

Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest, by Stacey M. Robertson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. xiv, 320 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Barbara Cutter is associate professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. She is the author of *Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels: The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830–1865* (2003).

No one could accuse historians of neglecting the abolitionist movement in the United States, yet most studies of the movement have focused primarily on the Northeast, and much of the work that has been done on abolition in the West has concentrated on male leaders of the movement. This limited approach, Stacey Robertson suggests, has given historians an incomplete picture of the nature of antebellum antislavery activism. Her book, *Hearts Beating for Liberty*, is an effort to address this gap by exploring the work of female abolitionists in the Old Northwest. Robertson uses evidence from the lives of these grassroots female activists to question assumptions in the existing historiography. Specifically, she examines the importance of the conflicts between Old Organization Garrisonians, New Organization abolitionists, and political abolitionists in the West, and investigates how western abolitionists navigated those divisions. She concludes that conflicts between these groups of abolitionists mattered much less in the West than they had in the East, and that in the Old Northwest “abolitionists created a distinct approach characterized by cooperation and flexibility,” in contrast with the “discordant” abolitionism of the East (2).

Robertson also explores the wide variety of roles women abolitionists played in the Old Northwest, and recounts the ways their antislavery work reshaped their identities. She charts the development of midwestern female antislavery societies, the rise of the Liberty Party and midwestern women’s roles in that organization, their involvement in the free produce movement and antislavery fairs, their work as antislavery lecturers, and the connections between women’s antislavery work and their growing commitment to women’s rights.

Robertson has created a rich and detailed narrative of women in the abolitionist movement in parts of the Midwest. Given the parameters of this study — the Old Northwest — readers of the *Annals of Iowa* will rightly assume that Iowa abolitionists are not featured in the book. Less predictable is that only periodic references are made to female abolitionists in Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois; and there is little if any mention of Wisconsin. Readers looking for an account of antislavery in these areas may be somewhat disappointed, as the vast majority of material in the book is focused on Ohio. That said, the abolitionist

movement was extremely vibrant in Ohio, and this expansive study of female abolitionists in that state is a significant addition to the field. Robertson also adds to the historiography on antebellum gender ideology and women's public activism by confirming some of the more recent scholarship in that area that stresses the flexibility of the concept of woman's sphere. She finds that women abolitionists saw themselves as acting within their proper sphere as guardians of morality, by fighting against the sinful institution of slavery, even as many of their detractors accused them of venturing outside their proper sphere. She also does an excellent job of linking female abolitionists in Ohio with their counterparts in the Northeast; for example, in her chapter on the free produce movement (which advocated a boycott of goods produced by slave labor), she shows the central role of Ohio Quaker abolitionists in the revival of a Philadelphia reform paper, the *Non-Slaveholder*, which championed the cause of free produce.

Her argument, however, is less persuasive where she differentiates between what she describes as the pragmatic, cooperative abolitionism of the West and the discordant abolitionism of the East. First, much of her material is from Ohio, and virtually none is from territories or states west of the Mississippi River, which constituted a key part of the West for abolitionists by the 1850s. Second, the notion that the abolitionist movement was fragmented in the 1840s has been significantly complicated by recent scholarship focusing on grassroots abolitionists rather than the movement's leaders, as well as cultural history approaches to the topic. For example, in *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (1998), which focused largely on the northeastern United States, Julie Roy Jeffrey argued that divisions in the national organizations often mattered little to women in grassroots antislavery groups. Finally, one might have hoped to see more material on African American women abolitionists in the Midwest. There are some intriguing references to African American women fighting against slavery and racism, but a fuller picture of their activities would have been welcome. Overall, this book is a valuable addition to the scholarship on women and abolition in the United States.

Lincoln Looks West: From the Mississippi to the Pacific, edited by Richard W. Etulain. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010. xi, 262 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Patricia Ann Owens teaches history at Wabash Valley College. Her Ph.D. dissertation (Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 1986) was "Wyoming and Montana during the Lincoln Administration."