

the framework of Black women's studies, of what Sojourner Truth said in public.

Stetson is an associate professor of English, Afro-American studies, and women's studies at Indiana University, and David is identified only as an independent scholar who writes on nineteenth-century social issues. Theirs is a uniquely valuable study of an American icon that situates Truth in the context of her Black women comrades in feminist and antislavery reform. Those Black women contemporaries, such as Maria Stewart, Frances Watkins Harper, Harriet Jacobs, and Rebecca Cox Jackson, figure here as actors in Truth's world.

With regard to context, *Glorying in Tribulation* forms a marked contrast with the other recent, scholarly biography of Truth by the historian Carleton Mabee and his daughter, Susan Mabee Newhouse (*Sojourner Truth—Slave, Prophet, Legend*, 1993). The Mabees were less intent on seeing Truth interacting with other Black people than with debunking the myths that have grown up about her, notably Frances Dana Gage's invention of the "Ar'n't I a woman?" refrain in Truth's 1851 comments in Akron, Ohio. Where the Mabees' book is a researcher's *tour de force* with a dash of self-righteousness, Stetson and David's work is a rhetorical extravaganza that is beautifully intertextual and written with enormous pungency and strength.

Stetson and David have added much to the burgeoning field of Sojourner Truth studies (for example, in their insightful and often funny depiction of the working relationship between Truth and her first amanuensis, Olive Gilbert), but their greatest contribution comes in their close analyses of the discourse surrounding the crucial events that constitute the emblematic Sojourner Truth: her Akron speech in 1851, the breast-baring episode in Indiana in 1858, her 1852 question to Frederick Douglass, "Frederick, is God dead?," and Truth's encounter with Abraham Lincoln in 1864.

Stetson and David disagree with recent historians (including the Mabees, Margaret Washington, and me) by reinforcing the authenticity of Gage's rendition of Truth's 1851 speech, which we doubt. But Stetson and David take the discussion a step further. In one of many examples of spirited writing, they

*Glorying in Tribulation: The Lifework of Sojourner Truth.* By Erlene Stetson and Linda David. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994. xii, 242 pp. \$28.95, ISBN 0-87013-337-3.)

This book is less a biography than a study of what Erlene Stetson and Linda David call Sojourner Truth's lifework of "talking aloud." Although *Glorying in Tribulation* follows a roughly biographical organization, its subject is Sojourner Truth's ways of knowing and performing herself, particularly in relation to other Black and white women. Stetson and David's first task—one they fulfill beautifully—is the thoughtful and cogent analysis, within

query the motives of educated white women such as Gage and Harriet Beecher Stowe who, by writing profiles of Truth,

desired to try on the identity of a Black woman like Truth. . . . In reading their essays we must imagine we are at a séance at which a complex composite spirit is called up, some part Sojourner Truth and many parts Gilbert, Gage, and Stowe: the Spirit is their Truth.

I could quote many other singular phrases from this highly original study—on the complex interactions between Truth and Frederick Douglass, on Truth and woman suffragists—but lack of space prevents this indulgence.

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