



# Women and Abolitionism in the United States: Recent Historiography

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## Abstract

The past 20 years have seen substantial developments in the historiography on women and abolitionism in the United States. These include a focus on the experience of African American women both as activists and as objects of the abolitionist movement. Recent studies explore the ways in which religion inspired and shaped American women's commitment to ending slavery. Important work has been done on the ways in which antislavery women functioned as political actors and the ways in which their efforts influenced antebellum American politics. Abolition historiography has benefitted from the Atlantic perspective as studies have explored the transnational networks created by British and American women and comparisons highlight new aspects of American women's experience in abolitionism. Lastly, studies of women and abolition from each of these perspectives have complicated and problematized the grand narrative of 19th-century American women's history which enshrined a "path from antislavery to feminism" as a critical consciousness-raising experience which inspired American women to take up the quest for their own rights.

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Scholarship on women and antislavery has developed substantially in the past 20 years. Our appreciation of African-American women's contributions both as path-breaking activists and to the abolitionist movement itself has broadened. Close examinations of revivalism and evangelicalism explore abolitionist women's religious experience in a more nuanced fashion. Researchers have probed antislavery women's political activism and their influence on antebellum American politics. The turn to Atlantic history has facilitated useful comparisons and studies of the transnational networks British and American women created. Lastly, research on women and antislavery from these perspectives has problematized a key narrative of 19th-century American women's history which enshrined a "path from antislavery to feminism," seeing abolitionism as a consciousness-raising experience which inspired many American women to call for their own rights.<sup>1</sup> The experience of committed antislavery women who did not see a link between the enslavement of African Americans and their own status, and evidence that for some abolitionist women, concern about the equality of women preceded or at the very least developed alongside their opposition to slavery, has begun to complicate this long-standing paradigm. These developments demonstrate why the study of women and antislavery in the United States remains a lively and productive field of enquiry.<sup>2</sup>

Building on Shirley J. Yee's pioneering *Black Women Abolitionists*, new research deepens our understanding of African American women's early and persistent activism in the struggle against slavery.<sup>3</sup> This dynamic was animated by much more than the benevolent impulse that spurred so many of their White peers. James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, Willi Coleman, and Patrick Rael have demonstrated that abolitionism and a deep-seated understanding that racism undergirded American slavery shaped virtually all free Black women's organized activism. African American women banded together in a variety of mutual self-help

organizations. In these, a commitment to racial uplift was twinned with the fight against slavery and its impact on all African Americans.<sup>4</sup> Coleman, Beth Salerno, and Barbara Cutter describe their efforts to counter racism by assisting the poor in their communities, by educating their children, and by raising funds to purchase family members out of slavery or in overtly antislavery activities, such as raising money to support antislavery newspapers and speaking out publicly against slavery. They note that these efforts often anticipated those of White American women.<sup>5</sup>

When African American women's activism closely mirrored (or took place within) White women's organizations, it was often fraught with unique tensions. Kristen Hoganson demonstrates that White women mobilized maternal feminist ideology in a fairly uncomplicated manner, but African American women's use of this discourse involved more complex negotiations.<sup>6</sup> Debra Gold Hansen and others have shown that Black women often found that maternalist ideology and the sisterhood it proclaimed did not extend to them when they sought to join White women's Female Anti-Slavery Societies.<sup>7</sup> The class connotations of respectable womanhood for White women possessed different valences for African American women where respectability was also about protecting themselves against racially motivated insult and injury.<sup>8</sup>

At a time when, as Michael Pierson has demonstrated, some White antislavery organizations and political parties began to welcome women as co-adjutors in the fight against slavery, Black women's attempts to assert greater autonomy for themselves intersected with the ways racism assailed Black manhood.<sup>9</sup> Although Carol Lasser has found that African American women from activist families could feel free to assert themselves in Black community organizations, Rael's examination of abolitionist lecturer Maria Stewart's experience demonstrates that anxiety about Black manhood could operate to silence Black women.<sup>10</sup> Even when this did not occur, when Black women abolitionists wielded maternal feminist ideals, they experienced ambivalence and ambiguity that did not trouble most of their White sisters. As Seymour Drescher points out in another context, grounding rationales for activism in their roles as mothers of Black families accomplished much good for their communities, but at the cost of entrenching paternalist norms of family structure and appropriate behavior for women.<sup>11</sup> Hoganson's and Carla Peterson's work suggest Black women abolitionists experienced a distinctive kind of double – if not triple – consciousness. They struggled to achieve full integration into American society, to conform to and manipulate prevailing gender conventions, while maintaining a diasporic consciousness of their identity as descendants of Africans.<sup>12</sup>

Our appreciation of what constitutes antislavery activism has also expanded. Hilary McD. Beckles reminds us that by rendering the system of slavery unstable and insecure from within, enslaved people were the first and most persistent abolitionists.<sup>13</sup> His work speaks directly to enslaved women's resistance and their role in slave uprisings. Melton McLaurin's account of Celia, a young African American girl who murdered her master after years of rape and abuse, illustrates another way enslaved women fought against bondage.<sup>14</sup> Many of the most powerful voices we associate with African American women's fight against bondage, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Jacobs, began their struggles against slavery from within the Peculiar Institution.<sup>15</sup> By the same token, however, recent scholarship also illuminates the cost and limitations of these struggles. In a new introduction to the second edition of her ground-breaking *Ar'n't I a Woman*, Deborah Gray White acknowledges she has become less sanguine about enslaved women's ability to survive the psychological challenges of bondage unscathed.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Walter Johnson cautions that in the closed system that was American slavery, opportunities for agency were always severely circumscribed.<sup>17</sup>

We have seen careful exploration of the religious experience of antislavery women and the ways religion inspired, shaped, sheltered, but sometimes limited their commitment to ending slavery. In the context of evangelicalism and revivalism, some White Northern women recognized slavery's immorality and believers' duty to combat an institution that epitomized their understanding of sin.<sup>18</sup> If slaveholding was sinful, this Christian ethos could inspire sympathy for the oppressed and motivate efforts to rescue those held in bondage, a perception that touched directly on the piety that supposedly characterized true women in 19th-century America. Julie Roy Jeffrey and others have documented the ways in which this provided "The Great Silent Army" of antislavery women with an acceptable discourse with which to articulate their critique of bondage and justify their actions.<sup>19</sup> Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven's study of Rhode Island women reveals that approaching antislavery from a Christian perspective and eschewing political critiques could enable women to engage in abolitionist activity without provoking rebukes.<sup>20</sup> However, Vron Ware and others have observed that the benevolent impulse arising from this ideology and motivating some white middle class women to sympathy for their enslaved sisters and to action, contained elements of objectification and condescension.<sup>21</sup> Carol Lasser observes that the maternalist paradigm is a poor fit for describing the motivations of African American women.<sup>22</sup> Cutter and others note the ways the trope of "true womanhood," which has figured so prominently in American women's history since Barbara Welter's iconic article tends to flatten differences of race and class.<sup>23</sup> Cutter suggests the term "redemptive womanhood" as a way of capturing the substance of these women's motivation and incorporating the activities of African American women in this rubric more effectively.<sup>24</sup>

Salerno and Jeffrey both show how women's antislavery activism found organizational models in the female benevolent societies, which characterized the ecclesiology of American Protestantism. Nowhere was this truer than in African American churches.<sup>25</sup> Stacey Robertson has explored the ways that, for White women in the Old Northwest, the voluntarism of the Second Great Awakening emboldened some to challenge unsympathetic ministers and "come out" of congregations indifferent to the plight of the enslaved.<sup>26</sup> Some women found homes in antislavery churches, while others, particularly in the West, formed broad-based and inclusive secular Female Anti-Slavery Societies.<sup>27</sup> That said, a commitment to abolitionism rooted in religiously motivated maternalism meant that many antislavery women were able to live out their abolitionist convictions without arousing ministerial ire.

Although the religious climate of the antebellum North facilitated many women's movement into antislavery activism, the religious experience of others followed a different path. Anna Speicher argues the personal spiritual quests for autonomy and authenticity of women such as Angelina Grimké, Abby Kelley Foster, and Lucretia Mott led to a kind of antinomian moment which questioned all forms of authority, whether ministers who demanded conformity and submission, patriarchal authority in the home and in society, or masters who denied personal autonomy to their slaves.<sup>28</sup> For these women, the critical transition often preceded their espousal of antislavery. Marginalization from their communities resulting from their rejection of conventional religion freed them to question prevailing ideologies leading to an awareness that the supposed rewards of conformity were contingent and, as a consequence, susceptible to criticism. Kathryn Kish Sklar traces Grimké's odyssey from Southern Presbyterianism, through Quakerism to both antislavery radicalism and agitation on behalf of Woman's Rights.<sup>29</sup> Carol Faulkner documents Lucretia Mott's confrontations with Orthodox Quakers and her determined rejection of "quietism" in the face of both racial and gender inequality.<sup>30</sup> Carolyn Karcher shows how Lydia Maria Child's search for independence and authenticity led her to reject Unitarianism for Swedenborgianism and then organized

religion entirely.<sup>31</sup> For these women and those like them, religious dissent could and did open new loci for both reimagining social relations and recreating the self. Their search for religious autonomy would be the ground out of which *both* their commitment to antislavery *and* to women's rights would flow.

Taking a position on slavery and colonization was inevitably a political act and therefore not seen by contemporaries as the province of women.<sup>32</sup> Yet by the 1830s, women went beyond private prayer and benevolence into public aspects of the controversy. Recent scholarship considers women's political involvement from several perspectives including women's political activism for abolitionism, the political impact of women's antislavery activism, the ways in which women's involvement in politics raised their own political consciousness, and the politics of gender that shaped all of these.

The Hortons and Coleman demonstrate that Black women had organized to promote uplift, and attack discrimination and slavery since the 1790s. They fundraised and sold subscriptions to Black newspapers in the fight against colonization.<sup>33</sup> African American women such as Frances Ellen Watkins Harper made valuable contributions through their writing.<sup>34</sup> Although Maria Stewart invoked the gendered discourse of woman's special concern for morality to justify her public speaking, Rael has shown her attacks on slavery, and colonization were inevitably political and elicited a harsh reaction even from her own community, so harsh that she felt obliged to leave Boston. As Rael and Mia Bay have noted, within the African American community, gender, class and respectability could interact in ways that tended to silence Black women, in this case literally.<sup>35</sup> Yet Stewart's lectures heralded a major "transformation" in abolitionism already underway according to Richard S. Newman.

A shift to immediate abolition initiated by Englishwoman Elizabeth Heyrick and disseminated to American women by Elizabeth Margaret Chandler mobilized Jeffrey's "Great Silent Army" of antislavery women and profoundly altered the abolitionist movement.<sup>36</sup> Salerno describes how British women's antislavery campaigns inspired American women to form female auxiliaries to male antislavery societies and build a network of female antislavery societies that corresponded, educated, and fundraised.<sup>37</sup> However, she and Lasser both assert that except for conservative Quaker women, American women did not adopt the consumer boycotts that British antislavery women used so effectively.<sup>38</sup> The strong commitment to Free Produce among African American women that Coleman and Bettye Collier-Thomas have described and that Robertson has demonstrated among some Quaker women in Ohio and Indiana may modify this assertion.<sup>39</sup>

Pierson observes that formal politics in the antebellum period were profoundly gendered. Antislavery rhetoric enabled established and emergent parties to put forward distinctive positions on women and family structures. Often articulated most forcefully by women writers, these positions on gender came to define the deeply conservative stance of the Democrats and the more progressive gender attitudes of, first the Liberty Party, and ultimately the Republicans. Women's involvement in politics went beyond rhetoric, however. Like their British counterparts, American women drafted, circulated, and signed petitions to their legislators. By examining these petitions, Susan Zaeske shows that initially women framed their message in religious and maternalist rhetoric, but by the late 1830s, many antislavery women addressed their legislators as citizens and asserted their right to be heard on matters of national importance.<sup>40</sup> As women such as Lydia Maria Child and Angelina Grimké began to publish nationally and speak publicly, their actions provoked a conservative backlash as concern about the sectional crisis escalated. Alisse Portnoy compares women's antislavery activism with women's petitions opposing Indian Removal and supporting the American Colonization Society. She concludes that opposition to women's

antislavery activism was inherently racist, that the racial egalitarianism abolitionist women promoted, rather than their gender, provoked opposition.<sup>41</sup>

The “Woman Question” divided the antislavery movement in 1840 because as Lori Ginzberg and Michael Pierson both point out, it spoke to fundamental expectations about how slavery was to be ended.<sup>42</sup> Garrisonians believed moral suasion was the key and that women, as moral arbiters in American society, had a critical role to play in this process. Political abolitionists looked for legislative and constitutional solutions. In their view that excluded women. The emergence of political antislavery in the form of the Liberty Party exacerbated these tensions, as it became difficult to determine whether maternalism or political partisanship drove women’s antislavery work.<sup>43</sup> However, Salerno argues that rather than derailing women’s antislavery activism, the resulting schism actually allowed women’s antislavery activism to grow and diversify by accommodating different constituencies.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Robertson suggests that Western women found these controversies less problematic. Western women tended to form broad-based antislavery societies more inclusive of both religiously grounded and political antislavery.<sup>45</sup> By the 1850s, women as diverse as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Jane Grey Swisshelm no longer invoked essentialist arguments to justify their right to speak about slavery, readily entering into political debate.<sup>46</sup> However, Pierson notes that as apparent victory approached in 1860, the Republicans distanced themselves from more radical critiques of patriarchy put forward by these women writers. Ironically, Emancipation would deprive reformers of a powerful rhetorical resource with which to challenge existing gender relations.<sup>47</sup>

American women’s antislavery activism substantially influenced abolitionism itself. Newman links women’s involvement to antislavery’s transformation from an elite initiative into a mass movement.<sup>48</sup> Salerno observes that Garrisonians welcomed women as immediatism struggled to gain legitimacy and discredit colonization.<sup>49</sup> According to Andrea Atkins, Alice Taylor, Stacey Robertson, and Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, women provided much needed funding by sewing, donating, selling antislavery publications, and organizing antislavery fairs.<sup>50</sup> Zaeske argues that Congress passed the Gag Rule in direct response to women’s massive petition campaigns in the 1830s. The Gag Rule enabled abolitionists to argue slavery infringed on the rights of all Americans, and as a result, a sizeable antislavery constituency emerged across the North by the late 1830s.<sup>51</sup> However, as anxiety about rising sectionalism and conservative reaction against the Grimké gathered steam, enthusiasm for women’s activism cooled rapidly among conservative abolitionists. Liberty Party supporters urged women to confine themselves to ancillary roles. Although the movement fractured over this point, Salerno argues women continued to be vital supporters throughout the antebellum period.<sup>52</sup> Ultimately, Pierson demonstrates that they contributed important support for electoral campaigns in 1856 and 1860.<sup>53</sup>

Involvement in abolitionism raised American antislavery women’s political consciousness in several ways. Although many American women justified their entry into abolitionist activity by maternal benevolence, as their efforts coalesced in female antislavery societies, they came increasingly into contact with the political system.<sup>54</sup> Zaeske observes that signing petitions familiarized women with the structure of government, constitutional provisions, and the extent and limits of state and federal government powers. Soliciting signatures required women to explain their objectives and exposed them to the partisan dynamics of the question.<sup>55</sup> The intersection of antislavery, manhood suffrage, and party politics alerted many women to their own disenfranchisement. Ginzberg suggests that initially many antislavery women tried to make a virtue of their “votelessness,” describing their activism as altruistic and above partisanship.<sup>56</sup> As sectional tensions escalated through the 1840s over slavery in the territories, fugitive slaves, and the Mexican War, some antislavery women

recognized that the issue of slavery would be determined nationally and politically.<sup>57</sup> Without the vote, they could have little influence on the outcome. Women's "votelessness" has also continued to obscure their role in traditional political history. Despite increasing evidence of women's political activism on behalf of antislavery and growing awareness of the political significance of women's efforts to bring about abolition, those who have chronicled antebellum political history have yet to integrate women's experience into their narratives.<sup>58</sup>

David Brion Davis has observed that American slavery (and by extension, antislavery) formed part of an international system linking Africa, Europe, North and South America, and the Caribbean and should not be studied in isolation.<sup>59</sup> Paul Gilroy documents that enslaved persons of African descent across the New World knew of and responded to events such as the Haitian Revolution and the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>60</sup> Subsequently, the Atlantic perspective has benefited scholarship on women and American abolitionism, revealing transnational networks that inspired and financed the American antislavery movement and facilitating provocative comparisons.<sup>61</sup>

Salerno and Lasser have both explored American women's reception of immediatism from their British counterparts. British precedents provided models for American women's organizations, networks, and petition campaigns.<sup>62</sup> These transatlantic networks were crucial not only organizationally and educationally but also financially. British women donated funds and supplied goods for antislavery fairs.<sup>63</sup> These networks also built support for Garrisonian immediatism against the American Colonization Society and helped limit damage caused by the split in 1840. Clare Taylor's work on the Weston sisters shows how Anglo-American women's correspondence networks created pathways along which American antislavery agents traveled and fundraised throughout Britain.<sup>64</sup> American women also monitored events elsewhere in the Atlantic world, paying close attention to Haiti and the outcomes of Emancipation in the West Indies.<sup>65</sup>

Comparisons between women's abolitionist activism in the United States and Britain are instructive. Historians readily acknowledged that women's experiences in the American antislavery movement contributed substantially to the emergence of calls for women's rights, but time and circumstance meant that these dynamics played out somewhat differently in the history of British women. Drescher notes that British women's antislavery petitioning, linked as it was to the supposed altruism and self-denial of the abstention campaigns, conformed to expectations of virtuous womanhood and actually reinforced patriarchal norms in the reactionary climate that followed the French Revolution. In the United Kingdom, these campaigns did not challenge social order, provoked relatively little criticism and thus did not prompt British women to question their right to act.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, not only Zaeske and Portnoy but also Nancy Isenberg and Mary Ryan have each indicated that in the United States, antislavery women failed to prove that petitioning was a legitimate exercise of their rights as citizens.<sup>67</sup> Although excluded from the formal political system, British women achieved their goals by means of legislation, a process that served to endorse a political system that was far from democratic, and permitted British women a role in nation-building. By contrast, the refusal to hear women's antislavery petitions called the legitimacy of the structure of American government into question and caused some American women to question their place in that polity. A scant three years after British women's petitioning led to Emancipation by Parliament, the Gag Rule, which William W. Freehling has called the Pearl Harbor of the Sectional Crisis, denied a political voice to American women, alerting them to their civil disabilities in a particularly powerful manner.<sup>68</sup>

Analyzing the two movements, Lasser argues that by basing their antislavery commitment on what she describes as "sentimentalist" maternalism and rejecting the British model of consumer boycotts, American women failed to attack the political economy of slavery.<sup>69</sup>

Lasser correctly observes that Free Produce garnered relatively little support in America, but she may underestimate American women's appreciation of the economic aspects of slavery. Certainly, Lydia Maria Child's comparison of "Free Labor and Slave Labor" in her 1833 *Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* is framed in archetypal 19th-century liberal thinking. She condemned slavery because in her view, it deprived slaves of any incentive to work. Van Broekhoven demonstrates that many Rhode Island women supported the Free Produce movement as a way to attack slavery, and Robertson points out that many of the antislavery women in the old Northwest who supported the Liberty Party would go on to support the nascent Republicans in the 1850s, the party of "Free Soil, Free Labor and Free Men."<sup>70</sup> In addition, American abolitionist women's work in antislavery fairs reveals growing sophistication about marketing and consumerism.<sup>71</sup> That said, the economic thought and understanding of antislavery women is an area that could benefit from further exploration.

Perhaps the most significant development in the history of women and antislavery over the past two decades has been the complication of a central narrative of American women's history. For a century, beginning with Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *History of Woman Suffrage* (1881), many historians of American women have asserted, implicitly and sometimes explicitly that encounters with abolitionism raised the "Woman Question," setting some women on a "path from antislavery to feminism."<sup>72</sup> The argument has been that a benevolent impulse on the part of some American women, often rooted in evangelicalism, gave rise to concern for the enslaved and that the social constraints these women experienced in their altruistic efforts on behalf of the slave sensitized them to the ways in which their own lives were circumscribed by custom and law. Though few historians went as far as Blanche Glassman Hersh's 1978 claim that "feminism was a logical outgrowth of antislavery," the long-held view as articulated by Ellen Carol Dubois was that the beginnings of "the process by which women's discontent crystallized into a political demand for women's emancipation . . . lie . . . primarily among women associated with the antislavery movement."<sup>73</sup>

Numerous challenges to this traditional narrative over the past 20 years have begun to problematize this apparent connection. As noted above, some women's search for personal spiritual autonomy preceded their concern for the slave. Some women went directly to woman's rights without any significant involvement in antislavery. Margaret Fuller, author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), is described by her biographer, Charles Capper, as only "moderately sympathetic . . . to antislavery ideas."<sup>74</sup> She certainly took no role in abolitionist organizations. Stanton identified her own and Lucretia Mott's exclusion from the World Antislavery Convention in London in 1840 as a pivotal moment which would eventuate in the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. Although, according to Stanton, this is where American women would first assert their right to vote; Pierson, Robertson, and Ginzberg all demonstrate that that the "origins" of the Woman's Rights movement were far less "tidy" than Stanton's narrative and those of many who have followed her would suggest.<sup>75</sup>

The problems with this well-entrenched narrative involve more than chronology. Clare Midgley argues that assumptions about the fundamental role of maternalist ideologies in developing support for antislavery among American women tend to "sideline" the antislavery activity of African American women, activism which as previously noted preceded that of White American women and was influenced by very different priorities.<sup>76</sup> Rael notes that Maria Stewart used the same discourse of morality, restraint, and self-discipline as did her Black male peers well before White women began to speak publicly on the subject of slavery.<sup>77</sup> Pierson's work on Jane Grey Swisshelm and Clarina Nichols shows that the current between antislavery and woman's rights could flow in the opposite direction. Concerns about the ways in which property and divorce law disadvantaged women could lead to egalitarian arguments, a commitment to political reform and by extension to antislavery.<sup>78</sup>

This well-worn “path from antislavery to feminism” also misleads because it ignores the experience of the many antislavery women who vigorously rejected calls for women’s rights. Amy Swerdlow argues that prevailing gender conventions were too deeply embedded in the evangelical Christianity which motivated conservative antislavery women to permit the development of a feminist critique.<sup>79</sup> Much more needs to be done to understand the antislavery mindset of these women. The British experience, where women played an important role in the abolition, first of the slave trade and then of slavery itself, may be instructive here. Although little if any direct connection between antislavery and calls for women’s rights exists in the British context by the time of Emancipation in the 1830s, Midgley challenges the assumption that there was nothing “feminist” about the antislavery activities of those women who embraced and abided within the confines of “woman’s sphere.” Without dismissing the classist and at times racist dimensions of their thinking, Midgley argues that these British women used a feminist analysis when they argued that slavery was a particular problem for female slaves, that their objective was to secure to Black women by means of Emancipation, the same privileges of domestic life that they valorized, and that they sought to achieve their goals by creating female antislavery networks.<sup>80</sup> The same is almost certainly true for conservative American antislavery women. Most historians would agree that “feminism” and “feminist” are technically anachronistic when applied to 19th-century women. However, as we have seen, it is frequently used to describe the motivations of women in this period. The paradox is that when used in many 19th-century contexts, it references constructions of womanhood, i.e. maternalist or essentialist thinking, that most 20th- and 21st-century feminists would eschew. Yet Midgley’s argument is provocative and challenges us to be both more precise and, at the same time, less dismissive as we consider the experience of conservative antislavery women and their place in the history of 19th-century American women.

New scholarship on race, religion, politics, transnational perspectives, and women’s history itself all speak to the impact of gender on abolitionism. Thus, the study of American women and abolitionism remains a lively field that continues to benefit from new questions and new perspectives.

### *Short Biography*

Margaret M. R. Kellow is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario and received her PhD from Yale University in 1993. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and a former Director of the Centre for American Studies at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. Her research deals with Slavery, Abolitionism and American Women’s History. Recent publications include “The Greek Slave: Elision and Disjunction in American Antislavery Imagery” in *Trans/Oceanic, Trans/American, Trans/lation: Issues in International American Studies* João Ferreira Duarte, Marta Pacheco Pinto and Susana Araújo (eds.) Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010, and “Hard Struggles of Doubt: Abolitionists and the Problem of Slave Redemption,” in *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy*, Richard Wilson and Richard Brown, (eds.) New York, Cambridge University Press 2009.

### *Notes*

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- <sup>1</sup> Bogin and Yellin, "Introduction," in Yellin and Van Horne, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 3.
- <sup>2</sup> For historiography on American women and antislavery prior to the 1990s, see Hewitt, "On Their Own Terms," in Yellin and Van Horne, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 23–30; Terborg-Penn, "African American Women and the Vote," in Gordon et al., *African American Women and the Vote*, 10–22; and Turley, "Complicating the Story," in Clapp and Jeffrey, *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery*, 20–43.
- <sup>3</sup> Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*. Some of the growing number of biographical studies of African American antislavery women are listed in the Bibliography.
- <sup>4</sup> Horton and Horton, 128; Coleman, "Architects of a Vision," in Gordon et al., *African American Women and the Vote*, 24–40 and Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*.
- <sup>5</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 13–14; Cutter, *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels*, 15; and Coleman, "Architects of a Vision," 25–31.
- <sup>6</sup> Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender," *American Quarterly* 45/4 (1993): 558–595.
- <sup>7</sup> Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood* and Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 13–14.
- <sup>8</sup> Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 223–226; Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 82–117 and 157–208; and Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists*, 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 47–69; Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind*, 38–74; and Young, *Antebellum Black Activists*, 67–83.
- <sup>10</sup> Although as Pierson has shown that these gender tensions were not absent from White American's experience in this period, Rael has shown that in the context of racism and slavery, they operated with particular intensity in the free Black community. See Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes* and Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 150–155. See also Lasser, "Enacting Emancipation," in Sklar and Stewart, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, 319–345.
- <sup>11</sup> Drescher, "Women's Mobilization in the Era of Slave Emancipation," in Sklar and Brewer, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, 110.
- <sup>12</sup> Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender"; Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism and Diasporic History," in Sklar and Brewer, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, 189–209, and Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 150–155.
- <sup>13</sup> Beckles, *Natural Rebels* and Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 65–70.
- <sup>14</sup> McLaurin, *Celia: A Slave*.
- <sup>15</sup> Humez, *Harriet Tubman: The Life and the Life Stories* (2003); Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman*; Painter, *Sojourner Truth*; and Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*.
- <sup>16</sup> White, "Revisiting 'Ar'n't I A Woman?'" in *Ar'n't I A Woman?*, 2nd ed., 1–12 and Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 64–65 and 79–114.
- <sup>17</sup> Johnson, "On Agency." *Journal of Social History* 37/1 (2003): 113–125, and Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 8–9.
- <sup>18</sup> Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 183–230.
- <sup>19</sup> Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism*, 4; Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 134–170; Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty*, 21; and Lasser, "Immediatism, Dissent, and Gender," in Clapp and Jeffrey, *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery*, 111–131.
- <sup>20</sup> By these means, Van Broekhoven argues that these women kept antislavery alive for nearly a generation after internal and external crises in the early 1840s caused male Rhode Islanders to abandon abolitionism. See Van Broekhoven, *The Devotion of These Women*, 226.
- <sup>21</sup> Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, 47–116.
- <sup>22</sup> Lasser, "Enacting Emancipation," 319–345.
- <sup>23</sup> Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18/2: 151–174.
- <sup>24</sup> Cutter, – *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels: The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865*, 3–17.
- <sup>25</sup> Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 128–130.
- <sup>26</sup> Robertson, "On the Side of Righteousness," 156 in Clapp and Jeffrey, *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery*.
- <sup>27</sup> McKivigan. *The War Against Proslavery Religion*. On racism and classism in female antislavery, see Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood*, and Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 60.
- <sup>28</sup> Speicher, *The Religious World of Antislavery Women*.
- <sup>29</sup> Sklar, "The Throne of My Heart" in Sklar and Brewer, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, 211–241.
- <sup>30</sup> Faulkner, *Lucretia Mott's Heresy*.
- <sup>31</sup> Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic*.
- <sup>32</sup> Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America*, 104–106, and Drescher, "Women's Mobilization in the Era of Slave Emancipation," 98–120.
- <sup>33</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 13–14.
- <sup>34</sup> Collier-Thomas, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper," in Gordon et al., *African American Women and the Vote*, 41–65; and Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism and Diasporic History," in Sklar and Brewer, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, 189–209.
- <sup>35</sup> Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 195, 232 and 246, Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer*, and Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 174–175.

- <sup>36</sup> Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 134–150 and 169–170; Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 46–47; Lasser, “Immediatism, Dissent, and Gender,” 111–113; and Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 14–52.
- <sup>37</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 20; Swerdlow, “Abolition’s Conservative Sisters,” 31–44; and Soderlund, “Priorities and Power: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society,” 67–118, both in Yellin and Van Horne, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, and Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood*.
- <sup>38</sup> Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood*, 18–19, and Lasser, “Immediatism, Dissent, and Gender,” 111–113.
- <sup>39</sup> Coleman, “Architects of a Vision” 24–40; Collier-Thomas, “Frances Ellen Watkins Harper,” 41–65; and Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty*, 67–90.
- <sup>40</sup> Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*.
- <sup>41</sup> Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak*, 10.
- <sup>42</sup> Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 98–132, and Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 52–53.
- <sup>43</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 72.
- <sup>44</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 117–118.
- <sup>45</sup> Robertson, “On the Side of Righteousness” 168–172 and *Hearts Beating for Liberty*.
- <sup>46</sup> Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe*, and Sylvia Hoffert, *Jane Grey Swisshelm*.
- <sup>47</sup> Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*.
- <sup>48</sup> Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 134–150.
- <sup>49</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 38.
- <sup>50</sup> Atkins, “When Pin Cushions Are Periodicals,” *ATQ* 11/2 (1997): 93–114; Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty*, 97–102 and 115–126; and Taylor, “Selling abolitionism,” Ph.D. Diss. University of Western Ontario, 2008.
- <sup>51</sup> Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 3.
- <sup>52</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 148–149.
- <sup>53</sup> Kellow, “For the Sake of Suffering Kansas,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 5/2 (1993): 32–49.
- <sup>54</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 24–48.
- <sup>55</sup> Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 29–72.
- <sup>56</sup> Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 67–97.
- <sup>57</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 119–150.
- <sup>58</sup> See for example the treatment of the Gag Rule controversy in Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, Vol I, 287–352; Ashworth, *Slavery Capitalism, and Politics*, Vol I, 129; and Howe, *Transformation of America*, 514–515.
- <sup>59</sup> Davis, “Looking at Slavery from Broader Perspectives,” *American Historical Review* 105/2 (2000): 452–466.
- <sup>60</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (1993).
- <sup>61</sup> Clapp and Jeffrey, *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery*, and Sklar and Stewart, *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*.
- <sup>62</sup> Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 20, and Lasser, “Immediatism, Dissent, and Gender,” 111–131
- <sup>63</sup> Taylor, “Selling Abolitionism.”
- <sup>64</sup> Taylor, *Women of the Anti-slavery Movement*; Winch, “Sarah Forten’s Antislavery Networks,” in Yellin and Van Horne, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 143–157, and Coleman in Sklar and Stewart, *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, 173–188.
- <sup>65</sup> Peterson, “Literary Transnationalism and Diasporic History,” 189–208.
- <sup>66</sup> Drescher, “Women’s Mobilization in the Era of Slave Emancipation,” 98–120.
- <sup>67</sup> Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship*; Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak*; Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825–1880*, (1990); and Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 105–125.
- <sup>68</sup> Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, Vol. I, 308.
- <sup>69</sup> Lasser, “Immediatism, Dissent, and Gender,” 111–113.
- <sup>70</sup> Robertson, “On the Side of Righteousness” 172–173.
- <sup>71</sup> Taylor, “Selling Abolitionism.”
- <sup>72</sup> See for example Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, and Conrad, *Perish the Thought*, 100, and Melder, “Abby Kelley and the Process of Liberation,” in Yellin and Van Horne, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 243.
- <sup>73</sup> Quotations from Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex*, vii, and Dubois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 19, respectively.
- <sup>74</sup> Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life*, 224.
- <sup>75</sup> Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 88–89; Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty*, 184; and Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins*.
- <sup>76</sup> Midgley, “British Abolitionism and Feminism in Transatlantic Perspective,” in Sklar and Brewer, *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, 121–141.
- <sup>77</sup> Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest*, 195, 232 and 246, and Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart, America’s First Black Woman Political Writer*.
- <sup>78</sup> Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 81–96.
- <sup>79</sup> Swerdlow, “Abolition’s Conservative Sisters,” 31–44.
- <sup>80</sup> Midgley, “British Abolitionism and Feminism in Transatlantic Perspective,” 121–141.

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