BOOK REVIEW

Thinking Together: Lecturing, Learning, & Difference in the Long Nineteenth Century. Edited by Angela G. Ray and Paul Stob. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018; pp. viii + 249. $89.95 cloth; $39.95 paper.

Angela G. Ray and Paul Stob's *Thinking Together: Lecturing, Learning, & Difference in the Long Nineteenth Century* documents the ubiquity, innovativeness, imperfection, and, above all, heterogeneity of lecture culture in the nineteenth-century United States. It is a deftly edited assemblage of smart essays and a unified scholarly intervention in the fields of rhetoric, U.S. history, and performance studies. *Thinking Together* convinces readers of the lecture's central place in nineteenth-century U.S. culture and details how it worked alongside print—and in tandem with political, legal, educational, and religious institutions—to form and resist the racial and ethnic categories that continue to shape American life.

The volume draws energy from the productive tension—or as Carolyn Eastman has it in her conclusion, the "electric friction"—captured by the title. In Western culture, *thinking* is often framed as a subjective, asocial activity. More appropriate words for collective rumination might be conversation, dialogue, or deliberation. However, the editors use the phrase *thinking together* to capture how the lecture constituted a "collective intellectual experiment" and a "technology of learning," producing new knowledge and counter/publics (4, 12). Another productive tension explored in *Thinking Together* is that between political pursuits and entertainment—the way in which "lecturing and learning . . . often resisted overt instrumentality in favor of sociability and the pleasure of inquiry" (13). In this way, the volume resonates especially with current scholarship in African American literature and performance that resurrects the category of the esthetic to enrich histories previously attentive solely to the political.

 Rhetoric & Public Affairs Vol. 23, No. 4, 2020, pp. 782–786. ISSN 1094-8392.

Thinking Together is composed of two sections: "Disrupting Narratives," essays that contest established histories of lecturing and learning in the nineteenth century, and "Distinctive Voices," treatments of single figures and their accomplishments. Through this scheme, Ray and Stob create a third productive tension tied to methodology: centering practitioners versus emphasizing the (counter)publics in which they operate. The two approaches are, ultimately, impossible to separate; the section distinctions blur as the essays necessarily toggle between speakers and their collaborating audiences to transform our understanding of nineteenth-century lecture culture.

Part one, "Disrupting Narratives," begins with an article that should be required reading for all students of nineteenth-century United States. Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray reveal the previously elided "Civil War lecture system" by drawing on their transcriptions of "diaries, letters, memoirs, and account books," a collection of "more than 5500 documents written between 1860 and 1866" (24). We read of those on the home front who persisted in lecture-going, including those who transcribed lectures for loved ones away at war. We meet Emilie Frances Davis, an African American seamstress and milliner in Philadelphia who saw Frederick Douglass speak multiple times, and the captured Union officers at the Libby Prison in Richmond who organized a Libby Lyceum (or "Lyce-I-see-'em") Association and produced a handwritten newspaper (36). The lyceum, the Zborays conclude, was a "portable concept . . . that could be reconstituted at will with paper and pen, inside a parlor at home or under an army tent near the front" (40). This understanding of the lecture's transferability speaks to the collection as a whole and certainly to Granville Ganter's essay, which follows. Like the Zborays, Ganter transforms our understanding of lecture history by drawing on a deep archive: "twenty-five thousand digitized advertisements for 'lectures' in American newspaper[s]" from 1740 to 1825 (42). For women practitioners, the public lecture existed on a continuum with classroom teaching, scientific publication, and other education-inflected business pursuits. To pick one example, in the 1820s, Anne Laura Clarke lectured on grammar and biblical history to promote her private school before turning (quite successfully) to history lecturing full-time.

The collection continues through attention to intentional performances of ethnic and racial identity. Tom F. Wright considers how proponents of Irish nationalism brought together "the worlds of theater, [racial] science,

and political agitation" to galvanize a diasporic Irish identity and win support in the United States (59). Speakers such as Thomas Meagher, John Mitchel, and Thomas D'Arcy McGee performed the "complex ethnic affiliations" associated with Irish nationalism, participating in what Kirt H. Wilson and Kaitlyn G. Patia identify in their essay as the nineteenth-century lecture's profound engagement with identity (71). As we know from the history of minstrelsy and other stage types, racial imitation, or mimesis, was a prominent esthetic mode in the nineteenth century, dovetailing as it did with the political and social issues of the day. Wilson and Patia describe how the mimesis of "lyceum and chautauqua lectures, scientific demonstrations, dramatic readings, musical recitals, educational sermons, and even minstrelsy" constituted a "general rhetorical strategy" in the propagation of racial and ethnic identities (74, 75). Yet, mimesis could also be "a destabilizing force in racial ecology," as witnessed in particular by the remarkable career of William Wells Brown (92). Disrupting narratives entail distinct voices.

Part two of *Thinking Together* begins with Bjørn F. Stillion Southard's study of the Liberian Lyceum founder Hilary Teague, complementing Wright's essay by considering how the lyceum operated in the diaspora—and, more specifically, in the context of black settler colonialism. A native Virginian who had purchased freedom for himself and his family before emigrating to Liberia in 1821, Teague promoted the lyceum as a cultivator of intelligence, a site for manly engagement with issues of the day, and a space for "the unveiling of deception" (107). At the end of the century, as Sara E. Lampert explores, Gertrude Kellogg sought a *womanly* engagement with performance culture through the means of the dramatic reading. While retired actors like Fanny Kemble and Edwin Forrest drew audiences with dramatic readings before the Civil War, the 1870s and 1880s saw the proliferation of dramatic readings in the lyceum, which "became a major entry point for women onto the platform" (132). The example of Kellogg echoes Ganter's observations, tracing how the lecture dovetailed with women's education and leisure activities and, ultimately, with "the white middle-class feminine ideal" (140). Amy Fay's invention of the lecture recital, or "piano conversations," wherein she both performed and spoke about selected works for piano, represents another way in which women used hybrid performance modes to negotiate gendered expectations. E. Douglas Bomberger traces how the accomplished Fay—who studied with

Franz Liszt, among others, while in Germany from 1869 to 1874—published accounts of her time abroad and delivered lecture recitals beginning in 1883, with both great success and influence.

Thinking Together takes seriously the place of religion in lecture culture through two essays. In Richard Benjamin Crosby's examination of Joseph Smith's King Follet discourse, we encounter a Mormon founding father defined by a passion for popular access to education—a passion fueled by the Second Great Awakening's democratic thrust and the occult folk traditions in which Smith was steeped. The influential discourse was preached to 20,000 people at a funeral for church member King Follet and offered a thorough account of his belief that God was once a human and is knowable and accessible to all who strive for such knowledge. Scott R. Stroud introduces us to Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda, who traveled to North America in 1893 to attend the World Parliament of Religions at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, an event touting universalism but doggedly towing a Christian line. As Stroud documents, both at the parliament and in lectures during his two-year American tour, Vivekananda created "a radically novel vision of Hinduism as multilayered, pluralistic, and inviting," going so far as to "build a place of Christianity within the framework of his Hindu monism" (183). On the whole, these essays demonstrate how, in the nineteenth century, the lecture prompted new religious formulations.

After this rich gathering of essays, Eastman closes the volume with additional contexts for thinking together in nineteenth-century lecture culture, emphasizing in particular the power of audiences, the rhetoric of reform, the intersection of theatrical and oratorical cultures, and the relationship between education and entertainment. This complicates the collection's titular trope, making plain how, for many audiences, "*thinking* could also mean the confirmation of assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes" (195). Furthermore, with reference to the formation of African American counterpublics in the period, Eastman shows how the lecture could serve the vital task of "privileg[ing] the cohesion of one part of the public sphere in contradistinction to the rest" (197). The conclusion ends with a call for scholars to seek ways to resurrect "the *repertoire*, or the ephemeral aspects of performance" (200).

One repertoire that warrants study considering the insights of *Thinking Together* is Native American platform performance across a century of removal, warfare, and forced assimilation. What did it mean for indigenous

intellectuals such as William Apess (Pequot), Sarah Winnemucca (Piaute), Gertrude Bonnin (Yankton Dakota), and Charles Eastman (Santee Dakota) to use this "technology of learning"? How were their appearances and their audiences conditioned by the settler–colonial construct of Native illiteracy and ahistoricity? *Thinking Together* teaches us about (to name a few things) formations of syncretic popular religion, women's platform innovations, the creation of African American educational sites, and the Chautauqua's reinforcement of nostalgic white supremacy. How do these historical narratives shift when we recall Native American performance in the nineteenth century? That *Thinking Together* is both greater than the sum of its parts and instigative of such queries regarding the performances to which it does not attend is a testament to its achievement as a shared scholarly endeavor.

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