first U.S.-born female itinerant lecturer to address mixed audiences of men and women (called "promiscuous" audiences at the time)—that title may belong to Deborah Sampson Gannett, the Revolutionary soldier who toured the Northeast in 1802—she is one of the most important. For over a decade, she pioneered the professional traveling lecture circuit alongside men, and she supported herself in that capacity several years before Frances Wright's lecture tours of 1828–29 or Maria Stewart's 1832 lectures in Boston. Regional newspapers heralded Clarke's notable accomplishment after her death, as did a handful of relatives and local historians over the ensuing

The New England Quarterly, vol. LXXXVII, no. 4 (December 2014). © 2014 by The New England Quarterly. All rights reserved. doi:10.1162/TNEQ_a.00418.

150 years, but otherwise she remains obscure in the annals of U.S. oratory and feminist history.¹

¹Early accounts of Clarke include a 21 August 1861 obituary in the *Massachusetts Spy*, which describes her as the “first woman lecturer”; an obituary in the *Hampshire Gazette*, 20 August 1861; and two publications in the 1890s by Charles Lyman Shaw, her sister’s son, the first of which published a portion of one of Clarke’s lectures on the early history of Northampton: “Early Reminiscences of Northampton: From Manuscripts of Anne Laura Clarke,” *Hampshire Gazette*, 18 August 1893, and “Anne Laura Clarke: The Northampton Lecturer,” *Hampshire Gazette*, 1 August 1896. Twentieth-century accounts, drawn from family papers and local historical club activities, include Anna Gertrude Brewster, “Anne Laura Clarke, 1788–1861” (a paper read at the meeting of the Northampton Historical Society, November 1946), Anne Laura Clarke Collection, Family Folder, Historic Northampton, Northampton, Mass. (hereafter Clarke Collection); Clara E. Hudson, *Plain Tales from Plainfield, or The Way Things Used to Be* (Northampton, 1962); Ruth Wilbur, “Anne Laura Clarke (1788–1861)” (a paper read on 4 November 1984 to the South Side Monday Night Club [Northampton]), Clarke Collection; Jacqueline van Voris, “Anne Laura Clarke (1788–1861)” (a paper read on 21 October 1985 to the Monday Afternoon Club, Alumnae House, Smith College, Northampton), Clarke Collection; and *The Look of Paradise: A Pictorial History of Northampton, Massachusetts, 1654–1984* (Canaan, N.H.: Phoenix Publishing for the Northampton Historical Society, 1984), p. 51. In 1999, historian Catherine Kelly quoted extensively from Clarke’s letters in her investigation of the urbanization of the countryside and women’s education: *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women’s Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 42–43. Clarke does not appear in the following: Doris G. Yoakam, “Women’s Introduction to the American Platform,” in William Norwood Brigance, *A History and Criticism of American Public Speech*, 4 vols. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1943), 1: 153–92; Lillian O’Connor, *Pioneer Woman Orators: Rhetoric in the Antebellum Reform Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954); Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Women Public Speakers of the United States, 1800–1925, a Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993); or *Man Cannot Speak for Her: Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric, 1830–1925*, 2 vols. (Westport: Greenwood, 1989); or other major studies of the lyceum, such as Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), or Angela G. Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005). Because it is not clear that Deborah Sampson Gannett wrote the material she delivered on tour in 1802, her performance can be viewed as a type of theater rather than a public lecture. For excellent studies of Sampson, see Sandra Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 1999), and Alfred Young, *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (New York: Knopf, 2005). Most histories of women’s public speech credit Maria Stewart as the first U.S. female to have published lectures she gave in serial fashion to mixed audiences of men and women in 1832. This technical definition excludes women’s exhibitional oratory in school as well as female religious oratory among Methodists and Quakers. I read about Clarke for the first time in 2001, when, as a Peterson Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society, I was looking for early nineteenth-century women orators by paging through regional newspapers. I am deeply grateful to Ruth McCormick, a graduate student at Greenfield Community College, Massachusetts, who had read a 2002 essay of mine citing Clarke’s tours and informed me that her papers were held at Historic Northampton. I would also like to thank Sandra Gustafson, Mary Kelley, Louise Knight, Melissa Mowry, and Linda Rhoads, who provided valuable comments for revisions of this essay.

Oddly enough, it is Clarke's very obscurity, her unsung achievement, that underscores her significance: she managed her career so skillfully that she normalized it, thus insulating herself from charges that she was violating gendered norms of public behavior. Presenting herself as a teacher, Clarke asked her audiences to attend an educational event, not a display of her epideictic oratorical prowess. Indeed, she developed such a strong reputation that in late 1828 she was even invited to lecture on biblical history to a Sabbath school in Portland, Maine, where she twice spoke to overflowing audiences in the midst of Frances Wright's controversial lecture tour from Cincinnati to New York and the simultaneous scandal over "praying women" during Charles Grandison Finney's religious revival.²

Clarke's deft negotiation of the prejudices of her age challenges current beliefs about the social prohibitions female orators encountered before the 1840s as well as what activities were available to women in previous decades. For example, most rhetoricians and historians have assumed that a woman's mere presence at the rostrum would alarm a promiscuous audience; Clarke's career disrupts that supposition, at least as it pertains to the 1820s and 30s. Avoiding provocative topics on stage, she was widely applauded as a formidable intellect and a compliment to her sex, a story which is rarely told in the history of women's public speech. As a consequence of her careful control over her public image, however, her highly visible activity as a public lecturer was not recorded in book-length histories of noteworthy women written by antebellum or Civil War generations nor by our own. Clarke, who lived until 1861,

²Clarke Collection, F1: 23 December [1828]. Unless otherwise noted, all correspondence is from the Clarke Collection at Historic Northampton. The collection contains two family folders and eleven folders numbered F1 to F11. One of Clarke's Sabbath school lectures is advertised in the *Eastern Argus* of Portland, Maine, 12 December 1828. Some of Clarke's most complimentary reviews are found in: *Philadelphia Aurora*, 20 June 1825 (partially reprinted in the *Hampshire Gazette*, 27 July 1825); *Connecticut Courant*, 15 May 1826; *Albany Argus*, 9 November and 27 December 1826 and 8 January 1827; and the Portland magazine *Yankee*, 26 November 1828 and 1 January 1829. I have found no negative reviews. For the controversy over "praying women" in Finney's revivals, see Susan Zaeski, "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy and the Emergence of the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 191–207.

never sought fame; she only wanted to be known as a good teacher—women’s work indeed.³

Clarke’s low profile in historical literature is also a consequence of the attitudes of the generations who came after her. The educational outlet she successfully exploited in the early national period had narrowed by midcentury as Victorian-era middle-class and elite women looked for ways to distinguish themselves socially and aesthetically from their less-educated or working-class peers.⁴ During the antebellum reform era and beyond, the activity of women’s public speech became more difficult to balance with a claim to bourgeois social prestige. In the concluding sections of this essay, I argue that Clarke’s successful exploitation of *useful* educational discourse remained one of the most acceptable avenues for women’s publicity and professionalization in the nineteenth century, but the broad license initially associated with that conduct in the early 1800s was chastened by narrowing standards of social distinction by mid-century. As has been the case with several other notable women orators of the early national period, Anne Laura Clarke was likely a casualty of the psychological repression of men and women of taste who codified the nation’s history in books. She was forgotten by most of New England’s intellectual elite because she no longer fit the mold of how women of refinement should behave—the examples of brazen “Fanny” Wright, the Grimké sisters, or Abby Kelley Foster, sincere and very idealistic reformers, were a more comforting memory for both progressives as well as conservatives. In this regard, the hallowed

³Even Kenneth Cmiel, one of the most demographically inclusive theorists of U.S. nineteenth-century rhetoric to date, asserts that women were not accepted as orators in the age of Frances Wright; see his *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight Over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: William and Morrow, 1990), p. 70. I do not dispute his claim; rather, I seek to set its limits. Clarke presented her speaking as education, not oratory, a generic distinction that would have been familiar to her audiences. To illustrate the lasting effects of Clarke’s strategy, I offer an anecdote: in 2013, the academic editors of a prestigious series on American rhetorical traditions declined to publish Clarke’s collected lectures because, in their view, Clarke was not sufficiently “rhetorical,” that is, persuasively oriented, like Maria Stewart.

⁴As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has argued, the cultural elite celebrate their appreciation of abstract form—rather than their useful physical activity in the world—to distinguish themselves from other groups. See his *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

tradition of modern feminism that has been codified in so many anthologies of American women's oratory is both a tribute to the bold radicalism of the early reformers but also a subtle artifact of their marginalization by the aesthetic consciousness of the writers and intellectuals who fostered this genealogy through the twentieth century. By the time Doris Yoakam and Lillian O'Connor published their histories of women's public speech in the 1940s and 1950s, Clarke's divergence from the compelling story of women's political journey to Seneca Falls in 1848 neither fit prevailing national narratives of the struggle for women's rights nor would her story have been otherwise attractive or meaningful to advocates of women's subordination. In other words, if Yoakam and O'Connor were looking for political iconoclasts, they found them. But, as contemporary historians such as Mary Kelley and Carolyn Eastman have argued, the story of the professionalization of women's voice through education may be less controversial and equally important.⁵

Teacher

Anne Laura Clarke, the eldest of six children, was born on 4 July 1788 in Northampton, Massachusetts. During her twenties, her father, Joseph O. Clarke Esq., became mired in the financial depression that developed toward the end of the War of 1812. Although her father's family pedigree was not particularly distinguished—Joseph was the son of a saddle and harness maker—he ranked among Northampton's elite because, as a boy, his intellectual abilities had recommended him to one of Northampton's leading citizens, Major Joseph Hawley. When Hawley died in 1788, some of his lands and all of his library were bequeathed to Joseph, whom he had informally adopted. Wealthy enough to afford a \$110 church pew in 1812, the Clarkes were struggling by war's end. Joseph wrote to his

⁵Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute, 2006); Carolyn Eastman, *A Nation of Speechifiers: Making an American Public after the Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and, most recently, Lucia McMahon's *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

daughter in 1815 that many of the family's friends were financially ruined—some as much as \$27,000 in debt—and the Clarke family had begun taking in boarders to help pay expenses. Anne, twenty-seven years old, had accepted a teaching job 140 miles away at Fishkill Landing on the Hudson River, and in the spring of 1816, she was planning to move to New York City to study painting. Although the family's income continued to decline, Anne's father, who had great faith in her potential as a visual artist, urged her to stay in Manhattan until she had become "a complete mistress of the art you practice." He wrote that he would send whatever money he could spare toward that end (F5: 8 February, 1 May, 17 June 1816).⁶

In succeeding years, however, the money flowed in the opposite direction. Late in 1817, Anne made the bold step of accepting a teaching position in central Georgia, where she lived for two years while sending money home to help her recently widowed father pay back the loans and mortgages he had taken out on the family property. When she arrived in Georgia, Anne had her eleven-year-old sister Elizabeth in tow, and a year later her fifteen-year-old brother Frederick joined them, siblings Anne educated as well as supported. After year-long teaching jobs in Sparta and Powelton, Anne moved to a teaching position in Petersburg, Virginia, where, according to a 5 May 1822 letter, one of her paintings was chosen for exhibition at an academy (F2).⁷

As a general teacher in both Georgia and Virginia, Clarke earned an adequate income, which she supplemented by offering instruction in the ornamental subjects of French, music,

⁶Samuel Clark, *Antiques, Historicals and Graduates of Northampton* (Northampton: Steam Press of Gazette Printing Co., 1882), p. 173. See also Betsy Ann Chapter, *Early Northampton* (Springfield, Mass.: F. A. Bassette, 1914), and the standard history of Northampton in that period, James Russell Trumbull and Sylvester Judd, *History of Northampton from its Settlement in 1654*, 2 vols. (Northampton: Press of Gazette Printing Co., 1898–1902). For the pew receipt, see F1: 19 December 1812; F4: Joseph Clarke to Anne Clarke, 20 August 1815.

⁷Georgia, whose cotton industry was booming, was overrun with northerners seeking easy wealth in this period. Due to lack of local supply, teachers were in high demand at Georgia's private academies (F2: 4 March 1818; 17 January and 4 July 1819). Clarke's prize-winning painting, I believe, was of a Virginia farm. It currently hangs in the house of her sister in the Shaw-Hudson House in Plainfield, Massachusetts.

and drawing. Her income was approximately \$800 a year in Sparta, \$900 at Powelton, and \$500 in Virginia. The terms of her employment were irregular, however, and she had additional room-and-board expenses for her siblings. During most of this period, Clarke suffered poor health (F2: 29 August and 18 October 1818; 3 January and 20 April 1820; 24 July 1821). Torn between the immediate need to support her family and the desire to launch a career that would bring her greater satisfaction and financial stability, she thought of starting a school of her own but could not find a suitable location; she considered portrait painting, a lucrative business, but felt she needed more study (F2: 19 July, 7 September, 20 October, and 21 December 1821). Meanwhile she continued to worry about the family's obligations. According to the Clarkes' financial records, Anne contributed \$200 toward her father's mortgage in October 1819, and she continued to pay down the debt until it was cleared in the 1820s (F11). After he had studied with Anne for a year, Frederick was sent home. From time to time, the two sisters visited their brother George in Philadelphia, where, desperate for a stable teaching job, Anne finally moved in late 1821.

The family's extensive correspondence is intellectually robust—for example, Joseph Clarke would write several pages about the reign of Islam in Gibbon's *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* or about his experiments raising silkworms, and Anne would respond by discussing the relation between religion and manners in the South (F4: 16 April 1815; F2: 4 October 1818)—but it is not radically progressive. Anne's choice about the next stage of her career was, however, bold. Inspired by Philadelphia's active lecture culture, Clarke, thirty-four years old, wrote to her father in February 1822 that he should not be surprised to see her name in the papers. She planned to imitate the example of her new friend, the American geographer William Darby (1775–1854), who lectured and taught in Philadelphia. Because most Philadelphia lecturers addressed scientific topics, Clarke felt there might be a niche for her on the subject of English grammar, and Darby offered her use of his classroom (F2: 13 January and 24 February 1822).

Philadelphia's lecture culture was thriving in the early 1820s and, in contrast to writing for publication, was a speedy way to make money. A month's advertising in the city's *National Gazette* of 1825, for example, lists nearly fifty individual lectures or lecture series, mostly in the sciences but also in English grammar and elocution, bookkeeping, and business. At the time, lecturers typically charged \$5 for a series of five to sixteen lectures on a given topic over the course of a month, or between 25¢ and \$1 at the door for an individual lecture. With approximately thirty people subscribing to a series, an average speaker could gross \$150 a month, an entire term's salary for many schoolteachers.⁸

Lecturer

Clarke's first public address directed toward adults was a success. On 5 May 1822, she wrote to her father that on 11 March, she had lectured on English grammar "in the presence of many ladies" in Mr. Darby's classroom. Because some of the audience could not find seats at Darby's, Clarke found a larger venue the following week, when she lectured at the Hall of the Musical Fund Society. That audience included men, an unusual

⁸There is important work to be done on public lecturing in the United States between the Revolution and the lyceum movement (c.1826). Emerging from British scientific culture in the 1750s, itinerant lecturing on electricity, galvanism, anatomy, astronomy, and chemistry took off after the American Revolution, supported in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Baltimore, Charleston, and other smaller seaboard cities like Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Newport, Rhode Island. Some of the more well known speakers were Ebenezer Kinnersley, Benjamin Franklin's scientist friend, in the 1750s to the 1770s; and the blind scientist Henry Moyes, who toured America to great acclaim from 1785 to 1786. In their wake, numerous other serial and itinerant lecturers emerged to speak on non-religious topics. There is little space to discuss them here, but a short list includes: Noah Webster (language); John MacPherson (science); Thomas Adderley (humanities); Thomas Swann (horsemanship); John Griscom (science); Alexander Ramsay (science); Eliza Harriot O'Connor (literature, heard by George Washington in 1787); Deborah Samson Gannett (war exploits); James Ogilvie (oratory); G. Green (astronomy); John Stewart, "The Traveller" (philosophy); Charles W. Peale (science); Elihu Palmer (politics); George J. Chilton (science); John Wood (navigation); J. M. Ray (philosophy); Rev. Dr. James Abercrombie (literature and public speaking); John D. Craig (science); Dr. P. K. Rodgers (Rogers?) (chemistry); Dr. Thomas P. Jones (chemistry); John Lathrop Jr. (science); Nathaniel G. Senter (oratory and taste); Mr. Huntington (elocution); William Darby (geography); Thomas Hallworth (mnemonics); Robert Goodacre (astronomy); and Edward Everett (humanities).

event in early national history but a reasonable extension of Clarke's profession (F2). The lectures had been well received, she reported, but had excited "considerable animosity" among many of the teachers of English grammar, who were dismayed that a "Lady should step forward to take their business out of their hands." As had been the case since she was twenty-two years old, the mainstay of Clarke's career was teaching classes for children. At the time, she charged \$10 per pupil per quarter and \$5 extra for French or drawing (F2: 16 February 1823). By September 1823, she had about thirty students, but she was simultaneously planning to boost her income by expanding her role as an educator. She wrote to her brother Hawley that she was preparing a historical lecture series for adults. She proudly noted that "I am the first female in this Country who has offered to Lecture on any subject.—and that circumstance alone ought to insure my success" (F2: 29 September 1823).

Although Clarke was aware that her decision was innovative, public address for men and women in the early national era existed in many forms—such as the recitation; the address; the dramatic dialogue; the speech; the declamation; the reading, the lecture; the oration; the sermon; the exhortation; the toast—and in many different locales—such as the schoolroom; the theater; the church; the legislature; the bar; and various types of public meetings and private clubs—all of which involved different and very specific expectations, although there was also some discursive overlap. James Ogilvie, for example, one of the most famous secular speakers of the early national period, dressed in a toga and spoke in deliberative and epideictic mode on social topics like dueling. Ministers like Lyman Beecher, who addressed the same topic from the pulpit, were appreciated according to different criteria than their literary flair alone. The publication of their oratorical performances also had different outcomes: Beecher's career benefited while Ogilvie's collapsed.⁹

⁹Carolyn Eastman shared with me an essay in draft, "The Peculiar Genius of Mr. O: Celebrating and Forgetting Oratory in the Early American Republic," which discusses James Ogilvie's career in depth, and I borrow her argument that his brand of grandiloquence did not transfer successfully to the printed page.

Women's public speech was also shaped by audience, genre, and venue. Women commonly gave speeches as actors in the theater, and schools sponsored dramatic oratory for both men and women. Herself formerly an actress, schoolmaster Susanna Rowson popularized women's public speech from the late 1790s onwards, when, on school exhibition night, her young female students performed dramatic dialogues, read literary excerpts, and spoke original essays. Never formally called "declamations" or "orations" in school programs, the essays would have been so called had a male delivered them. Paradoxically, the speeches had more influence as printed artifacts, for they were broadly disseminated when Rowson published them to serve as advertisements for her school.¹⁰

The printed lecture, with its close association to educational discourse, was a simulation of public speech that had no need to be spoken to have influence, and it was a genre women embraced in this period without generating controversy. Closet oratory, such as Emma Willard's famous "address" to the New York State legislature in 1819 asking for funds to support women's education, was not actually read before an

¹⁰In contrast to anthropological distinctions between nonliterate and literate cultures, or oral and chirographically oriented cultures (see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* [London: Methuen, 1982]), public speech in early national America often blurred the media boundary between print and vocalicity as well as neoclassical generic distinctions. Beyond the Aristotelian triumvirate of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic oratory (generally reserved for describing men's public-sphere activities), eighteenth-century rhetoricians such as Hugh Blair and Richard Whately also recognized religious oratory as a significant addition to Aristotle's framework, in which women in North America had occasionally participated—for better or worse—since Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson in the early seventeenth century. See Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle-Letters* (1783), ed. Harold F. Harding (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965); Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric: Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion, with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution* (1828), ed. Douglas Ehninger (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1963). Even before the Gutenberg revolution, however, writers in the classical age recognized that oratory was a hybrid genre that could be appreciated in printed as well as spoken form. Indeed, one of Cicero's contemporaries complained that his "speeches" were greatly enlarged and retouched when he published them, a practice that most early national readers took for granted when they read speeches in pamphlet form. See Anthony Everitt, *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician* (New York: Random House, 2003), p. 58. See the introduction to Gustafson's *Eloquence Is Power* for an extended argument about the danger of oversimplifying the differences between print and speech in colonial society.

audience but was taken to imply that it might have been.¹¹ In 1823, a self-proclaimed “Lady,” (presumably) pseudonymed Clio Alzire Darnielle, published several “lectures” in five installments of the *Kentucky Reporter* (27 October and 3, 10, 17, and 24 November) on the need for state-sponsored education. Both of these examples illustrate that, at least figuratively speaking, women could lecture publicly to men in the early national period, particularly on educational matters. By packaging her oratory as a type of education, Clarke took advantage of a platform for addressing *both* sexes that women had been slowly establishing in schoolrooms and on the printed page for the previous two decades.

With an ear for technique, Clarke also studied the genre of the public lecture outside of the classroom. She wrote to her father in late 1823 that she and her sister had begun to attend a course of lectures on astronomy offered by the English schoolmaster Robert Goodacre. She was impressed by his visual aids—he used a giant transparent globe and a fifteen-foot-diameter orrery, a mechanical model that displays the orbits of the planets around the sun—but she complained that he was a “miserable” public speaker. Although 500 people had attended his first lecture, she reported, “no one is attending his 2nd!” (F2: 26 November 1823).¹²

Beyond the literary labor of drafting her historical lectures, Clarke drew on her skills as a graphic artist. She planned to augment her speeches with historical charts to help audiences visualize the relative duration of various monarchs’ reigns. Inspired by the vogue for chronological “maps” based on Joseph Priestley’s biographical and historical charts of the 1760s, Clarke produced several poster-sized timelines, five feet long by three and

¹¹Emma Willard, *An Address to the Public, Particularly to the Members of the Legislature for New York, Proposing a Plan for Improved Female Education* (Middlebury, Vt.: J. W. Copeland, 1819).

¹²Although Goodacre eventually developed a respectable reputation in the U.S., a review of his introductory lecture published in *Poulson’s Advertiser* echoed Clarke’s disappointment about his speaking abilities. Goodacre himself admitted that his initial lectures were blundering. See Ian Inkster, “Robert Goodacre’s Astronomy Lectures (1823–1825) and the Structure of Scientific Culture in Philadelphia,” *Annals of Science* 35 (1978): 353–63.

one-half feet wide, representing the rise and fall of nations and empires in vertical bars. Clarke significantly improved Priestley's infographics, reorienting the flow of time and national achievements on vertical axes, the bars painted in bold colors, much like later visual representations of dinosaur epochs in children's books of the twentieth century. Elizabeth, then old enough to work as an assistant teacher in her sister's school, helped Clarke prepare the charts (F2: 26 November 1823; F6: Elizabeth to Joseph, 18 August 1825). Based on the initial advertisements for the school she held at her father's house in Northampton in 1810, which promised education with "charts and maps" (*Hampshire Gazette*, 28 May 1810; *Anti-Monarchist*, 28 May 1810), Clarke had been using visual aids in her teaching for over a decade. Now integrated into her lectures, the charts were frequently touted in the press as modern pedagogical inventions. A colored chart mapping the succession of the kings of Judea remains extant in her papers at Historic Northampton. Several of the larger charts have been stored in the attic of her sister Elizabeth Shaw's house in Plainfield, Massachusetts (where they have lain forgotten for 150 years [see figs. 1 and 2]). Confident of their value, Anne filed a copyright application in Philadelphia on 2 July 1825 and circulated a subscription to publish them (F11).¹³

Although Clarke had experimented with public lecturing in 1822, she formally debuted a commercial series of lectures in Philadelphia in late December 1823. She wrote to her father after her fourth lecture to say that they were going very well (F2: 4 January 1824). Afterward, she seems to have returned to teaching for a year, during which she prepared more lectures. She offered two more public courses in Philadelphia in 1825. According to family correspondence, the early summer series did not fill after the introductory lecture—her sister thought

¹³See Joseph Priestley, *A Chart of Biography: To the Right Honourable Hugh Lord Willoughby of Parham* (London: J. Johnson, 1765) and his *New Chart of History* (New Haven: Amos Doolittle, 1792; repr. 1769). For a rich history of the charts, see Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton, *Cartographies of Time* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010). The subscription to publish Clarke's charts, in folder 11, is undated but likely from the summer of 1825.

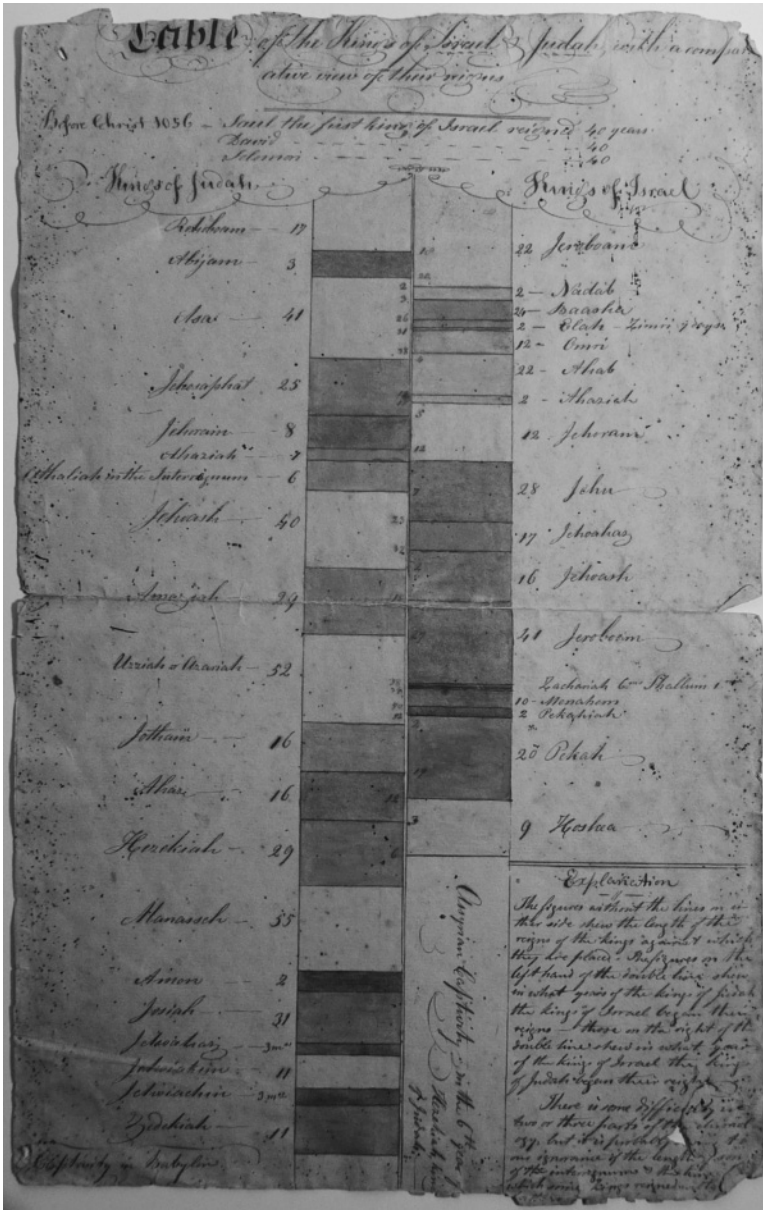


FIG. 1.

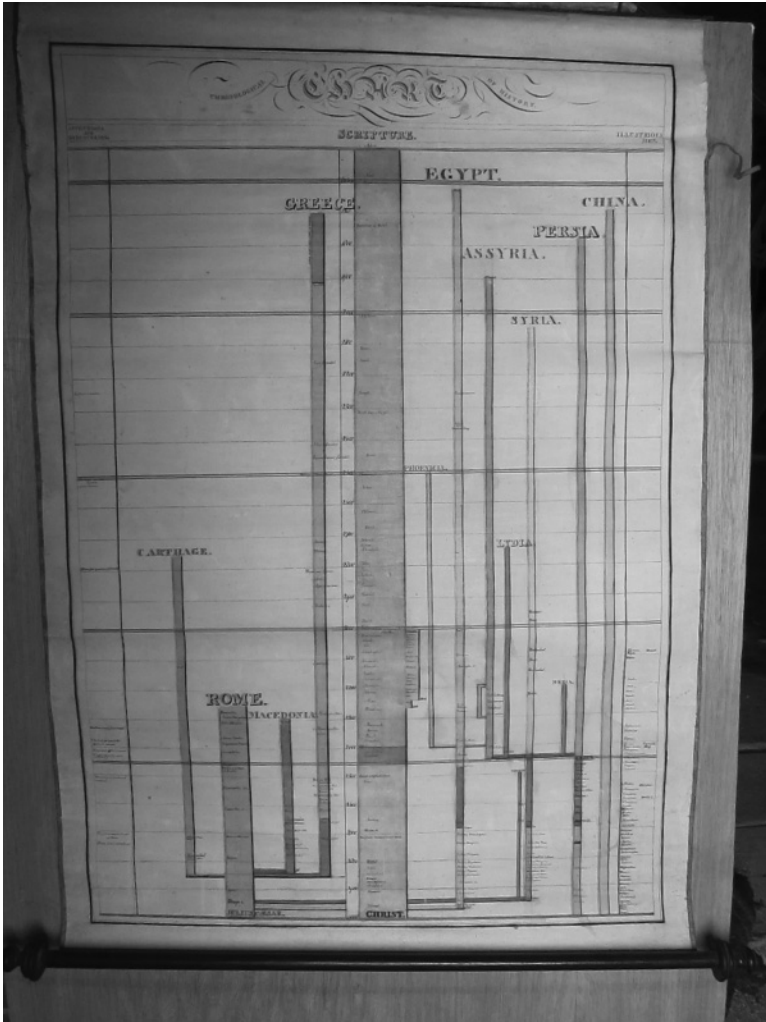


FIG. 2.

it was because Philadelphians cleared out of the city for vacations in May—but feedback was promising enough that she offered another series shortly afterward in October (F6: Elizabeth to Joseph, 18 August 1825). She advertised the third series in advance in the *National Gazette* (7 October 1825) and charged \$5 for the course of lectures. The principal text of her advertisement remained largely consistent over the next seven

years: “Miss Clarke . . . will give a course of Historical Lectures in this city, comprising the interval from the Creation to the termination of the American Revolutionary War in 1783.” As was customary for lecturers of her day, she offered the first introductory lecture for free. In her October 1825 series, she initially spoke at the Hall of the Franklin Institute and gave the remainder of the course at her classroom at 209 Chestnut Street. She would repeat this split presentational format in most cities over the ensuing years, initially renting public lecture halls to promote her courses to a large audience and then, for economy, using local schoolrooms to finish out the course of lectures.

As demand for her lectures increased over the years, Clarke sometimes broke her lecture series into two parts: one from the Creation to the Reformation; the other, on modern secular history, focused on America. None of the pre-Columbian lectures, beyond a few paragraphs, have survived in her papers, but there are about twelve extant lectures and lecture fragments on secular history, ranging from Columbus and the Spanish conquistadores through the American Revolution and histories of individual states—about 30,000 words in all. The historical lectures on the Americas are strongly antislavery, and they celebrate resistance to European authority in both North and South America as aspects of a single anticolonial movement, an idea frequently expressed in early 1820s North American newspaper coverage of South America. Clarke took advantage of recent publications to discuss Indian uprisings against the Spanish in Peru in 1780–81, and she vehemently criticized the Pequot War as a great reproach against the humanity of the colonists. Her lectures on the Revolution emphasize the patriotic exploits of women such as Lydia Darragh and Emily Geiger. In a mildly controversial parallel to her own novel activity as a public speaker, Clarke several times refers to Anne Hutchinson, the Puritan-era religious instructor, as a “lecturer” (F10: p. 153).¹⁴ The surviving drafts demonstrate that Clarke carefully revised

¹⁴In a 17 March 1823 letter to her father, Clarke cited Alexander Garden’s *Anecdotes of the Revolutionary War in America: with Sketches of Character of Persons the Most Distinguished, in the Southern States, for Civil and Military Services* (Charleston,

her choice of words to achieve an economical literary elegance stripped of ostentation, but her introductions and perorations reveal her skill with elevated oratorical language, as in the rhetorical nationalism of her first lecture on American history.

Peopled by a race of Men altogether unlike the Inhabitants of the Eastern Continent and only known to them at a comparatively recent period.—America presents a spectacle altogether unrivaled in the general History of nations.

Within the short space of two Centuries, what changes have taken place!!! The gloomy forest has disappeared and we behold on every side Splendid Cities, smiling villages and cultivated fields.

On the same spot where perhaps the untutored Child of nature carelessly roamed in quest of game, are now to be seen colleges and academies.

We behold a proud navy, the bulwark of the nations, securely riding in harbours, where formerly the simple Indian sheltered his fragile bark.

One mighty republic has arisen, whose morning has been far more resplendent than the wildest dreamer could imagine.—Other republics have just arisen above the horizon, whose career promises to be equally glorious and honourable. [F10: p.1]

Newspaper reviews, which were glowing, characterized Clarke principally as a teacher. One of her earliest Philadelphia reviewers was skeptical that a woman would add much to the already “ponderous” literature of history, but he was won over when he attended a lecture:

The lecturer brings to the understanding, in the first place, a highly accomplished mind and accurate knowledge of her subject; but what is peculiar is, that she has prepared chronological charts upon a new plan, a very enlarged scale, and of beautiful execution.

By the help of these charts, she points out contemporaneous transactions in the annals of every nation, and enables her audience, who

S.C.: Printed for the Author by A. E. Miller, 1822) as written with too much “bombast” and tending to make a hero out of every character (F2).

seem to be chiefly females, to digest what they already had read, into more of a system, and to read thereafter more understandingly.¹⁵

Although Clarke's reviewer sees her as a species of educator rather than a charismatic orator, she knew that her audiences were paying to be stimulated as well as instructed. Her account of Cortez's conquest of Mexico City, a common opportunity for historians to deploy exaggerated literary topoi of the tragic sublime, displays a tasteful restraint of her poetic skills:

At length the army of Cortez arrived at the summit of the heights which enclose the valley of Mexico. There they beheld a spectacle which filled them with amazement—and the earnest soldier paused to gaze and admire.

At the bottom of the valley extended a lake from whose glassy bosom arose a most splendid city.—Temples, palaces, turrets, and magnificent private buildings were reflected in its clear waters. [F10: p.19]

Aware that too many gratuitous literary effects would dash her claim of being a useful educator, Clarke respected the fine distinction between dynamic education and cheap theatrics. A compliment published in the *Portland Advertiser* in 1829 emphasized that there was “no quackery or any attempt to produce mere effect. . . . [The lecture] is founded on the broad and solid basis of practical good sense . . . well adapted to communicate instruction without unnecessary parade.”¹⁶

In addition to avoiding melodramatic effects, Clarke also shunned the conventional female posture of humility: when she challenged historical authority, she did so confidently and without fussing about her gender, as demonstrated in her lecture responding to new research on Columbus:

It may not be improper to remark that Robertson and others have informed us that there are few or no particulars respecting the family and Patriotic Life of Columbus to be obtained. This is an error—Many

¹⁵*Philadelphia Aurora*, 20 June 1825, reprinted in the *Hampshire Gazette*, 27 July 1825. Clarke's sister Elizabeth identified the reviewer as Edward Ingersoll, writing under the pseudonym “Academicus” (F6: Elizabeth to Joseph, 18 August 1825).

¹⁶*Portland Advertiser*, 10 February 1829, reprinted in the *Hampshire Gazette*, 4 March 1829.

documents have lately been brought forward, which will finally give us all the information which we so ardently covet. [F10: p. 2]

Like Paulina Wright Davis's public lectures on anatomy twenty years later, Clarke addressed her audience as colleagues and as fellow students. Together they were jointly embarking on the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake—science, in its non-technological sense—which was the legitimating impulse behind the lyceum movement of the 1820s.

Clarke's lectures were well received in Philadelphia, but in her letters she frequently declared that she found the city restrictive for women. She complained to her father that day schools taught by women were frowned upon in the city; people seemed to believe that "a Lady *must* be in her *own* house here" (F6: 6 March 1825). After delivering several sets of lectures, she announced to her sister that New England might be a better place to pursue her new career: "Philadelphia is such a dull place, and people stare at any novelty, without knowing exactly *how* to judge for themselves. In fact, all wait for the opinions of others" (F5: 30 April [1826?]). In these comments, Clarke acknowledged how difficult it was to negotiate the social restrictions on women's public behavior in the mid-1820s. More important, however, she recognized that influential ideas—such as widely held beliefs about the value of independent thought—were circulating in her society (in New England at least) and that they would support her innovative activity. She was right.

The Magic Lantern

Despite her concern that local social norms would restrict her success, Clarke made a large investment in her budding career just before she took it on the road. On 2 December 1825, after concluding her fall lecture series in Philadelphia, Clarke purchased a magic lantern, also called a *phantasmagoria*, and seventy-one colored glass slides from the Chestnut Street store of John McAllister and Son, a manufacturer of whips, canes, and spectacles. She paid \$88.75 for the kit, including the slides, and kept the receipt for the rest of her life, probably as a token of the bold gamble she had taken on her vocation (F11).

Magic lanterns, an early type of candlelit slide projector, had been employed for the purposes of entertainment since the 1600s in Europe, but in the late 1700s, Stéphanie Félicité Ducrest de St.-Aubin, comtesse de Genlis, commonly referred to as Madame de Genlis (1746–1830), popularized their use for education. A French educator of extraordinary talent, Genlis projected images of plants to teach botany. Her educational methods were published in America in English translation during the early 1820s, and Clarke would have seen Genlis's books advertised in the same Philadelphia papers she later used to publicize her lectures. Magic lanterns had also become a staple of science lecturing and museum events since Henry Moyes's tour of America in 1785–86, when he recommended that all college laboratories procure one.

McAllister's store was selling an updated, portable, high-resolution projector developed by the London-based oculist Philip Carpenter, who had also established a new method for mass-producing glass slides. The improved lanterns, remarkably lightweight, could be carried around the room to give the projected images the effects of motion, and Carpenter noted in his promotional literature that the oil reservoirs, now much smaller, could be quickly drained and the lamps more readily transported. Carpenter recommended that the slides be projected onto wet gauze hung across the middle of the room, separating projectionist and audience, so that the images would seem to float in mid-air.¹⁷

Carpenter was particularly proud of his slides, which were minutely detailed and, unlike the previous process of creating each slide individually, could be reproduced commercially in large numbers from a single set of engraved copper plates. Promoting the educational and entertainment value of his product, Carpenter boasted in his user's *Companion to the Magic Lantern* that he had drawn from the most famous texts of history, astronomy, and travel to fabricate images that could be

¹⁷Philip Carpenter, *A Companion to the Magic Lantern: Part II. Containing a Description of the Subjects, in the Following Sets of Copper-Plate Sliders: The Kings and Queens of England, Astronomical Diagrams and Constellations, Views and Buildings, Ancient and Modern Costume, and Humorous. To Which is Added a Description of the Improved Phantasmagoria Lantern.* ([London?]: Printed for the Maker, 1823).

purchased along with his lanterns. Each slide, or “slider,” as he called them, carried three or four four-inch diameter circular images mounted in thin hardwood frames. He developed a nine-slider series of the kings and queens of England, taken from David Hume’s *History of England*; nine astronomy sliders taken from Friedrich Wilhelm Herschel’s textbooks; and sixty-two sliders of ancient and modern costumes drawn from illustrations in texts like Captain Cooke’s *Voyages* (1774), William Miller’s *The Costume of China* (1805), and Henry Pottinger’s *Travels in Beloochistan and Sinde* (1816). He also produced a series of fifteen sliders of humorous material (featuring representations of the miser, an organ grinder, and a clown), and fifty-six natural history sliders covering the principal groups of mammals, birds, and reptiles. Carpenter’s commercial package made him wealthy, and in 1821, he moved his telescope and kaleidoscope factory from Birmingham, where it had been located for eighteen years, to Regent Street in London.¹⁸

Clarke must have seen Carpenter’s lantern on display in the big windows of McAllister’s store at 48 Chestnut Street, the same street in which she maintained her classroom. In addition to the projector, Clarke bought the nine-slide series of England’s kings and queens and the sixty-two-slide series on ancient and modern costumes. The extent of her investment suggests that she expected a substantial financial return from her lecturing.

The texts Clarke prepared to accompany the slides she had purchased were impressively researched. Although most of her remarks on the history of clothing have not survived, a several-paragraph fragment on the dress of the ancient Romans and Greeks (see figs. 3 and 4; note heavy use) is handwritten in the

¹⁸Several years after Clarke began touring, Nehemiah Ball lectured at the Concord Lyceum and in the neighboring town of Lincoln (1829–31) on the subject of natural history, astronomy, and zoology. Since these were topics Carpenter specifically designed his slides to illustrate, Ball probably used Carpenter’s machine and slide package. See *The Massachusetts Lyceum During the American Renaissance: Materials for the Study of the Oral Tradition in American Letters: Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Other New England Lecturers*, ed. Kenneth Cameron (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1969), pp. 115–25, 195, and Stuart Talbot, “The Perfect Projectionist”: Philip Carpenter, 24 Regent Street, London,” *Bulletin of the Scientific Instrument Society* 88 (2006): 17–20, at <http://www.sis.org.uk/bulletin/88/Carpenter.pdf> (accessed 20 May 2012).



FIG. 3.



FIG. 4.

margins of her copy of Carpenter's *Companion to the Magic Lantern*. The passage demonstrates the formidable scholarship that earned her the respect of her audiences:

[Roman women] had also a kind of mantle called Lena, a kind of great coat which had a hood to it. It was open before and fastened with a clasp or buckles, and called Lacerna. The Romans wore no stockings (or pantaloons). They wrapped pieces of cloth about their legs. They had different sorts of shoes—one resembling the modern shoe, and was tied. It was called Calceus. Sandals or slippers scarcely covered the sole of the foot. The Senators had four latches, the plebeians one. Men's shoes were black, some red. Women wore red, scarlet, or purple, but white was the prevailing color. Poor people had wooden shoes. [F1]

Clarke's letters indicate that she read Caesar in Latin for her own edification and also tutored her younger brother in the language (F2: 13 March 1819; F6: 12 February [1825]), but in the extract above, she drew principally from Alexander Adam's chapter on "clothing" in his 1801 text *Roman Antiquities*, especially from pages 356–66, as well as from other historical sources.¹⁹ Her emphasis on higher education distinguished her from other traveling performers of the era, such as the Indian showmen, ventriloquists, astrologists, and magicians who marketed early forms of infotainment and exoticism.²⁰

The Tours

As Clarke prepared to embark on her first out-of-town tour to nearby Baltimore in January 1826, she made all the arrangements herself. Despite social conventions that a respectable

¹⁹Alexander Adam, *Roman Antiquities, or, An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Romans . . . Designed Chiefly to Illustrate the Latin Classics, by Explaining Words and Phrases, from the Rites and Customs to which They Refer* (London: T. Cadell, 1835 [1801]), at <http://archive.org/details/romanantiquitiesoomajooog> (accessed 12 June 2012).

²⁰Traveling entertainers included Richard Potter (1783–1835), an African-American ventriloquist and illusionist from New England. These types of performers tended to use handbills rather than newspapers to advertise their shows, and they performed in larger cities at venues like Peale's Museums in Philadelphia and New York City or wherever they could find space in smaller towns. One of Clarke's typical itinerant competitors from 1826 to 1830 was J. L. Milton and his "Solar Telescope" (*Burlington Free Press*, 29 October 1830).

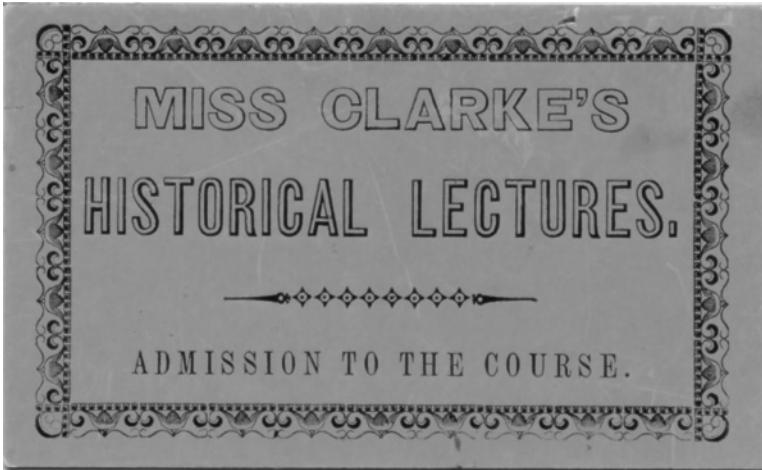


FIG. 5.

woman must travel with an escort, her letters suggest that she usually journeyed alone. The receipts she kept trace her habits and budget. Passage on a steamboat from Philadelphia to Baltimore on the Union Line cost \$4 and took a day. She generally rented the lecture hall in which she delivered her inaugural lecture for about \$5 (\$5 in Albany; \$10 in Boston); she conducted succeeding lectures at a schoolroom in the city (for an image of the tickets she had printed, see fig. 5). Prior to her speaking engagement, she took out advertisements in the local newspaper, which cost another \$2. At times, she paid an additional \$2 for a set of 200 handbills to be distributed on the street. Because her lecture series generally ran for three to four weeks, she paid about \$10 to \$15 for lodging and heat at a boarding house. (Unfortunately, she kept no receipts for her food bills, the cost of which would depend on restaurant or boarding fees, but a range of \$10 to \$30 a month seems reasonable.) In Baltimore, she lowered her price to \$3 per person for the entire course, slightly less than her competitors' average fee of \$5. According to a letter from her sister, her father thought that she should charge more, but she apparently wanted to secure

an audience from which to build a successful reputation (F6: 18 August 1825).²¹

Baltimore was a mixed success. Although Clarke organized two “classes” of lectures, she felt that the trip had been administratively mismanaged and, as she informed her sister, that she could have more than doubled her combined audience of sixty people (F5: 28 January 1826). The mismanagement to which she referred likely concerns the bad timing of her arrival, which fell on the heels of a flu epidemic and large snowfalls. If, as I calculate, she grossed \$180, she may have spent most of that take on the costs of her first preparation and trip, but at least she paid off her investment in the magic lantern and slides. Returning to Philadelphia, she made plans to expand her lecture circuit to the Northeast.

Clarke toured extensively for the next eight or nine years. Generally staying about a month in any given city, she spoke on average four times a week. Her itinerary suggests that she could depend on positive reports to generate successive opportunities in a specific region. Evidence from newspaper notices as well as her letters helps establish the range and duration of her travels. Anna Gertrude Brewster, whose parents may have known the orator, wrote in 1946 that Clarke traveled as far as Ohio, probably via steamship from Buffalo, where she ran a school in the 1830s and '40s and where her brother worked as the captain of a Great Lakes trading vessel. Unless otherwise noted, the itinerary set forth below (see table) is confirmed by newspaper reports. In an undated 1830 letter to her family, Clarke complained that it was difficult for

²¹As she had frequently done to obtain teaching positions, Clarke initially relied on the social connections of family friend Judge Joseph Lyman. A close adviser to the family, he often wrote letters of recommendation on her behalf. Lyman's wife, Anne Jean Robbins Lyman, was also known to be of a strongly independent mind (see Susan Inches Lesley, *Recollections of My Mother* [Boston: G. H. Ellis, 1886]). Clarke was requesting letters of introduction from Lyman as late as 1830, when she sought to start a lecture series in Newburyport or Salem, Massachusetts (F5: from Lowell, April [1830]). Her letters usually refer to her activities in the first-person singular. In 1833, however, she writes that “we” sailed from Burlington to Plattsburgh; whether she is referring to the collective nautical “we” or to travel with a friend is unclear (letter not dated in F10). Receipts are kept in folder F11.

ANNE LAURA CLARKE, ITINERARY, 1822–1850s

| | | | |
|---------|------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1822 | Mar. | Philadelphia, Pa. | <i>Poulson's American Daily Advertiser</i> , 28 Feb., 1 & 11 Mar. |
| 1823–24 | Dec.–Jan. | Philadelphia | <i>Poulson's American Daily Advertiser</i> , 4 Dec. |
| 1825 | 7 May | Philadelphia | <i>National Gazette</i> , 4 May; <i>Poulson's</i> , 4 May; <i>Aurora</i> , 20 June (rev.); <i>Hampshire Gazette</i> , 27 July (repr. of <i>Aurora</i> rev.) |
| | Jul.–Aug. | Lancaster, Pa. | (in letters) |
| | Oct. | Philadelphia | <i>National Gazette</i> , 7 Oct.; <i>Poulson's</i> , 7 Oct. |
| 1826 | Jan. | Baltimore, Md. | <i>Baltimore Patriot</i> , 13 & 17 (rev.) Jan. |
| | Apr.? | Philadelphia | (in letters) |
| | May | Hartford, Conn. | <i>Connecticut Mirror</i> , 15 May; <i>Connecticut Courant</i> , 15 & 22 (rev.) May |
| | Aug. | Northampton, Mass. | <i>Hampshire Gazette</i> , 2 Aug. |
| | Oct. | Troy, N.Y. | <i>Troy Sentinel</i> , 3 (rev.), 13 (rev.), 17 & 20 Oct. |
| | Nov. | Albany, N.Y. | <i>Albany Argus</i> , 7 & 8 (rev.) Nov. |
| 1827 | Dec.–Jan. | Albany (2nd course) | <i>Albany Argus</i> , 27 Dec. (rev.), 4 & 8 (rev.) Jan.; <i>Hampshire Gazette</i> , 7 Feb. |
| | Jan.–Feb. | Utica, N.Y. | <i>Utica Sentinel</i> , 26 & 30 (rev.) Jan. |
| | Mar.–Apr. | Auburn, N.Y. | <i>Auburn Free Press</i> , 14 Mar. |
| | May | Rochester, N.Y. | <i>Rochester Telegraph</i> , 5 May |
| | June–July | Buffalo, N.Y. | <i>Buffalo Emporium</i> , 14 June & 2 July |
| | Oct.–Nov. | Leicester, Mass. | <i>Massachusetts Spy</i> , 24 Oct. |
| | Dec. | Worcester, Mass. | <i>Massachusetts Spy</i> , 28 Nov. |
| | Jan.–Feb.? | New Hampshire | (in letters) |
| 1828 | Mar. | Providence, R.I. | <i>Providence Patriot</i> , 1 Mar. |
| | Nov.–Dec. | Portland, Me. | <i>Gazette of Maine</i> , 18 Nov. (rev.); <i>Yankee</i> 26 Nov., 1 Jan. 1829 (rev.) |
| 1829 | Jan.–Feb. | Portland (2nd course?) | <i>Portland Advertiser</i> , 23 (rev.) & 30 Jan., 10 Feb (rev.); <i>Hampshire Gazette</i> , 4 Mar (repr. of 2nd <i>Portland Adv.</i> rev.) |
| | late Feb.? | Bath, Me. | (in letters) |
| | Mar. | Brunswick, Me. | <i>Free Press and Patriot</i> , 11 Mar. |
| | Apr. | Hallowell, Me. | <i>American Advocate</i> , 18 Apr. (rev.) |
| | May | Augusta, Me. | <i>Maine Patriot and State Gazette</i> , 27 May (rev.) |

| | | | |
|-------|------------|------------------------------|---|
| | June–July | Bangor, Me. | <i>Bangor Register</i> , 16 & 23 June (rev.) |
| | Aug. | Northampton | <i>American Traveler</i> , 4 Aug. (rev.) |
| 1830 | Jan.–Feb. | Boston, Mass. | <i>Boston Commercial Gazette</i> , 11 Jan.; <i>Boston Courier</i> , 11 Jan. (rev.) |
| | Mar.–Apr. | Lowell, Mass. (2 courses) | <i>Lowell Journal</i> , 10 & 17 Mar. |
| | May | Newburyport, Mass. | <i>Newburyport Herald</i> , 14 & 18 (rev.) May |
| | 5 Nov. | Boston | <i>American Traveler</i> , 8 Oct. |
| | Nov.–Dec. | Pittsfield, Mass. | <i>Pittsfield Sun</i> , 25 Nov. |
| 1832 | March | Northampton | <i>Hampshire Gazette</i> , 14 Mar. |
| 1833 | Feb.? | Woodstock, Vt. | (in letters) |
| | Mar.–Apr.? | Windsor, Vt. | (in letters) |
| | May | Rutland, Vt. | <i>Rutland Herald</i> , 14 May |
| | Oct. | Burlington, Vt. | <i>Burlington Free Press</i> , 4 Oct. |
| | Nov. | Plattsburgh, N.Y. | (in letters) |
| | Nov. | Keeseville, N.Y. | (in letters) |
| 1835 | Jan.–Feb.? | Auburn, N.Y. | (in letters) |
| 1850s | | ? | (in niece's letters) |

speakers to make a living in Boston because it was so saturated with lecturers (F5). In other letters from 1833 to a professor at the Rensselaer School in Troy, New York, she lamented that she was having a hard time booking speaking engagements after Frances Wright's controversial tour in 1829, during which Wright had offended many Americans by criticizing the clergy. Clarke wrote that she had to rely on introductions from friends and contacts more than she had previously, and she was often at pains to distance herself from association with Wright's "strange notions." To maximize her opportunities for success, Clarke preferred lecturing in midsized cities where she would have been an uncommon diversion for middle-class and town elites.²²

²²Brewster, "Anne Laura Clarke." A handwritten copy of a newspaper review appearing in the University of Massachusetts archives is dated March 1835, at Auburn [New York?], near where she had been living at the time, but I have not yet located the original source. After a long complimentary notice of her historical charts, the review concludes: "With a strong and clear intellect Miss Clark [*sic*] possesses the acquired advantage of being versed in many languages, besides being in the opinion of men of science, a complete English scholar. The writer of this article attended her course, and listened with delight to her dulcet voice and clear articulation: and

In contrast to historical wisdom that oratorical women of this period were generally greeted with hisses and prurient leers, newspaper accounts are noteworthy for their lack of salacious reporting on Clarke's physique and dress. One of the few remarks on her delivery appeared in the 10 February 1829 *Portland Advertiser*, which described her style and manner as "pure, chaste and unaffected." Anne Gertrude Brewster wrote that she typically wore a black satin gown, with a skirt shorter than the custom of the times, and a white turban (turbans were not unusual in this period as an element of women's formal attire). If the reports are accurate, the striking outfit, at once austere and exotic, would complement her prose style, an agreeable balance between formal politesse and novel accent. In addition to the *Philadelphia Aurora's* strong recommendation of her first lecture series, she received rave reviews in Troy and Albany in late 1826 as well as in Portland in late 1828, which yielded numerous speaking engagements in nearby cities for several months.²³

Clarke's audience at the Rensselaer School wrote a complimentary testimonial about the pedagogical efficacy of her lectures and charts (F11: 1 January 1827), but she had a difficult personal relationship with the founder of the Troy Female Seminary, Emma Willard, who was about her age and who had already developed a reputation as a leading educator. Clarke's sister Elizabeth wrote to her in early 1826 that her father was unhappy about her plan to visit Troy. "[F]ather says you are

the chaste and elegant style of her Introductory, and gratuitous lecture; in which, a beautiful [epitome?] of history is given: charmed every auditor of taste and knowledge: while the unassuming dignity and modesty of the female shone inconspicuously in her demeanor and won every heart!" (Anne Laura Clarke folder, Hudson Family Papers, University of Massachusetts, Special Collections Library, Amherst, Mass.). For Clarke's summary description of her Northeast tours and her acknowledgment of the chilling effect Frances Wright had on Clarke's invitations, see Anne Laura Clarke to Thomas Eaton, Esq., 1833, Simon Gratz Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia.

²³The assumption that American female orators of this period *typically* faced hostility from the audience (see Yoakum, "Women's Introduction to the American Platform," and Eastman, *Nation of Speechifiers*) is not supported by newspaper evidence. Despite the burning of Pennsylvania Hall in 1838 by an angry mob (a highly unusual act), the number of complimentary reports of Frances Wright, the Grimkés, and Abby Kelley Foster is astonishing. In Wright's case, it was only after she began criticizing the clergy that the press turned against her.

foolish to mind Mrs. Willard, people here say she is intemperate, [and] her school is declining gradually” (F6: 17 February 1826). When Clarke lectured in Troy in October of that year, she was stung that “Miss Willard & her school—came not to the course—neither has she *deigned* to bestow the slightest attention upon me, except coming to the Introductory [lecture]. . . . she is a *vain* kind of woman and rather despises women and treats them with a great sort of neglect which is not very gratifying” (F5: 29 October 1826). In other locales, by contrast, college faculty attended from Bowdoin and Hamilton and, according to Clarke, seemed pleased with her performance (F5: 18 February 1827; 18 March 1829). Aside from her disappointment with Willard, one of Clarke’s few other negative experiences, at least as she reported them, took place in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1830. Clarke wrote to Elizabeth that the wife of a local Episcopal minister had opposed her lectures, even though her popularity there led to a second series of lectures (F5: April [1830]).

Clarke was particularly pleased by two short recommendations from John Neal, published in early issues of the Portland magazine *The Yankee*, which she proudly mailed home to her family. In his first notice, Neal wrote that he had not yet been able to hear her himself but had been told that “Miss Clarke did honor to her subject, herself and her sex, treating the great business of biography and history with a masculine vigor of understanding, and a beautiful propriety of language” (26 November 1828). In his second piece (1 January 1829), Neal wrote that he had recently attended Clarke’s lectures on three separate occasions and was highly impressed:

[Her lectures] may be attended with profit by *anybody*—or by anybody, who cares to know aught of history: And are so far a credit to her, as a woman, that if her own sex knew their worth and felt as they ought to feel, for one who is trying to shake off a portion of the monopoly of man—to dispose him of a small portion of his prerogative, and thereby to break through the bondage of woman, they would cluster about her on every side, and rejoice in her courage and skill.

Coming at the end of Frances Wright's 1828 speaking tour, Neal's recommendation has the complimentary effect of praising Clarke at the same time as it signals his awareness that he is touching on a controversial subject. As she had done throughout the previous four years, Clarke convinced her audiences to focus on the educational value of her material rather than the novelty of her appearance on the stage.

The financial recompense for Clarke's touring was significant. Her records of the late 1820s demonstrate that in addition to helping to pay off her father's mortgage in regular installments ranging from \$60 to \$100, she secured a \$500 quitclaim by 1827 on a property for herself (F11). In the late 1830s and early 1840s, she invested her surplus in bank stock and, with her brother Frederick, in Buffalo-region real estate ventures. By the time she died in August 1861, Clarke's Northampton land holdings were valued at \$5,825 and her personal estate at \$3,226, which, as stipulated in her bequest, were liquidated and divided principally among her siblings and their children.²⁴

The Benefits of Education

Clarke's innovative career is probably best explained by her upbringing in what Mary Kelley has termed a philosophy of "gendered republicanism," which encouraged women to assert their progressivism in a variety of public acts but also constrained that conduct within gendered norms. One of the prevailing narratives explaining women's uneven advances into the public sphere during the first half of the nineteenth century is a version of Gordon Wood's revolutionary backlash hypothesis: as Rosemary Zaggarri has compellingly argued, the radical forces initially unleashed by the Revolution gradually receded back toward the center over subsequent decades. Even though radical new approaches to women's education had been proposed and instituted in the 1790s (Benjamin Rush's essays on female education; John Poor and Susanna Rowson's progressive

²⁴Anne Laura Clarke Probate Court Records, Docket Box 183-22, Town Hall, Northampton, Mass.; see also receipt box, ALC folder F11, Historic Northampton.

female academies; and “useful” academic curricula that moved away from the model of European finishing schools), domestic ideologies were also taking root, many of which originated in growing anxieties over class distinctions in a purportedly egalitarian society. For Kelley, the history of early nineteenth-century women’s education centers on a paradox: that is, its truly revolutionary impulses—the academies and literary societies that encouraged women to “stand and speak” and the remarkable literary output that demonstrates how thoroughly they embraced that creed—were coincident with philosophies that demanded that women apply their talents close to home.²⁵

At the turn of the 1800s, public education for women in the Connecticut River Valley was generally not financially supported by local townships. Early American educators such as Anne Laura Clarke, Emma Willard, and Sarah Pierce were trained in small *private* schools that encouraged them to read, write, cipher, and stitch in the hope of producing literate and discerning mothers and teachers who could educate the next generation of America’s leaders. As Carolyn Eastman has shown, the fruits of that education were displayed on “exhibition night,” when young women students read the essays they had written aloud, performed dramatic pieces, and, in many cases, delivered orations before an audience of parents and school supervisors. This academic practice, which was built into most American schoolbooks of the era, extended well beyond the early national period, and it helped form and embolden the activist generation of Seneca Falls and 1848. Indeed, even though Frederick Douglass never attended school, he learned how to give speeches by reading from the classic exhibition-night text, *The Columbian Orator* (1797), while still enslaved in the 1830s. Clarke was an early beneficiary of this educational tradition, and by 1810, she was herself a practitioner-instructor of oratory. Perhaps more so than many of her female peers, her family prioritized education, the arts, and liberal thought to a degree that enabled her to develop her role as a teacher in an unexpected direction. When viewed within the context of the

²⁵Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, p. 25.

published female educators and historians of her day, Clarke's success illustrates how women used educational discourse to distinguish themselves as virtuous citizens without necessarily appearing to be in competition with men.²⁶

Forgetting and Remembering

Although Clarke profited from her society's growing reliance on female teachers, her disappearance from the historical record was assisted by subtle interactions of class politics and taste that shaped her reception in her own era and later periods. To be sure, as a woman orator, Clarke was overshadowed by more controversial figures like Frances Wright and the Grimké sisters. Given the commentary of influential (and hostile) social critics like William Leete Stone and Catharine Beecher (both of whom famously criticized Wright), and the West Brookfield assembly of Congregational ministers (who censured the Grimkés), the objectionable politics of female reformers frequently found expression in the register of taste—their ideas were not simply bad, their behavior was unladylike, an assault on gender and social norms. Catharine Beecher's "abhorrence and disgust" at Frances Wright's "untasteful attire" and "brazen front and brawny arms" well expresses the synthesis of conservative politics and taste that many women reformers faced from 1836 onward.²⁷

When Sarah Josepha Hale compiled her history of notable women in 1855, she privileged those who had published (none

²⁶See Trumbull and Judd, *History of Northampton*; Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience: 1783–1876* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); and Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*. See also Eastman, *Nation of Speechifiers*, esp. pp. 53–82.

²⁷For Stone's role, see Celia Morris, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 185–87; Eastman, *Nation of Speechifiers*, pp. 179–210. For the Beecher controversy, see Catharine Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolition, with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1837); see also Morris, *Fanny Wright*, p. 248; Angelina Grimké, *An Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (New York: American Anti-slavery Society, 1836), and her *Letters to Catharine E. Beecher, In Reply to an Essay on Slavery and Abolition, Addressed to A. E. Grimké* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838). The Brookfield pastoral letter is reprinted in Aileen Kraditor, *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968).

of Clarke's lectures was printed in her lifetime) as well as those who epitomized her sense of propriety and gentility. Although hysterical debates about the role of oratorical women in anti-slavery and women's suffrage may well have obliged Hale to avoid political controversy, her choice of exemplary women instantiated alternative ideals of conduct that were guided by aesthetic codes of refinement and taste, criteria of validation that suffuse Hale's biographies. Lydia Maria Child's remarkable 1835 anthropological study of women's condition in global history acknowledges that the modern age has been steadily moving toward "external refinement," and she recommends only one American woman by name, "Miss [Catharine] Sedgwick" for her fine prose style.²⁸

Hale and Child, both about a decade younger than Clarke, had experienced an early national educational culture similar to hers, and they, too, were motivated by a nationalist pride in women's achievement, but by the late Jacksonian and antebellum periods, the anxieties related to building the nation were supplanted by more conservative anxieties about holding it together. In her own era, because she was not viewed as a social reformer, Clarke was never tainted with controversy; as a public speaker, however, she was perhaps close enough to that unruly tradition to be omitted from most pre-Civil War polite discourse or historical documentation.²⁹

For later generations of historians, the factors leading to Clarke's omission from the record are slightly different, but they, too, arise from the interaction of political values and class distinctions. Because Clarke's career did not fall along the vectors leading into and out of Seneca Falls that have tended

²⁸Sarah Josepha Hale, *Women's Record: Or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women from the Creation to A.D. 1854* (New York: Harper Bros, 1855). Lydia Maria Child, *The History of the Condition of Women*, vol. 2 (London: Simkin, Marshall and Co., 1835), pp. 268, 271.

²⁹I am aware that the causes of Clarke's omission from history cannot be conclusively determined, but the disappearance of her celebrated career merits an attempt at explanation. In her excellent study of women's rhetoric, Nan Johnson (*Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866–1910* [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002], p. 19) asks why traditions of women's eloquence have been obscured for so long; this essay attempts to address a small part of that question.

to dominate the course of U.S. historiography about women from the 1880s through the 1970s, she rarely appears in critical literature. And when she does—as in two 1890s publications from the western Massachusetts *Hampshire Gazette* (one of which reprinted part of Clarke's lecture on the early history of Northampton), her achievement was likely minimized by the aesthetic tastes of the age. As Caroline Levander has shown, a text like Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1886) characterizes the national response to women's oratory as a tension between feminized oral spectacle and masculine written refinement (and, in fine Jamesian fashion, not without irony). Social conservatives would have considered Clarke's career a misplaced relic of a bygone era; progressives would have dismissed her as insufficiently activist.³⁰

To the present day, studies of women's oratory have been influenced by Doris Yoakam, who wrote her dissertation on early American women's orators in 1935 and, in 1943, contributed an important essay to the first volume of William Brigance's *History and Criticism of American Public Address*. Clarke's omission from Yoakam's work likely resulted from the gravitational force of women's rights discourse, which otherwise seems to have organized Yoakam's survey. Although Yoakam recognizes that both the entertainment and instructional value of early America's lecture culture drew the first generation of women reformers to the podium, she begins her discussion with Frances Wright and reflects the general religious and racial biases of Brigance's overall survey (as Brigance admitted, there was unfortunately no room to discuss Catholic or

³⁰See Hewitt, "From Seneca Fall to Suffrage?" That trajectory might be sketched as moving from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper, *History of Women's Suffrage*, 6 vols. (Rochester, N.Y.: National Women's Suffrage Association, 1881–1922), to Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959) and Kraditor, *Up from the Pedestal* (1968) to Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (1989; repr. New York: Free Press, 1997) and Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). On *The Bostonians*, see Caroline Field Levander, *Voices of the Nation: Women and Public Speech in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Mormon orators; he was less forthcoming about his other religious prejudices and racial bigotries). And so, while Yoakam's treatment of women's professional lecturing from the 1850s onwards is useful and significant, her assertion that "in 1828 public speaking by women was an unheard of practice in America" is inaccurate.³¹

Yoakam's simple claim, which (in my view) mistakenly accepts Catharine Beecher's 1836–37 version of the Wright-Grimké controversy and applies it backward in time to earlier periods, has been echoed by historians and rhetoricians into the twenty-first century.³² Implicitly recognizing the racial shortcomings of Yoakam's study but accepting her historical narrative, Lillian O'Connor calls out essentially the same cast of characters, with the addition of Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth. Despite her inclusion of these two spiritually oriented, African-American orators, O'Connor concentrates on the secular, persuasive oratory of the reform movement, not on religious, educational, or professional oratory in general.

Even though it is unlikely that Clarke's Presbyterian sympathies played a role in her historical marginalization, political and aesthetic codes also repressed the contributions of female religious oratory to American culture. The Methodist exhorter Fanny Newell published her autobiography in 1825, and she has yet to receive recognition outside of recent studies of religion. As a Methodist, she was not taken seriously by New England's cultural elite of Unitarians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, a prejudice that only became more pronounced in the 1830s and 40s. With the exception of figures such as George Whitefield and Edmund Thompson Taylor, "the poor, despised Methodist" orators, among whom Newell once classified herself, were written out of New

³¹Yoakam, "Women's Introduction to the American Platform," pp. 154–55, 187. For Brigrance's editorial philosophy, see his introduction to *History and Criticism of American Public Address*, 1:ix.

³²For example, see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric, 1830–1925*, vol. 1 (Westport: Greenwood, 1989), pp. 9–11; Zaeske, "The 'Promiscuous Audience' Controversy," pp. 191–92; Johnson, *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life*, pp. 3–4.

England's *literary* history for over a century. As Catherine Brekus argues, early female preachers were often viewed by the public as a species of peddler or vagabond, who traveled from town to town selling ideas. Within the context of the female reform movement, Clarke may have appeared more sideshow than founding sister.³³

Prospects

Remembering Clarke's historical achievement raises several new questions for emerging discourses about women's rhetoric in the nineteenth century and also contributes new information to the perennially charged debate about the purported spheres of human activity—masculine and feminine, public and private (or counterpublic). As I have argued here, one of Clarke's most ingenious rhetorical moves was to displace her public speech from oratory to *something else*—teaching—a generic sleight of hand that, to treat her career as a single innovative speech act, is a triumph of personal *ethos* as well as conceptual *inventio*. Depending on one's sense of tradition, this act could be considered a radical departure from the past, a stunning appropriation of customary tools, or both simultaneously. In any case, Clarke established herself in mainstream public opinion, even as her innovations may have transformed the public that accepted her. Acknowledging Clarke's popularity also recasts our definition of women's domestic sphere and helps explain why their role as public citizens seemed to diminish during the 1830s and 1840s. Moreover, recent studies of the stylistics of women's speech by Carol Mattingly, Lindal Buchanan, and others will be enhanced

³³See Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, p. 271. Fanny Newell, *Memoirs of Fanny Newell, Written by Herself, and Published by the Desire and Request of Numerous Friends* (1825), 3rd ed.: With Corrections and Improvements to Which Are Added Numerous Interesting Letters (Springfield: G.& C. Merriam, 1833), p. 35; see also Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, p. 197. Religious revivalism has long been a part of American cultural history, but Methodist female oratorical influences in particular were largely unacknowledged until the 1990s. See Christine L. Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and Nathan O. Hatch and John H. Wigger, eds., *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture* (Nashville, Tenn.: Kingswood Press, 2001).

by close attention to Clarke's multidimensional archive of prose, graphic material, academic research, and performance.³⁴

For those engaged in U.S. literary history, Clarke's lectures represent another facet of women's emerging role as professionals and historians in the early nineteenth century. As Nina Baym has shown, women found the Enlightenment rediscovery of history a hospitable arena in which to work and publish. The educational justification for doing so is well illustrated in Emma Willard's 1828 *History of the United States*, intended for use in schools. Appealing to an older audience than Willard's but employing the same warrant, Clarke's public speech was conducted under the aegis of scientific inquiry and factual authority, not licensed by moral conscience or by any obligation to "feel right" (in Harriet Beecher Stowe's memorable phrase

³⁴The literature on publics and counterpublics is extensive. For a focused discussion of this issue pertaining to women's voice, see Eastman, *Nation of Speechifiers*, pp. 53–82. More general discussions include Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25–26 (1990): 56–80, reprinted in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 109–42; and the special issue of *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (2005). Some of the texts that have expanded my sense of the range of woman's sphere include Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); and Ronald and Mary Zboray, *Voices Without Votes: Women and Politics in Antebellum New England* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2010). For valuable work on expanding our sense of "rhetoric" in the nineteenth century, see Lindal Buchanan, *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), and Carol Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002). See also Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen J. Ryan, eds., *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics: Landmark Essays and Controversies* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Parlor Press, 2010); Karen Foss, Sonja J. Foss, and Cyndy L. Griffin, eds., *Feminist Rhetorical Theories* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1999); Johnson, *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life*; Shirley Wilson Logan, "We Are Coming": *The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999); Andrea Lunsford, *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); Hildy Miller and Lillian Bridwell-Bowles, eds., *Rhetorical Women: Roles and Representation* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005); Carla L. Peterson, "Doers of the Word": *African-American Women Speakers & Writers in the North (1830–1880)* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Joy Richie and Kate Ronald, eds., *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetorics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).

from the conclusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). As a result, her lectures provide an opportunity to extend professional paradigms for discussing women's literary agency beyond the reformist or sentimentalist paradigms that have shaped U.S. women's literary history for over a century. In this regard, Clarke anticipates the professional accomplishments of Margaret Fuller as a historian of women's achievement, an educator, and a reporter as well as those of the 1850s generation of lecturing medical professionals like Paulina Wright Davis and Harriot Hunt.³⁵



The past several decades of research on oratory and American culture have established important codes of social prestige and power that were conferred through oratory as well as reminding us of the role that oratorical sentiment has played in the shaping of U.S. masculinity. These scholars range from Jay Fliegelman and Garry Wills to Julie Ellison and Sandra Gustafson.³⁶ But this critical movement has also tended to fetishize oratory as principally masculine and neoclassical (which it certainly was, but not exclusively). One reader of this essay in its manuscript form protested that Clarke's speech *couldn't* be considered

³⁵Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790–1860* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Emma Willard, *History of the United States, or Republic of America, Exhibited in Connexion with Its Chronology & Progressive Geography; by Means of a Series of Maps* (New York: White, Gallaher, and White, 1828). On lecturing and professionalization, see Yoakam, "Women's Introduction to the American Platform," pp. 185–87.

³⁶See esp. Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1978), *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), and *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Robert Ferguson, *Law and Letters in American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, National Language and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Gregory Clark and S. Michael Halloran, eds., *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power, and Imagining Deliberative Democracy in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

oratory, at least as Edward Everett enacted that form when speaking to audiences on classical history or as Daniel Webster commemorated Plymouth Rock; Clarke's performances were, rather, received by her audiences not as oratory but as a *recitation*, or a *reading*, or a schoolroom *presentation*, or so on. Few denied however, that Anne Laura Clarke was a lecturer. By promoting herself as an educator, Clarke altered popular understanding of the nature of her conduct.

Clarke's disappearance from the historical record is, then, not simply a casualty of the prejudices of her peers or of those of later generations. Rather, she made deliberate decisions that opened some opportunities and foreclosed others. Her prose demonstrates that she had the talent to publish in the field of history had she so desired (her papers include a fragment of a novel on New England education), but she chose speech because, despite its ephemerality, it was a more lucrative medium. Moreover, her understanding that growing interest in the lyceum movement offered her access to a field dominated by men indicates that she self-consciously manipulated convention to suit her needs. Anticipating that her behavior would be viewed as an acceptable form of women's work, she exchanged historical recognition for the regularity of employment. Emerging from a vocational crisis in the early 1820s—whether she intended to be a painter or a schoolroom teacher—Anne Laura Clarke forged a new path. As her father knew, she would become mistress of the art she practiced, a choice born of agency, not victimization.

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