

Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America. By Sandra M. Gustafson. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Pp. xxvi, 287. Illustrations. Cloth, \$39.95; paper, \$17.95.)

Sandra M. Gustafson traces the symbolic use of oratory in conflicts over culture, religion, empire, and nation in America from the early seventeenth to the late eighteenth century. The key turning point was the middle of the eighteenth century, a time when conservative elements sought to revive classical oratory in order to counteract a democratization of print culture. Yet it was also a time when first the Great Awakening and then the American Revolution had the effect of democratizing oratory itself.

Gustafson's first conceptual move is to correct teleological histories that construe print culture as supplanting oral culture. Duly granting the ascendancy of print culture, Gustafson concentrates on the persistence of oral genres within this shifting context. Essentially the subaltern history of an oral genre, *Eloquence Is Power* chronicles not sweeping triumph, but embattled resilience.

Yet *Eloquence Is Power* is concerned neither strictly nor merely with oratory. Gustafson's second conceptual move is a deft one, because the central framework guiding the analysis is a dialectic between orality and textuality—what Gustafson calls “the performance semiotic of speech and text” (xvi). Focal are oratorical claims to power and authenticity made either through reliance upon or repudiation of textual authority. Proponents of “speech” generally favored the living voice over the dead text as their way of challenging social hierarchies that were to their disadvantage. Proponents of “text,” on the other hand, typically favored stable text over chaotic speech as their way of preserving hierarchies that were to their advantage. The history of oratory was consequently full of contestation among European-American, Native-American, and African-American standpoints, as well as those of male and female.

The prologue introduces this heterogeneity of conflict in the form of seventeenth-century Puritan patriarchs who invoked textual authority to squelch verbal opposition from two different sources—women and Native Americans. Chapter one swiftly propels the narrative into the eighteenth century. The 1692 Salem witchcraft crisis helped initiate a subtle change in which linguistic hierarchies were no longer seen as absolute (apparently from the perspective of Puritan patriarchs, although Gustafson strays toward the passive voice in attributing this shift in perception). Instead, a rising tide of cultural relativism accelerated in the age of the Great Awakening, an era that set the textual authority of learned ministers against the extemporaneous preaching of evangelicals. Gustafson's primary case study is Jonathan Edwards, the Northampton, Massachusetts, minister who

inspired a religious revival, and who, at the same time, sought to steer pious women away from ecstatic expressions and toward public displays of self-silencing. Edwards sought to preserve male authority traditionally associated with textuality, even as many other evangelicals were instead assigning religious authenticity to orality as an alternative claiming of social authority.

Chapters two and three feature Native Americans. Inspired by the Great Awakening, Samsun Occum (along with John Marrant, a black preacher) sought to turn oratorical directness into the preaching of inclusionary universalism, but this strategy met with only limited resonance among European Americans. The same must be said of European-American fascination with Native-American diplomatic oratory, a fascination that did not translate into full cultural respect from European Americans, nor into decisive cultural leverage for Native Americans.

Chapters four and five resume a narrative of change, reaching forward from the democratization of religious culture wrought by the Great Awakening to the democratization of political culture wrought by the American Revolution. Adapting evangelical oratory to the arena of politics, James Otis of Massachusetts and Patrick Henry of Virginia both championed orality for its closer connection to the popular will. Annual orations commemorating the Boston Massacre likewise aimed to unify popular audiences around revolutionary politics.

Launching into the postrevolutionary era, chapters six and seven are of particular concern to historians of the early republic. Chapter six most starkly highlights competing outlooks on the relative merits of oratory versus print. In the debate over the Constitution, for instance, populists tried to discredit eloquent oratory as duplicitous, whereas elitists tried to discredit popular speech as anarchical. In George Washington's awkward oratorical style can be seen the prevailing cultural relativism, with one constituency criticizing Washington for affectation and another praising him for sincerity. Even though oratory was often deployed as a populist instrument, it also could serve the cause of elitism, as mastered by the prominent Federalist Congressman Fisher Ames featured in chapter seven. Rather than countering populist speech purely with textual authority, Ames also cultivated an eloquent oratorical style meant to demonstrate not only his social superiority but also his emotional patriotic commitment to what he proclaimed to be the "public good." Such a leavening of populism in elite white male oratory became the "dominant rhetorical style in the early republic" (265). Ultimately, earlier motions toward the democratization of oratory resulted in little except reinvigorated exclusion for "women, blacks, native Americans, and the lower orders of white men" (268).

Gustafson closes by examining two exceptional figures of the early republic: Deborah Sampson Gannett, who embarked on a lecture tour in 1802—unprecedented for a woman—in order to lobby for a military pension; and Hendrick Aupaumut, who served briefly as a Native-American ambassador for the United States government in its negotiation with northwestern tribes. These case studies betray that *Eloquence Is Power* is more successful in establishing a continuity of analysis with respect to European men and Native-American men than European women or African Americans, who appear sparingly. The ambition to write an inclusive history is noble, yet it remains uncertain what the marginalization of exceptional figures like Marrant, Gannett, or Aupaumut can tell us about the marginalization of the vast majority of people within each given subaltern group. Presumably the terms of marginalization were not always equivalent, and so Gustafson's mode of analysis elucidates the liminal more than the majority within subaltern groups.

Eloquence Is Power is a dense and compelling account of the varied symbolic uses of oratory as an instrument of power in early American history.

Konstantin Dierks is visiting postdoctoral fellow at Wolfson College and the Rothermere American Institute, Oxford University. He is currently turning his dissertation into a book entitled *Writing the Self: Letter Writing in Early America*.

Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African-American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765-1900. By Stephen A. Vincent. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. Pp. xvii, 244. Illustrations, maps. \$35.00.)

Stephen A. Vincent has helped to close the gap in the historiography of African-American migration to the Midwest. His new book, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil*, describes in great detail, the migration of African-American farm families from Northampton, Greensville, and Halifax counties, North Carolina to Indiana. Vincent's work focuses upon the Beech and Roberts families, whose free status and land ownership can be traced back to the late eighteenth century.

Although both families were able to amass a substantial amount of property, circumstance and the quality of life began to change drastically for many free blacks in early nineteenth-century North Carolina. As rebellion swept across Santo Domingo, heightened levels of fear and insecurity initiated the tightening of slave codes in the South. The rigidity of the atmosphere in nineteenth-century North Carolina simultaneously