

times eschews analytical detail for generalizations and narration. The result is a slightly uneven treatment of the subject. Some chapters are broad-based and suitable for introducing the subject to nonspecialists, while others are highly detailed analyses of the subtle nuances of public argument and advocacy that may only interest specialists.

Anfinson's stance as a public historian contributes to what is perhaps the book's most enduring contribution. That is, he speaks directly and self-consciously to current public policy issues, hoping to shed historical light on how we got to where we are in managing the Great River. Once again, as the twenty-first century opens, the river's future is at a crossroads. In 1986 Congress determined that the Mississippi is nationally significant as both a transportation and an ecological resource. Determining how those two competing interests will be managed and balanced has been the subject of strong, even vituperative debate, and the cause for the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars in planning studies. As many try to find a way to establish and maintain a "river that works and a working river," John Anfinson's voice is a welcome addition to the debate, a voice that reminds us how often the river has been managed in the past, and what the terms and stakes of the discussion have been. Many scholars talk about the potential value of a historical perspective that informs public policy. Anfinson's rich work provides such perspective on future management of the upper Mississippi River.

Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels: The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830–1865, by Barbara Cutter. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003. ix, 285 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$44.00 cloth.

Reviewer Joanne E. Passet is assistant professor of history at Indiana University East. She is the author of *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality* (2003).

In this well-grounded and thoroughly researched work, Barbara Cutter explores the impact of gender ideology on antebellum American women's participation in public life. Like many historians of women, Cutter challenges the relevance of Barbara Welter's "Cult of True Womanhood" (with its emphasis on piety, purity, morality, and submissiveness) and the concept of separate spheres for any except white women in the emerging middle class. The key gender ideology shaping an antebellum woman's activism or even violence, she contends, "was not her submission to male authority or her presence in the domestic sphere, but her ability to use her special moral, religious, and nurturing nature to redeem others" (7). Proposing the ideology of re-

demptive womanhood as an alternative, Cutter argues that it offers a more inclusive approach to reconstructing the meaning of women's participation in public life because gender trumps class and race in the act of redemption.

To test the applicability of this theory, Cutter examines published accounts—both factual and fictional—of four categories of antebellum women: murderesses, “fallen” women (prostitutes), public lecturers, and Civil War workers and soldiers. An outward appearance of respectability, combined with an assumption that women had a special duty to protect their virtue and that of the republic, complicated antebellum perceptions of women in public. Indeed, as Cutter's careful analysis reveals, it was not uncommon for antebellum Americans to regard with sympathy both white murderesses and African American slaves such as Margaret Garner (who killed her children rather than have them returned to slavery).

Cutter continues to build a case for “female independence, self-assertion, and even violence” (64) in chapter two, in which she explores antebellum Americans' efforts to construct the meaning of prostitution. In the midst of the market revolution, as people struggled to distinguish good from bad, it became clear that prostitutes easily could be mistaken for respectable women by virtue of their origin, appearance, or place of residence. Moreover, the visibility of young victims of seduction and women who turned to prostitution because they needed the economic aid of men lent support to a growing notion that female dependency was “a potential problem, rather than a virtue” (59).

The ideology of redemptive womanhood also shaped other women's responses to the changing world around them. Empowered rather than controlled by their inherent virtue, increasingly politicized women chose to become public lecturers, Civil War nurses, relief workers, and female soldiers. Their presence in such public roles confirms how permeable the boundaries of antebellum gender ideology could be.

Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels is compelling, in part because of Cutter's consideration of the print culture that informed antebellum Americans' worldviews. Through such sources, she convincingly demonstrates the confusion that prevailed as antebellum Americans struggled to understand the meaning of women's presence in public life, and she adds to a growing literature exploring the political dimensions of nineteenth-century women's activism. Yet the author at times conflates the labels *radical* and *activist*. If we accept the premise of redemptive womanhood as the rule rather than the exception, the activism it encouraged can no longer be considered radical. And although

the ideology of redemptive womanhood is inclusive in many respects, this fine study is influenced by the northeastern bias of the primary sources on which it is based. To what extent did midwestern women embrace this redemptive power? Does it apply equally to American Indian women? To politically active immigrant women? These few reservations aside, this carefully researched and thought-provoking work offers an ideology for nineteenth-century women who became active agents in a world of change.

Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy, by Laura Jensen. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xii, 244 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$60.00 cloth.

Reviewer James W. Oberly is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He is the author of *Sixty Million Acres: American Veterans and Public Lands Before the Civil War* (1990).

This is an intriguing book that contributes important background investigation and analysis to a present-day policy debate: What are the historical origins of the American welfare state? Most would answer that question by pointing to the New Deal of the 1930s with its federal programs to alleviate poverty and suffering, whether in the form of old-age pensions, aid to mothers with dependent children, price supports for farmers, or protections for workers trying to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining. In 1992 the sociologist Theda Skocpol, in *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, sought to push the answer to the question back to the post-1865 period, especially the 1890s, when the Republican Party became closely tied to the Grand Army of the Republic and the call for pensions to all Union Army veterans, simply on the basis of their service in the War of the Rebellion. Skocpol further pointed to the program of federal "mothers' pensions" started before World War I as another benefit program in which the federal government paid money to individual citizens on the basis of their belonging to a group. Now, University of Massachusetts-Amherst political scientist Laura Jensen wants to push back the point of origin to the years after the War of 1812, when Congress and the Monroe Administration adopted two broad policy strands. The first was embodied in the Pension Act of 1818, which granted old-age pensions to veterans of the Revolutionary War. That law and a supplementary one in 1832 made the granting of pensions an entitlement based on service, rather than a case-by-case matter based on special acts of Congress. The second broad policy strand was the set of public land policies adopted after the Panic of 1819 to make the public lands cheaper and more

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