I got my first glimpse into the lives and work of Consuelo and Ernestine Clark from the amateur journal *Ink Drops,* which I saw at the University of Wisconsin back in 2018.[1] In this issue of *Ink Drops*, prominent African American amateur journalist Herbert Clark, then 46 years old, reminisces about his youth as the first African American officer of the North American Printers Association (N.A.P.A.) and advocates for the work of his forgotten sisters, Ernestine and Consuelo Clark. More recently, at the American Antiquarian Society, I was able to see the final issues of Le Bijou and read all of Consuelo and Ernestine's work that is still extant. Throughout my dissertation research on amateur journals, I had come to understand it as a virulently misogynistic and racist organization, and had never found evidence of young Black women participating. I was therefore extremely interested to learn more about these young women's experiences.

So first, I want to say a bit about what amateur journalism is. Amateur journalism as a cohesive phenomenon existed from roughly the 1850s through the beginning of the twentieth century, but its heyday was in the 1870s and 1880s. The invention of a cheap novelty printing press, along with changes in postage made it easy for young amateur printers to exchange "bundles" of papers more cheaply through the mail, resulting in the development of national networks that allowed young people to create a cohesive community (called Amateurdom, or the 'Dom, for short). Though people of all ages were involved, this was predominantly a children's and young people's movement–with writers ranging from 8-25 (at which point they were usually considered "fossils"). The organization was very homogeneous, and young women and people of color, when they participated, were usually tokenized and patronized, but rarely taken seriously.

[1] While I reference having seen the following papers at the University of Wisconsin's Library of Amateur Journalism, I should note that I also saw the papers at the American Antiquarian Society in a subsequent fellowship.

Occasionally, their presence was out and out protested–as in the case of Herbert Clark, whose election to the position of third vice-president in 1879 was hotly debated.

In contrast, however, Clark's sisters were neither protested nor patronizingly welcomed; rather, the women seem to have been largely ignored. Moreover, their erasure by their amateur journalist peers has resulted in their subsequent invisibility within scholarship about amateur journalism. In this presentation, I want to begin to think about how these women made space for themselves in the NAPA and more broadly, in the rest of their lives. I hope that this will just be a starting point, increasing conversation about them, and allowing us to sustain hope that there might have been other amateur journalists of color whose work and lives we can learn about.

In analyzing the print culture endeavors of the Clarks, I follow in the footsteps of scholarship that explores the intersection of African American children's literature and African American book history. Nazera Sadiq Wright's work is pioneering in this area, as her work draws on often-overlooked genres such as periodicals, advice columns, conduct books, and scrapbooks. In addition, Kate Capshaw Smith's and Anna Mae Duane's recent edited collection *Who Writes for Black Children?* attempts to fill in gaps in African American children's literature in the nineteenth century.

What this scholarship has in common is a speculative thread that strives to imagine history as something other than what has been received, and a desire to share these imaginings so that others follow in their footsteps. Herbert Clark partakes of this speculative tendency in his piece, not only showing that his sisters were amateur journalists, but reminding Amateurdom as a whole that African American women *could* be writers and editors, and that their experiences in the amateur movement were specific and worth attending to and recording.I won't be able to dig into Clark's work here because of the limited time we have today, but I want to mention him

because he is how I found their work, and his care for his sisters' legacy is the only reason we know of their amateur journalism today.

Now, I want to say a little bit about *Le Bijou* as a periodical. *Le Bijou* was initially an 8-page periodical published every other month from 1878-1880. Consuelo's most active time with the journal lasted just over a year–from the journal's second issue in September 1878 to the second issue of its third volume in July 1879. During this time, Consuelo contributed heavily to her brother's paper, at times writing almost all of the content except for Herbert Clark's editorial column (see Jan 1879 issue). In addition to short fictional pieces and poetry, Consuelo consistently produced a column called "Consuelo's Corner" or "Our Views," alternately. Additionally, there is a line above her column that requests that "exchanges will please send an extra copy to 'Consuelo' 54 Sherman Ave., Cincinnati, O. We will reciprocate." This request for two papers in exchange for one is relatively unorthodox, and suggests that Consuelo was next door to an editor during her time. Ernestine's active period, as far as we know from the journal issues that are extant, was shorter–just two issues (March and May of 1879).

Ernestine's contributions in 1879 mark the beginning of Le Bijou's time as, as Herbert Clark calls it, "a family journal." The journal also enlarged to twelve pages in January of 1879, and it seems that the periodical thrived the most when all three of them were working on it. During this time, in addition to amateur criticism, the periodical included humorous short fiction, poetry, nonfiction pieces, and essays on abstract themes. It is this earlier period that I will focus on, as this was the period during which the Clark sisters contributed, and the later issues detailing the Civil Rights Controversy were written almost entirely by Herbert Clark and have been extensively examined by other amateur journalism researchers such as Paula Petrik.

Now I want to show just a little bit of Consuelo's amateur work. In her column, Consuelo reviews amateur journals and books. While many young women ran "corners" and "girls' departments" toward the end of amateur papers, they were mostly focused on controversy around women's participation in the organization rather than literary criticism. In contrast, Consuelo focuses equally on amateur politics and literary criticism, largely ignoring the issue of women's participation in Amateurdom.

Consuelo's work suggests a desire to navigate amateur journalism through maintaining an ambiguously gendered and racialized identity in her "corner" and by avoiding amateur journalism's yearly conferences and occasional regional ones. While one can see this as a necessary evil because the Clark sisters may have been socially excluded from amateur society as Black women, I think this also may be, at least in part, a deliberate strategy that allowed her to avoid the controversies of amateur journalism. One example of this is in one piece in her "corner," Consuelo demonstrates a desire to be seen as masculine in her overt display of cultural capital and her knowledge of love. Consuelo contrasts a piece called "Sprays of Thought" favorably with most amateur love poems. "Somehow or other," she writes, "amateur poets seem to write love poems with such ease. In fact, they write as if they knew little about love making" ("Consuelo's Corner," Sep. 1878, 6). However, Consuelo argues that "no one but an experienced lover co'd have written "Kissing" and "To G.S." (6). This claim to knowledge about the process of "love making" seems a kind of grasping to be identified as male, as knowledge of wooing women functioned as a kind of male cultural capital in amateur journalism. In positioning herself as an arbiter of poetry about lovemaking, Consuelo aligns herself with the young men of Amateurdom insofar as she professes knowledge of and claims to be good at it. More importantly, her anonymity allows her to make this comment about the verisimilitude of this

scene that she might have found much more difficult to make if other amateurs knew that she was a Black woman. Consuelo maintained this ambiguous identity, seemingly, by not attending conferences–a large part of amateur journalism as an institution. In 1879, Consuelo claimed to have received an invitation to the NJAPA (New Jersey Amateur Printers Association), but did not attend because she "received it on the very day of the meeting" ("Our Views," Jan. 1879, 12). Though of course this could be true, this seems to me like an excuse for her not to go.

And now I want to talk just a little bit about the work of the other Clark sister, Ernestine. Ernestine wrote just one piece for Le Bijou called "Early British History" (published in March and April 1879). In this piece, I argue, Ernestine Clark uses another strategy to navigate the racism and sexism of her institution–namely, she interrogates ideas about the constructed nature of history and the role of the historian in creating categories of identity. In this way, she sets up a powerful role for herself as this kind of historian. In this piece, she begins by meditating on the nature of history, noting that "the early history of all countries is involved in great obscurity," and she notes that history is often prone to "exaggerations" that are "the natural outcome of a simple and uncultivated mind, acting in an age of superstition" ("Early British History," Mar. 1879, 2). She goes on to say that the general populace, whom she characterizes as "credulous and superstitious," often accepted these accounts "willingly and without inquiry" ("Early British History," Mar. 1879, 2). Here, Ernestine attempts to make sense of what is essentially bad history–attributing blame to the tellers of tales, as well as the hearers.

She also characterizes the British people themselves as "primitive." In characterizing the early Britons as speaking from "a simple and uncultivated mind," she takes it upon herself to analyze them in almost an anthropological way, presuming a higher position from which to dissect an earlier and less sophisticated culture than her own. In contrast, she continually

characterizes Rome as cultivated and sophisticated. The Roman-British queen Cartismandua is the particular target of this contrast between the two cultures, showing us the meaning Clark intends to draw from it. When Cartismandua arrives in Ludstown, Ernestine writes that she was escorted to her castle by "rude, half-naked barbarians" ("Early British History," Mar. 1879, 3), and notes that "this change was sufficient to have blighted flowers less tender than Cartismandua" ("Early British History," Mar. 1879, 3). This language she uses imagines Cartismandua as a "flower"--a gendered metaphor. However, she does not imagine her as a passive victim, but rather, a flower who could have been wilted, but was not. In this narrative, Ernestine positions herself as a historian of a more evolved time and place, and one who can not only untangle fact from fiction, but discern heroines from those whom they benevolently serve.

Beginning with amateur journalism as a starting point for research about the lives of Consuelo and Ernestine Clark allows us a unique view of the lives of Black women who are now not very well known, though they were lauded in their own community and their own time. The young writers and editors whom white amateur journalism did not include or invite into their conferences and exchange lists were active in many other physical and virtual spaces. Learning about Consuelo and Ernestine's work in these other spaces shows that they were immensely respected in the local Black community of Cincinnati and deeply involved in local Black social life–including charitable efforts and literary clubs. Consuelo Clark was a founding member of the Whittier Club–a society for mutual self-improvement and literary society created by Cincinnati's young Black elite. Subjects the group addressed included "The Black Regiment" a regiment from Massachussetts in the Civil War, and Toussaint L'Ouverture, leader of the Haitian Revolution ("Our Colored Citizens," 27 Dec. 1885). The many mentions of Consuelo's name in

connection with this society in the column "Our Colored Citizens" in the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* show that she spoke at their meetings a few times a year for at least three years.

Additionally, this column attests to her vibrant social life. From going down south to "attend the Mardi Gras" to frequent meetings and events such as the Gaines High School Alumni gathering where she delivered a "well-prepared and spicy welcome address," Consuelo Clark was both physically mobile and rooted in her community ("Our Colored Citizens,"14 Mar. 1886, and 27 Jun. 1886). She is also noted in this column as frequently entertaining seemingly important guests from far away—including a Miss Fannie Harding of Galveston, TX ("Our Colored Citizens," 28 Aug. 1887) and a "Miss Hallie S. Brown…elocutionist" ("Our Colored Citizens," 9 Oct. 1887). Even more impressive however than the events and people themselves, is the tone of awe and admiration in which both she and her sister are spoken of in these columns. One column notes that"by their efforts, [they] gave special interest" (7 Jan. 1888).

Not only were Consuelo and Ernestine prominent and involved–the Black elite of Cincinnati. They were also, like the women that Ernestine writes about, women who endured harrowing circumstances, but navigated them with great courage and strategy. As Consuelo and Ernestine grew up, they began to make space for themselves in even more racist and misogynistic institutions–in particular, the medical establishment. Though the medical training that Consuelo pursued was integrated in terms of race and sex, her letters to her mentor Elmira Howard show the extent of what she faced. For instance, Clark was nearly denied the position she won as resident at the hospital affiliated with her university. Though the examiners claimed they did not have the funds for the position that year, Clark confronted them saying that it was "a dodge to get out of…confirming a colored woman physician" ("A Woman's Sphere is What She is Best Fitted to Do" 13). During the position itself, she reported to her mentor being

"continually driven, and criticized, and hagged at" ("A Woman's Sphere" 15). She also, however, reported her determination to "stand it" as she knew she was "on trial with reference to race and sex" ("A Woman's Sphere," 15).[2] Once she began practicing in Cincinnati, she also had to navigate the difficulties of gaining and retaining patients–many of whom were white.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest trials of Consuelo's life, however, was her imprisonment in a mental hospital against her will for several years. Consuelo herself was vocal about the fact that she did not belong in this institution, despite the depression symptoms she may have endured. She was also vocal about the fact that the"treatment" available there seemed not merely dubious but violent. Consuelo writes of her time in the asylum that "it was not a paradise…" and reports being "choked and gagged and beaten, and dragged along the floor by the hair of my head" ("A Woman's Sphere" 18). During this trying time in their lives, the sisters used all of their resources–including print as a means of advocating for themselves. Consuelo asked that Dr. Howard "kindly let me have the letter I wrote you the first week I was at Massillon…" arguing that "it is of value to me. It shows conclusively that the writer possessed a sound mind" (2). Here Consuelo views her personal correspondence as evidence to be used to prove her sanity. Her sister Ernestine also sued for her removal from the hospital based on the opinions of multiple physicians that she collected, and Consuelo was released for a time. Taken together, these many written documents testify to a prolonged struggle on the part of the Clark sisters with a legal system that allowed and even enabled abuse of women–particularly women of color.

Consuelo also used print culture as a venue for advocating for legal change to treatment of mental illness. She advocated against Ohio's "lunacy" trials, which she argued were "not fair to free-born citizens" as they were conducted by medical rather than legal personnel, and were

[2] "A Woman's Sphere is What She is Best Fitted to Do" is a catalogue created by the antiquarian bookshop, Downtown Brown. The catalogue references several of the letters they currently hold, which are part of a collection of materials including letters between Consuelo Clark and her mentor Elmira Howard.

often unfairly enforced upon women ("Lunacy Laws Need Changing" 66). In using the press to build momentum against healthcare practices that she deemed to inhibit the civil rights of the mentally ill, Clark shows that she is committed to using the press as a venue for extending care to the disenfranchised, as well as fighting a deeply personal battle.

I find the case of Herbert, Consuelo, and Ernestine, to be interesting because it was so utterly hidden in plain sight in the archives of amateur journalism. Unlike other groups of famous literary siblings, the Clarks did not go on to produce well-known creative work as adults. Additionally, though their father is well-known, his work was not the avenue through which I found the siblings' work. As Karen Sánchez-Eppler argues, children's productions are often "the residue associated with the lives of prominent adults," ("In the Archives" 221) in this case, Peter Clark's status as a well-known activist and teacher was not what caused his children's work to be valued or saved. Instead, it was inadvertently saved by the amateur journalism establishment–and I was able to find it because of the intervention of their brother, Herbert, who amplified their voices over twenty years after they completed their amateur writing.

I am struck by Herbert's care for his sisters, and by the degree to which this care can be a model for our own scholarly practices of care. I hope that my work on amateur journalism increases interest in this archive and that future work will uncover more young women of color within this institution so that we better understand the particular ways they survived and thrived in this hostile environment.