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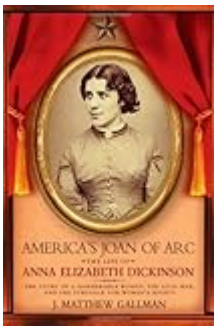

J. Matthew Gallman. *America's Joan of Arc: The Life of Anna Elizabeth Dickinson.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. viii + 262 pp. $30.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-516145-8.

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Joan of Arc, American-style

Biography presumes the power of the individual. It also reflects the power of the canon. Why else would there be hundreds of biographies of Abraham Lincoln, with an addition seemingly every year? Expanding the canon has long been the goal of biographers in women's history, and J. Matthew Gallman's compelling portrayal of Anna Dickinson, one of the most famous women in the second half of the nineteenth century, drawn from impeccably researched sources, should help the cause.

Anna E. Dickinson, born to a Quaker family in Philadelphia in 1842, snuck out of the house one cold January day in 1860 to attend a public debate on "Woman's Rights and Wrongs." Appalled by one speaker's assertion that his daughters, as well as all women, were unsuited to labor in professional careers, Dickinson counterattacked so vociferously the man left the hall in retreat. Only seventeen years old at the time, Dickinson attracted considerable attention because of her powerful response in the public arena, and thus began her career as an orator. She developed a reputation in Philadelphia that soon spread, particularly among the anti-slavery activists she admired, and they invited her to speak at many of their gatherings. Her feminine beauty and youth attracted additional listeners and, perhaps more importantly, the press. She soon earned enough to supplement and then replace her salary as an employee of the Philadelphia Mint. She spoke in favor of both women's rights and against slavery, following the linkages between the two issues forged by Sarah GrimkÃ© years before.

During the Civil War, Dickinson spoke on the political platform first in Connecticut, where Republicans sought her help in the 1863 state elections. Her success there put her on the national stage for the Republican Party and even led to a speech before Congress, where she criticized Lincoln and questioned moderate Republican policies that in her opinion moved too slowly when it came to abolition. Her criticism aside, she declared that the President must be re-elected in 1864. She continued to speak in favor of Radical Republican policies and women's rights for the rest of the war.

Dickinson's political positions did not always follow those of other antislavery or women's rights advocates. In particular, she chose to argue for constitutional prohibitions against slavery because she thought it was em-

bedded in the Constitution (something many abolitionists denied) and therefore needed to be gotten rid of in the same way. She also took the "wrong" side during the fight over the Fifteenth Amendment, supporting it because it meant black men could vote, and that was better than nothing. While she fought the good fight within the American Anti-Slavery Society over women's suffrage (she and Frederick Douglass both questioning the group about its support for black male suffrage but not suffrage for black women), she did not go over to the American Equal Rights Association, which focused on women's suffrage. Furthermore, while she spoke in favor of a 16th Amendment for women's suffrage, in the end she never formally allied with suffragist organizations.

Dickinson's oratorical style drew considerable notice. Despite her feminine, if not girlish, appearance, not for her was the gentle remonstrance or ladylike demeanor, according to most newspaper accounts of her speeches. She opened with both barrels and spoke so quickly that if her logic did not convince listeners, her ferocity might. Mark Twain, himself an accomplished speaker on the lyceum circuit, was particularly impressed. Her appearance was striking–he found he could not guess her age–and her style distinctive: no notes, no hesitation, "always gets the right word in the right place, and has the most perfect confidence in herself" (p. 73). Dickinson became the highest-paid speaker for the Republican Party during the Civil War and afterward, regularly earning fees of at least $100 a night during the Civil War and $200 a night after it, eventually making $20,000 a year (a sum equivalent to $300,000 today). She spoke from the autumn through the spring and toured the entire country in the 1870s, giving lectures on women's rights, suffrage, and citizenship, and publishing her thoughts on working women, sexual exploitation, and education for all.

Dickinson was friends, and often lovers, with a number of men and women in the reform movements in the second half of the nineteenth century. She and Susan B. Anthony enjoyed a particularly intense relationship that cooled when Dickinson began to see Laura Curtis Bullard, a free-love advocate, novelist, founder of the literary club *Sorosis*, and leader of the Working Women's Association. Dickinson's charisma also appealed to men, including Benjamin Franklin Butler, badly smitten with Dickinson who found him "a bore in private" (p. 130), yet appealed to him for assistance whenever she needed a lawyer or, in the end, money. Money was a constant concern, since Dickinson cared for her aging mother and sister; often her brothers relied on her as well.

Economic considerations drew Dickinson to the stage when her speaking engagements dried up in the aftermath of the Panic of 1873. The critics were not kind and by 1879, Dickinson turned to writing plays as well, still trying to earn a living as she continued to support family members as well as herself and to turn down proposals from male suitors. Her fame declined, along with her health, while her behavior became increasingly erratic. Her sister Susan eventually had her committed to an insane asylum in 1891, and after her release Dickinson spent the next several years suing everyone connected with her commitment. She eventually dropped from public view and died in 1932, one of the few women from the original suffrage movement who lived to see the Nineteenth Amendment pass, but, ironically, never exercising her right to vote.

Dickinson's life, well told by Gallman, exemplifies the complexities of life for women who moved into the world of partisan politics and public political behavior in the nineteenth century. Her reach was as far as Anthony's and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's, certainly, and she may have been better liked by her audiences, if not better known. However, Dickinson worked alone, and that has made the difference in her place in the canon. She did not join with Stanton and Anthony in the suffrage movement, she did not aspire to its leadership, she did not support temperance, she aligned herself with black suffrage instead of woman's suffrage in the fight over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment. She chose, in many ways, the wrong road to the canon.

Yet Dickinson's life provides American history with powerful evidence of the roles women played outside of the suffrage movement, and Gallman's splendid work fits well into the expanding literature on women politicos and women in partisan politics that scholars such as Elizabeth Varon and Rebecca Edwards have delineated. Dickinson truly was a Joan of Arc, responding to the voices she heard–of familial duty that drove her to work all her days; of a call to broader conceptions of citizenship that she detailed in her writings and speeches; of honesty in saying what she believed and living as she wanted, no matter how it differed from what others thought she should think and do. In a country that prides itself on individualism and a canon that seeks to highlight the lives of those who pursue it, Anna Elizabeth Dickinson deserves a place of honor.

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