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Leigh Fought. *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 424 pp. $29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-978237-6.

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Frederick Douglass's life has been so widely studied it comes as a surprise that anyone has anything new to say about him. However, previous historians have long overlooked or ignored the women who surrounded great men. Leigh Fought's *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass* is an essential text for historians of women, antislavery, and African American history. Fought, a former editor of the *Papers of Frederick Douglass*, provides substantial insight into Douglass's home life and his relationships with the female reformers who both supported and hindered his efforts to end slavery and advocate for civil rights. Written in a clear and engaging style, this book is appropriate for a wide audience, including advanced undergraduates, but academic historians and graduate students will find substantial contributions to the historiography of Douglass and the antislavery movement in its pages as well. Readers come to understand how America's strongest voice for black equality was also a supporter of women's rights.

The book is organized chronologically, and the first women the reader is introduced to are Douglass's mother, grandmother, and aunts. Douglass lived with his grandmother Betsey for the first six or seven years of his life and he long remembered her home as a haven from slavery. His relationship with his mother, Harriet, was more complicated. Harriet had brought her son to her mother to raise when she was hired out. Fought asserts that it is likely that Harriet was a house servant and not a field hand as Douglass claims, as it is unlikely that a field hand would have learned to read (p. 19). Douglass only saw his mother a handful of times before she died in 1825, when Douglass was only seven years old. Fought contrasts Douglass's memories of the women in his family with his recollections of the women he worked alongside in the Anthony house, including Katy, the cook who managed the enslaved children. Katy's cruelty also served as a foil to the absentminded kindness of Douglass's early mistresses, Lucretia Anthony and Sophia Auld. From this point forward, the tensions between the black and white women in Douglass's life become the center of the narrative.

As Douglass grew to adulthood, learned to read, survived his time with Covey the slave-breaker, and developed and carried out his plan to gain his freedom, he was supported by women. Fought points out that Douglass's published accounts of his time in Baltimore are carefully curated to shield the lives and welfare of the women in Douglass's life, but he was clearly surrounded by and interacted with many free and enslaved

women (p. 39). It is during this thinly documented period in his life that he met the woman who would be the center of his home life for forty-four years, Anna Murray. Murray was a free woman who worked as a housekeeper for several upper-middle-class families in Baltimore when she met Douglass. Since Douglass did not document much about this period of his life, Fought tries to reconstruct their meeting and lives before they made their way north and married in New York. She lays out several possible scenarios in which they could have met, gotten to know one another, and decided that they were compatible. Fought pushes back against romantic narratives about a couple in love, and instead reminds readers that the vast majority of working-class couples did not practice romantic marriage and instead chose partners whose economic potential and connections could ensure a stable home life and a good future for children (p. 49).

The Douglass's marriage forms the center of the book. The family moved to Massachusetts and began to climb the social ladder and Frederick became deeply enmeshed in antislavery work; Anna focused her efforts on creating and maintaining a home for her husband and children. As Frederick's fame grew, Anna found herself and her family under increasing scrutiny and she was criticized as an unfit partner for abolitionism's spokesman. Anna did not learn to read or write until she was an adult, and she never became fully literate. She appeared, to outsiders, rather uninterested in her husband's antislavery work, and only joined one women's antislavery society, while they lived in Lynn, Massachusetts. Fought argues, based on letters and the reminiscences of the Douglass children, that Anna saw her role in maintaining a clean and orderly home as central to her husband's career, a part of respectability politics that was challenged as Frederick became more famous and his family's life was invaded by visitors and exposed through scandals.

The tension between the Douglasses' working-class roots and Frederick's intellectualism drove much of the speculation about the couple and their marriage. The chapters of the book covering most of Douglass's antislavery career, from the 1840s through the 1860s, focus on the various intrusions into the Douglass home and the resulting tensions between Frederick and Anna. Frederick's work brought him into contact with a wide range of activists, many of them women, and he cultivated relationships based on mutual interests in reform work and intellectual pursuits. Especially after his return home from his British tour in 1847, his friendships with European women strained his marriage. The Douglasses' move to Rochester, New York, and the founding of ***The North Star*** heralded a major split between Douglass and the Garrisonian abolitionists he had worked closely with in Massachusetts. Douglass struggled to keep the paper afloat and as part of the effort to maintain solvency, he enlisted the assistance of British reformer Julia Griffiths, who became the paper's manager and a boarder in the Douglass home. Griffiths and Anna did not get along, and the discord in the household fueled rumors of an affair between Frederick and Griffiths and unhappiness in the Douglass marriage. Griffiths was only the first of several white women that the Douglasses hosted for long visits. The other visitor who troubled Anna and Frederick's marriage was German intellectual Attilie Ossing. Both Griffiths and Ossing disliked Anna (the feeling was mutual) and they saw her as an unintelligent woman who was not worthy of Frederick. The conflicts between the women living in the Douglass house were heightened because Frederick insisted that the family host his friends, even when his wife disliked them. Fought's coverage of these conflicts reveals her sympathies with Anna, who is the most sympathetically portrayed woman in the book.

The theme of conflicts between the women in Frederick Douglass's life continues through the final chapters of the book, including those dis-

cussing his daughter Rosetta's education, career as a teacher, marriage, and adulthood. Rosetta, more than the other children, found herself mediating between her parents and the family guests and moved in and out of the Douglass family home repeatedly after her marriage to Nathan Sprague, a working-class man whom she met while the Douglasses lived in Rochester. After the Civil War, the Douglasses moved to Washington, DC, and Frederick Douglass worked within the Republican Party during Reconstruction. It is in this time period that the family struggles turned inward, and conflicts between Frederick, Anna, and Rosetta's family are the center of the book. Ossing continued to visit, although less and less often after the move to Washington, and instead the shortcomings of Rosetta's husband fueled family strife, as did the increasing number of relatives who visited or lived with Frederick and Anna in the years before Anna's death in 1882.

The final chapters of the book focus on Douglass's marriage to his second wife, Helen Pitts, a white woman from New York whom Douglass married abruptly in 1884. Douglass had met Helen when she was a young girl while he toured the antislavery circuit, and Helen worked for him in Washington in the Recorder's Office, alongside Rosetta. Frederick's children were not present at the marriage ceremony and were not told until after the ceremony. Frederick's children did not like their new stepmother, although after a few years, they seemed to recognize that Helen made their father happy. When Frederick Douglass died in 1895, Helen took on the task of preserving his last home, Cedar Hill, and his papers and books as part of his legacy. She did this while battling his children for control over the estate and their father's memory.

Throughout this book, which tells a tale both familiar and new to historians of African American history, Fought excels at writing a history on the edges of the traditional narrative. Her depictions of Douglass's family life and relationships with female friends like Amy Post, and those women who were both friend and enemy, like Maria Weston Chapman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, are built of the tiny snippets of information included in business letters and directives between members of the Douglass family and fellow reformers. Between these bits of family news and the reminiscences of the Douglass children written in the late nineteenth century, she manages to weave a rich tapestry of the life behind closed doors. In particular, Fought's skill at teasing out Anna Murray Douglass's life and character without any documents written in her own hand is impressive. Anna comes to the reader not the shadowy figure she was to Douglass's acquaintences, but a well-rounded character whose motivations and reactions are grounded in the realities of life as a black woman in the nineteenth century. Overall, this book is not just a well-researched work of history, but an enjoyable read as well.

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