

Performing Womanhood: The Lyceum Lectures of Elizabeth Oakes Smith

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Society for the Study of American Women Writers, Philadelphia, November 2006

In the spring of 1852, residents of Philadelphia prepared to greet the poet, novelist, and journalist Elizabeth Oakes Smith as a public lecturer. The forty-five-year-old Oakes Smith was scheduled to speak in Sansom Street Hall on April 6, 8, and 10, delivering her lectures “Manhood,” “Womanhood,” and “Humanity.” Tickets cost twenty-five cents per lecture, or fifty cents for the series. One supportive Philadelphia newspaper noted Oakes Smith’s “high rank among the writers of our country” and pronounced her “thoroughly qualified” as a proponent “of the Equal Rights of her sex.” The paper urged readers to follow the lead of the “large and highly intelligent audiences in New York, Providence, Boston, Worcester, Portland, and other places at the East” who had responded favorably to the “high literary character” of Oakes Smith’s lectures even if dissenting from their “radical sentiments.”¹

Upon arriving in Philadelphia in March, Oakes Smith suffered the harsh rejection of her long-time friend Sarah Josepha Hale, who had supported her literary career but now objected strenuously to her political advocacy and public lecturing. At the same time, the social circles of the local Quaker reformers readily embraced her. Oakes Smith stayed with the family of Elizabeth Townsend on Locust Street, and she was warmly welcomed by James and Lucretia Mott, who hosted a gathering in her honor, invited her to take tea with their family, and provided their carriage for her transport. From the Townsends’ home, Oakes Smith wrote to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, saying that Lucretia Mott “accepts me, although she does not think me as radical as I should be.”²

Before the three lectures in Sansom Street Hall, Oakes Smith spoke in nearby Norristown and West Chester. On April 10 she sent a letter to her husband, Seba Smith, who was back home in New York with the couple's younger sons, saying that she had been invited to continue lecturing the following week. She repeated her three-lecture series at the Second Universalist Church on Callowhill Street and delivered "Womanhood" at the Chinese Museum.³ So a number of audiences in and around Philadelphia heard Oakes Smith say something like this, as she called for women to reimagine themselves: "It is for this cause that I am here, not in the expectation of converting women into Lawyers and Judges [and] Preachers but in the hope that by envying the ultimate of which we are capable, they may be roused from sloth and imbecility, from pettiness and discontent, into some sphere of true nobleness."⁴ From her Philadelphia-area lectures, Oakes Smith expected to earn about \$100 (approximately equal to \$2500 in purchasing power today).⁵

I begin with this detailed anecdote not only because it features the city where we are meeting today but also because it crystallizes several themes that I would like for us to consider about Elizabeth Oakes Smith's career as a public lecturer. First, several aspects of this anecdote are typical of popular, commercial lecturing as it was developing in the United States in the early 1850s. At this time, many lyceums and other mutual-education associations regularly sponsored public lectures delivered by traveling lecturers. Public admission fees were modest by middle-class standards, and associations chose lecturers who were likely to produce profits and to perform in ways consonant with community norms. The press helped establish the prominence of visiting lecturers and hence sustained a national-scale celebrity culture. Successful lecturers could generate

lucrative incomes. The popular lecture of the 1850s was typically framed as instructional and entertaining, and common topics included history, literature, and inspiration. The titles of Oakes Smith's Philadelphia lectures clearly signaled the conventions of the lecture of philosophical reflection. In later seasons she would deliver biographical lectures entitled "Cleopatra and the Egyptians," "Madame Roland and the French," and "Margaret Fuller," and in her lecture "The Dignity of Labor" she explored contemporary issues relating to women's work. Although midcentury Americans celebrated an ideal of the lecture platform as a "democratic" space of plain speaking and free thought, explicitly partisan or sectarian lectures were typically proscribed, and cultural constraints on acceptable speech were enforced in myriad ways.⁶

In one crucial respect, the story of Elizabeth Oakes Smith's Philadelphia lectures is extraordinary. A female popular lecturer was a novelty, especially in the antebellum era. In December 1851, when Oakes Smith delivered her lecture "Womanhood" at the Concord Lyceum in Massachusetts, she became the first woman to lecture to that group, which included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Amos Bronson Alcott. Oakes Smith was the only woman on the *New York Tribune's* list of available lyceum lecturers in 1853. Decades later, after several women had found remunerative careers as professional lecturers, woman's rights advocates remembered Oakes Smith for having opened lyceum platforms to women.⁷ This was no small achievement. In the early 1850s, the cultural proscription against women's presenting themselves bodily and espousing their own ideas in public speech was profound. Amid rapidly changing patterns of work and leisure, many Americans located a reassuring myth of stability in the doctrine of separate spheres, the presumption that woman's domestic work naturally should sustain

the public work of the male head of household. Some people who did not object to women's public action through writing still opposed their public speaking. In mid-1851, just as Oakes Smith was beginning her work as a popular lecturer, Lydia Sigourney wrote to her: "Let us do all the good we can in the world, by our pens. . . . Let us . . . stand against innovations. The loud clamor for woman's rights, what does it signify? . . . in our own sweet sphere, well-filled, is our happiness & beauty & true influence."⁸

Oakes Smith not only flouted conventions of gendered behavior by presenting herself as a lecturer before public audiences, but she also assailed those conventions in her lectures themselves. She spoke unabashedly of a woman's rights to equal pay for equal work, to control of her own property, to representation in the governments that governed her, to the vote, to educational opportunities, and to the possibilities of fulfillment based on her own abilities. She spoke of woman's responsibilities to join in partnership with man to promote the progress of the human race. These were her themes, and in a sentence that recurred in her lectures, her prose fiction, and her journalism, she summarized an ideology that crystallizes U.S. feminist advocacy: "The measure of capacity is the measure of sphere to either man or woman."⁹

Later in life Oakes Smith located her commitment to woman's rights in the details of her biography—especially in her early marriage to a man twice her age, because her mother could not envision other prospects for a woman's life. She also recalled the influences of lecturers such as the controversial Scottish heiress and freethinker Frances Wright, whom she heard in a dingy hall in New York in 1839, and her friend and fellow Mainer John Neal, who supported women's political rights in lectures and in print.¹⁰ Oakes Smith's own public advocacy on behalf of women began as a written defense of

the women who participated in the 1850 woman's rights convention in Worcester, Massachusetts. In the pages of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* from November 1850 through June 1851, Oakes Smith published ten essays collectively titled "Woman and Her Needs," and the series was distributed as a pamphlet in 1851.¹¹ She began her lecturing career at New York's Hope Chapel in June of that year, supporting the ongoing movement to reform women's dress.¹² Direct interaction with a public audience proved energizing to Oakes Smith, and she wrote to E. P. Whipple of her sense of a mission to help relieve the difficulties that women faced, while assuring him that she would not "neglect literature." She wrote, "Do you know, my good kind friend, that I am happier in being thus a voice to my kind than I ever could be in any mere Artistic effort?"¹³

Activists in the nascent movement for woman's rights, who were shunned as grotesque harridans from pulpits and newspaper offices alike, endorsed Oakes Smith's efforts. At the October 1851 convention, also held in Worcester, Oakes Smith delivered her lecture "Womanhood" at a special evening session.¹⁴ She attended national woman's rights conventions during the early 1850s, where she served on committees, accepted leadership roles, and participated in deliberations about movement ideology and strategies.¹⁵ She attempted to establish the first woman's rights journal, and when this venture fell through, she supported the *Una*, founded by her friend Paulina Wright Davis.¹⁶ Oakes Smith participated in regional and national movement activities periodically for the rest of her life.¹⁷ After her death, she was eulogized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the 1894 meeting of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.¹⁸

In examining the popular lectures of Elizabeth Oakes Smith, then, it is important to keep in mind the contradictory pressures that impinged on her rhetorical choices. In speaking on a woman's rights convention platform, Oakes Smith could say, as she did in Syracuse in 1852, that "we aim at nothing less than an entire subversion of the existing order of society," but in sponsored lectures for fee-paying popular audiences who were unaccustomed to a woman lecturer, open talk of social revolution would be ill advised. Indeed, in one version of the "Womanhood" lecture, Oakes Smith professed a "dislike" for the term *woman's rights* and its hint of "antagonism," saying that "perhaps like Hamlet I lack gall to make oppression bitter."¹⁹ Not surprisingly, manuscripts of Oakes Smith's lyceum lectures exhibit considerable argumentative tension and occasional logical contradiction. For example, male power and privilege, as well as "imperfect civil and social organisations," are frequently cited as social ills, but the responsibility to engender change rests more heavily on disempowered women themselves, whose "disabilities," Oakes Smith said in "Womanhood," "are mostly of our own creating."²⁰ Also, the fascinating lecture "Dignity of Labor" praises women who perform well in conventionally masculine roles, such as discovering celestial bodies, mining gold, and piloting ships. The lecture makes a provocative and still relevant claim for women's access to equal pay but retains the cultural assumptions that traditionally feminine occupations are unworthy of substantive compensation. Furthermore, although Oakes Smith's lectures claim that appropriate spheres of action for women and men depend on individual ability, they also offer what can easily be read as an epitropic acceptance of the cultural commonplace of women's innately superior spirituality.²¹ This is complex, though. The spirituality that the lectures propound can be read as normative, but it is not

coincident with conventional womanly piety on at least two counts: First, Oakes Smith equates spirituality with “the feminine element” in humankind, not necessarily in female persons, and she argues that spirituality finds its highest manifestation in individuals who blend masculine and feminine characteristics. She identifies such persons as Plato, Jesus, Shelley, Aspasia, Queen Elizabeth, and Madame de Staël.²² Second, Oakes Smith’s spirituality lays claim to women’s authority to apprehend God directly and, transcendently, via the natural world. The clergy is represented not as a set of divinely sanctioned experts to whom pious women should defer but as a bastion of male privilege that would benefit from an infusion of women’s wisdom.²³

Oakes Smith, like other early woman’s rights advocates, faced the challenge of producing arguments about gender roles in a cultural environment that defined *woman* so narrowly that the woman public speaker faced an acute problem of reception: her act of adopting the persona of an arguer could be seen to provide evidence for her opponents’ claims. Was she not unsexing herself by her public performance? Rhetorical scholar Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has described the woman public speaker as an oxymoron, and that figure of paradox was rarely embodied as starkly as in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴ Oakes Smith’s popular lectures were one site where an alternative model for gendered behavior was performed. Manuscripts of her lectures indicate less textual adaptation to expectations of femininity than some of her contemporaries exhibited. She did not, for example, typically rely on personal experience as evidence or present arguments inductively.²⁵ Although literary scholars regularly note parallels between Oakes Smith’s own life and the generalizations about marriage, education, and work in her poems, novels, and lectures, it is important to observe that when she lectured as an advocate, she

almost never spoke directly about her life.²⁶ Rather, the speaking persona was more often that of a public teacher or lay minister. In “Cleopatra” she correlated her own authority with that of male intellectual icons: “Cleopatra is a fact in history,” she said. “I meet her as such, as Plutarch found *creations*, and Shakespeare found persons.”²⁷

In her popular lecturing, Oakes Smith performed a blend of gender conventions by presenting this form of direct, authoritative speech conventionally associated with masculinity in the voice and body of a woman.²⁸ Reinforcing her womanly qualifications—and implicitly challenging assumptions that real women could not possibly speak like this—Oakes Smith dressed and comported herself on the platform in ways that contemporaries among the white middle and upper classes interpreted as fashionably feminine.²⁹ Reporters described her as “attractive and pleasing,” as “a pure-minded and highly womanly woman,” as “lady-like, refined, dignified, and intellectual.”³⁰ Newspaper reports of Oakes Smith’s lectures commonly claimed that the audience had expected a “brazen-faced woman with masculine airs” but had instead seen “womanly dignity” shining “resplendent in every gesture.”³¹ Such a mix of performed conventions of gender enacted the argument that she made repeatedly about the non-natural status of gendered spheres and offered conventionally feminine appearance as a form of argumentative refutation. In the words of one newspaper reporter, “a strong-minded woman isn’t such a fright as some folks imagine.”³²

Considering the ambiguous status of the woman public speaker and the dearth of alternative conceptions of gender in the early 1850s, it becomes easier to see why Oakes Smith could be simultaneously described as radical and as moderate, as an “ardent reformer” and as one who is “not as ultra as some among us.”³³ Further, because some of

Oakes Smith's claims could be heard as both traditional and as reformist, her lectures had the potential to engage audience members who held a variety of political commitments.³⁴ Some listeners interpreted her lectures as carefully restrained. One Cincinnati reporter, for example, wrote that "the lecturer avoided the scylla of impracticable and repelling ultraism, and yet kept quite clear of the charybdis of stolid conservatism."³⁵ This image is at odds with Oakes Smith's ideal of lecturing as depicted in her 1854 novel *Bertha and Lily*. At one point Bertha arranges for the construction of a temple, filled with flowers, and delivers public lectures there, teaching practical, natural, and spiritual truths to mixed audiences.³⁶ Unlike the fictional Bertha, Elizabeth Oakes Smith found it necessary to navigate the dangerous waters of cultural expectations of gendered performance and to avoid female monstrosities while also generating reinterpretations of those same characters.³⁷ The contradictions and complexities of her spoken word and enacted practice call attention to questions that remain salient for discourses that seek a balance between common ground and revolutionary change.

Notes

The research for this paper was supported in part by a 2006 Summer Stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the NEH.

¹ “Mrs. Elizabeth Oakes Smith” [April 1852], clipping describing Sansom Street Hall lectures “next week” from an unidentified Philadelphia newspaper, in “Reviews of Lectures” folder, box 2, Papers of Elizabeth Oakes Prince Smith, Accession #38-707, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville (hereafter cited as EOS Papers, UVA). Elizabeth Oakes Prince Smith was born Elizabeth Oakes Prince in 1806 and became Elizabeth Oakes Smith upon her marriage in 1823. She often chose to publish under the name Elizabeth Oakes Smith or E. Oakes Smith, and she had the names of her sons legally changed to Oaksmith. This paper adopts her preferred practice by identifying her surname as Oakes Smith. Libraries typically catalog her work under the name Smith.

² EOS to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, March [27?], 1852, Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers, Library of Congress, in *Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, edited by Patricia G. Holland and Ann D. Gordon (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991), reel 7, frames 167–78; EOS to Seba Smith, April 4 and 10, 1852, and Lucretia Mott to EOS, [April 9, 1852], all in box 1, EOS Papers, UVA. Mott herself had expressed to Oakes Smith the hope that her lectures would be attended by “some of our conservative women,” since they “would be most profited by thy appeals”; Lucretia Mott to EOS, February 23, 1852, Elizabeth Oakes Prince Smith Papers, New York Public Library (hereafter cited as EOS Papers, NYPL).

³ EOS to Seba Smith, April 4 and 10, 1852, both in box 1, EOS Papers, UVA; “Mrs Smith’s Lectures” [April 15, 1852], clipping from an unidentified Philadelphia newspaper, in EOS Papers, NYPL.

Sansom Street Hall, the Second Universalist Church, and the Chinese Museum are no longer standing. Sansom Street Hall, a public bathhouse and lyceum located on Sansom west of Sixth, was built in 1848 and later demolished. The Second Universalist Church was located in the 400 block of Callowhill; the brick building was built in 1823 as a church and later served the functions of a hall, museum, theater, brewery, and warehouse before being demolished in 1971. The term “Chinese Museum” referred to the Philadelphia Museum Building, located at the northeast corner of South Ninth and Sansom. It was built in the late 1830s, and from 1838 to 1841 it housed an impressive exhibition of collector Nathan Dunn’s Chinese artifacts. The building seated two thousand patrons, and it burned in 1854. Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project, “Philadelphia Architects and Buildings,” 2006, <http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/>; and R. A. Smith, *Philadelphia as It Is, in 1852* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1852), 77–78, 79, 321.

⁴ “Womanhood,” 20, in box 2, EOS Papers, UVA. Although newspaper reports of “Womanhood” from the early 1850s closely match the manuscript of the lecture now in Virginia, it is not possible to know whether Oakes Smith spoke these precise words in Philadelphia and environs.

⁵ EOS to Seba Smith, April 10, 1852, in box 1, EOS Papers, UVA; John J. McCusker, “Comparing the Purchasing Power of Money in the United States (or Colonies) from 1665 to 2005,” Economic History Services, 2006, URL: <http://www.eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd/>.

⁶ Angela G. Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 13–47, 77–111; Donald M. Scott, “Knowledge and the Marketplace,” in *The Mythmaking Frame of Mind: Social Imagination and American Culture* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993), 91–112, esp. 96–97. The University of Virginia Library holds manuscripts of “Womanhood,” “Our Humanity,” “Cleopatra and the Egyptians,” and two versions of “The Dignity of Labor.” See box 2, EOS Papers, UVA.

⁷ Angela G. Ray, “What Hath She Wrought?: Woman’s Rights and the Nineteenth-Century Lyceum,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9, no. 2 (2006): 183–213; Kenneth Walter Cameron, ed., *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* (Hartford, CT: Transcendental Books, 1969), 165; “The Lecture Season,” *New York Tribune*, September 27, 1853, p. 4; Paulina Wright Davis, comp., *A History of the National Woman’s Rights Movement, for Twenty Years, . . . from 1850 to 1870* (New York: Journeymen Printers’ Co-operative Association, 1871), 19; *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 vols., vols. 1–3 ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, vol. 4 ed. Susan

B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, and vols. 5–6 ed. Ida Husted Harper (1881–1922), 1:231 (hereafter cited as *HWS*).

⁸ Lydia Huntley Sigourney to EOS, June 4, 1851, in box 1, EOS Papers, UVA. Cf. Mary Alice Wyman, *Two American Pioneers: Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), 194. For an example of an extended expression of the doctrine of separate spheres, see Daniel Wise, *The Young Lady's Counsellor; or, Outlines and Illustrations of the Sphere, the Duties and the Dangers of Young Women . . .* (New York: Carlton and Phillips, [185-]), 91–92.

⁹ See, e.g., “Biology and Woman’s Rights,” 2; “Dignity of Labor” [early 1850s], 11; “Dignity of Labor” [1850s], 21; “Our Humanity,” 3, all in box 2, EOS Papers, UVA; Elizabeth Oakes Smith, “Woman and Her Needs, No. II,” *New York Tribune*, November 30, 1850, p. 6; Elizabeth Oakes Smith, *Bertha and Lily; or, The Parsonage of Beech Glen: A Romance* (New York: J. C. Derby, 1854), 83; Elizabeth Oakes Smith, letter to Virginia L. Minor, *National Citizen and Ballot Box*, July 1879, in *Papers of Stanton and Anthony*, ed. Holland and Gordon, reel 20, frame 793; and Leigh Kirkland, “‘A Human Life: Being the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith’: A Critical Edition and Introduction,” Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 1994, p. 307. For a scholarly statement of the significance of this theme for U.S. feminist ideology in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Femininity or Feminism: To Be or Not to Be a Woman,” *Communication Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 101.

¹⁰ Kirkland, “Human Life,” 179, 254–55, 304; Elizabeth Oakes Smith, “Fanny Wright,” *Revolution*, April 29, 1869, pp. 258–59. On Neal, see Donald A. Sears, *John Neal* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 98–103; and John Neal, “Rights of Women: The Substance of a Lecture Delivered by John Neal, at the Tabernacle,” *Brother Jonathan*, June 17, 1843, pp. 183–85. In June and July 1843, Neal and Eliza Wood Burhans Farnham argued the question of the appropriateness of women’s political participation in the pages of *Brother Jonathan*, with Neal taking the position that would later be espoused by the organized woman’s rights movement.

¹¹ Elizabeth Oakes Smith, *Woman and Her Needs* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1851). The ten *Tribune* essays were published on November 21 and 30, December 11, January 23, March 4, 5, and 26, April 24, May 15, and June 10 and 19 (the fifth essay appeared on both March 4 and March 5). For an example of the kind of condemnation of the 1850 Worcester convention to which Oakes Smith’s essays responded, see “Woman’s Rights and Duties—The Worcester Convention,” *New York Tribune*, November 2, 1850, p. 6. Oakes Smith recalled that Greeley never paid her for her *Tribune* essays; see Kirkland, “Human Life,” 305.

¹² See multiple reports in “Reviews of Lectures” folder, box 2, EOS Papers, UVA.

¹³ EOS to E. P. Whipple, June 12, 1851, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Wynola L. Richards, “A Review of the Life and Writings of Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Feminist, Author, and Lecturer, 1806–1893,” Ph.D. diss., Ball State University, 1981, pp. 29–30.

¹⁴ *The Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, October 15th and 16th, 1851* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1852), 8, 98–99; “Mrs. E. Oakes Smith, of New York, . . .” [October 1851], clipping marked “New York Herald” in EOS’s hand, in “Reviews of Lectures” folder, box 2, EOS Papers, UVA. Convention participants paid ten cents each to hear Oakes Smith’s lecture, and the proceeds defrayed the convention’s expenses. A comparison of the lecture manuscript now at the University of Virginia with newspaper reports of the Worcester lecture reveals that the extant manuscript is similar but not identical to the version delivered in Worcester.

¹⁵ *HWS* 1:231, 242, 519, 526. *HWS* (1:824) lists Oakes Smith as a member of the Educational Committee at the 1850 Worcester convention, but the proceedings of that convention do not include her name; it seems unlikely that she attended a convention before the fall of 1851. See *The Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Worcester, 1850* (Boston: Prentiss and Sawyer, 1851), 18.

There is some limited evidence that Oakes Smith may have been denied the presidency of the 1852 Syracuse convention because Susan B. Anthony, as a member of the convention’s Nominating Committee, objected to the fashionable, revealing dresses worn by Oakes Smith and her friend Paulina Wright Davis. Some scholars name the objector as Lucy Stone, and some name a different time and place; see Kirkland, “Human Life,” 59n3. If this event did occur, the rift was not too damaging or long-lived. Davis and Oakes Smith were elected as two of the six vice presidents of the 1852 Syracuse convention, and Anthony was one of the secretaries; *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Syracuse, September 8th, 9th & 10th, 1852* (Syracuse: J. E. Masters, 1852), 12–13, 38; *HWS* 1:519. In April 1852 Anthony read a letter from Oakes Smith to the New York State Temperance Convention, which was meeting in Rochester; *HWS* 1:483. Anthony was enthusiastically complimentary of Oakes Smith’s 1854

novel, *Bertha and Lily*, which she said would “do a glorious work for women”; Susan B. Anthony to EOS, September 1, 1854, Susan Brownell Anthony Papers, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, in *Papers of Stanton and Anthony*, ed. Holland and Gordon, reel 8, frame 66.

¹⁶ “Prospectus,” *The Egeria*, reel 1, frame 616, in Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers, MSS 17,781, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also Thomas Amory Deblois to EOS, March 21, 1852, in box 1, EOS Papers, UVA; typescript of Paulina Wright Davis to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, September 1, 1852, reel 1, frame 106, Stanton Papers, LoC; and *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at the Broadway Tabernacle, in the City of New York, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 6th and 7th, 1853* (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1853), 34.

¹⁷ HWS 3:117n., 125n., 128n., 144n., 956; 4:24. For example, at a September 1855 convention of New England woman’s rights activists in Boston, she read her poem “Thoughts on Woman” at the closing session, following a lecture by Emerson. See HWS 1:256; *Report of the Woman’s Rights Meeting, at Mercantile Hall, May 27, 1859* (Boston: S. Urbino, 1859), 3–4; Davis, *History of the National Woman’s Rights Movement*, 21; “Thoughts on Woman,” unidentified clipping, EOS Papers, NYPL.

¹⁸ HWS 4:227. See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Tribute to Lucy Stone, Leland Stanford, George W. Childs, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith,” *Woman’s Tribune*, February 16, 1894, p. 32.

¹⁹ *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Syracuse, September 8th, 9th & 10th, 1852*, 16; EOS, “Womanhood,” 5. (The statement from the Syracuse convention is reprinted—with “existing order” changed to “present order”—in HWS 1:522–23.)

²⁰ “Womanhood,” 5–6.

²¹ See, e.g., “Dignity of Labor” [early 1850s], 4: “Truly, most truly, the feminine element, or as it is more truly designated by the word spiritual, is the highest, the greatest, and the last manifestation of God to man.” See also Eliza Richards, *Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe’s Circle* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 157; and Ray, “What Hath She Wrought?” 201. On epitrope, see James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 547–49.

²² “Dignity of Labor” [early 1850s], 4; “Womanhood,” 13.

²³ “Womanhood,” 26–34. In 1877 Oakes Smith would become the pastor of an independent church in Canastota, New York; Susan Belasco, “Elizabeth Oakes Smith,” in *The American Renaissance in New England*, 4th ser., edited by Wesley T. Mott, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 243 (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001), 279.

²⁴ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59 (1973): 74–86; idem, “‘The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron’ Revisited,” *Communication Studies* 50 (1999): 138–42.

²⁵ On common characteristics of women’s public speaking style in the mid-nineteenth century, see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vol. 1, *A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 13.

²⁶ Cheryl Walker, *The Nightingale’s Burden: Women Poets and American Culture before 1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 76; Jane E. Rose, “Expanding Woman’s Sphere, Dismantling Class, and Building Community: The Feminism of Elizabeth Oakes Smith,” *CLA Journal* 45 (2001): 210. The absence of personal anecdote in Oakes Smith’s lectures may be partially explained by her own comment at the 1852 woman’s rights convention in Syracuse, where she emphasized collective uplift as opposed to “petty personal motives” or expressions of “private griefs.” At the same time, she hinted that if women were to express the wrongs engendered by oppressive legal and social institutions, they would seem to be saints and martyrs; *Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Syracuse, September 8th, 9th & 10th, 1852*, 17. Oakes Smith did not adopt the twentieth-century terminology of the “personal as political,” but she wrestled with the same themes.

²⁷ “Cleopatra,” 37–38.

²⁸ Frances Wright had used a similar platform persona. For an example of Wright’s oratory, see Frances Wright, “Address, Delivered in the New-Harmony Hall, by Frances Wright, at the Celebration of the Fourth of July, 1828, the Fifty-second Anniversary of American Independence,” *New-Harmony Gazette*, July 9, 1828, reprinted in Donald E. Pitzer and Josephine M. Elliott, *New Harmony’s Fourth of July Tradition: Speeches of Robert Owen, William Owen, Frances Wright, Sketches by Charles Alexandre Lesueur* (New Harmony, IN: Raintree Books, 1976), 21–26.

²⁹ See Belasco, "Elizabeth Oakes Smith," 277; Mary Alice Wyman, *Two American Pioneers: Seba Smith and Elizabeth Oakes Smith* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), 194; and Timothy H. Scherman, "Elizabeth Oakes Smith and the Literary Status of Antebellum Women's Lectures," paper presented at the meeting of the American Literature Association, Baltimore, May 1999.

³⁰ "Elizabeth Oakes Smith," clipping marked "East Greenwich [RI] Dec. 1853" in EOS's hand; "The Lecture of Mrs. E. Oakes Smith," clipping marked "Sanduske [*sic*] Ohio Register" in EOS's hand; "Mrs. E. Oakes Smith's Lectures," clipping marked "Boston Commonwealth, Dec. 1854" in EOS's hand, all in "Reviews of Lectures" folder, box 2, EOS Papers, UVA.

³¹ "Correspondence," John of Morley to Jane Grey Swisshelm's *Visiter*, from Honesdale, Pa., dated Jan. 27, 1854, clipping in "Reviews of Lectures" folder, box 2, EOS Papers, UVA.

³² "The Lectures," clipping marked "Wellsboro P[enn]. 1854" in EOS's hand, in "Reviews of Lectures" folder, box 2, EOS Papers, UVA. See also typescript of Paulina Wright Davis to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, December 12, 1852, reel 1, frame 113, Stanton Papers. On the concept of rhetorical enactment—the speaker's being the proof of the argument—see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action* (Falls Church, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1978), 9.

³³ "Lecture of Mrs. E. Oakes Smith," clipping about a presentation of "Dignity of Labor," marked "Chicago" in EOS's hand, in "Reviews of Lectures" folder, box 2, EOS Papers, UVA; typescript of Paulina Wright Davis to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, September 1, 1852, reel 1, frame 106, Stanton Papers, LoC.

³⁴ See Leah Ceccarelli, "Polysemy: Multiple Meanings in Rhetorical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 4 (November 1998): esp. 404–7.

³⁵ "News Items: Mrs. E. O. Smith's Second Lecture," unidentified clipping about a presentation of "Womanhood" from a Cincinnati paper, in "Reviews of Lectures" folder, box 2, EOS Papers, UVA.

³⁶ Oakes Smith, *Bertha and Lily*, 245.

³⁷ As is true for other popular lecturers, women or men, Oakes Smith's effect on public opinion is difficult to gauge. Claims of influence are anecdotal. As a young girl, Christine Ladd-Franklin, later a psychologist who theorized color vision, was taken to an Oakes Smith lecture by her mother, Augusta Ladd, who favorably described the lecture's theme, writing that women belonged "every place where a man should be"; Laurel Furumoto, "Joining Separate Spheres—Christine Ladd-Franklin, Woman-Scientist (1847–1930)," *American Psychologist* 47 (1992): 176.