sence of the use value and community membership inherent in rights of property holding for small landholders, for property rights were “more than a metaphor” (p. 62). For women, this analysis is particularly important and suggests that ownership rights to real property might well have been more important for married women than rights of property to earned income.

I have only one quibble with this fine, compact book. The political boldness and historical importance of the six Jefferson County petitioners stand on their own, without the repeated contrasts the author makes to the towering figure of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Ginzberg suggests the women from Jefferson County were more “ordinary” than Stanton, hence more heroic, and that Stanton’s version of early women’s rights history obscured them in favor of her own singular significance. It should not be necessary to diminish Stanton in order to widen the historical portrait of the women of that pioneering generation of U.S. women’s rights. Stanton achieved the high level of historical significance that she did by virtue of her own originality of mind and boldness of action, not because of inherited privilege. She surely would have been the first to welcome such a book, so that she could properly stand, not alone in history, but rather in the company of other foresighted women, such as these six from Jefferson County.

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Most studies of abolitionists examine extremists who rejected political engagement and who instead advocated a hyper-morality within an individualist context. Frederick J. Blue has instead turned to those abolitionists and antislavery individuals who opted for a political solution; Blue’s purposes are to understand their motivations, their political philosophies, and their public appeal. He investigates eleven individuals who were associated with the Liberty party, the Free Soil party, and then the Republicans, offers a chapter on each of them, and then concludes with an assessment of their aggregate characteristics. His book is well written and informative; it should serve as a good reference tool for historians and be a guide to the topic of political antislavery for undergraduates.

The individuals Blue researches are Alvan Stewart, John Greenleaf Whittier, Charles Langston, Owen Lovejoy, Sherman M. Booth, Jane Swisshelm, George Washington Julian, David Wilmot, Benjamin and Edward Wade, and Jessie Benton Frémont. Many of these persons are well known, and often Blue covers territory already reconnoitered. The chapters on Stewart, Langston, Booth, Swisshelm, Wilmot, and the Wades nevertheless provide new information and give more perspective on these people than the older sources (in some cases, nonexisting sources). Blue presents his material in a narrative fashion, so each chapter is a mini-biography.

For this set of political abolitionists (save possibly for Wilmot), Blue finds that all found slavery a moral outrage and believed that merely making speeches against slavery would fail to raise the nation’s conscience to the point where something against the institution could be achieved by moral suasion. Rather, they all believed in the power of the federal government to promote an end to slavery. In this regard the work of Alvan Stewart was vital, for he formulated the first doctrines purporting that the Constitution was inherently antislavery. Virtually all the other individuals in Blue’s collection ascribed to this view. Even though the political question of slavery shifted to prohibiting its spread by 1846, most of Blue’s subjects held deeper concerns about the peculiar institution and wanted it extirpated, not merely restricted. Along the way, Blue deals with the troubles his antislavery advocates had with race; yet, with only a few exceptions, they generally fought for equal rights for African Americans once the Civil War ended. Worthy of mention is Blue’s discussion of some of the troubles among his antislavery group: Swisshelm’s willingness to commit genocide against the Lakota Sioux, Booth’s inability to curb his sexual appetite, and the Wade brothers’ inability to treat each other cordially. Also interest-
ing is reading about the fate of these people when they were in eclipse—when they faded from the political limelight after the slavery issue had been settled.

As informative and well written as the book is, it suffers from being too narrative and too insufficiently analytical. Why slavery became for these persons such a menacing threat to the future of the United States is not adequately explored, and the meaning behind the phrase the moral wrong of slavery needs elucidation. Why these individuals chose a political path rather than the moral-posturing path again requires additional explanation; it is something of a mystery why these political abolitionists did not foresee that a federal government committed to ending slavery would likely produce secession and then armed conflict. In general, more analysis would have been useful. Nevertheless, historians and students of nineteenth-century politics and reform will be well rewarded by reading this interesting work.

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The nature of the subject matter dictates that we can learn much about organized attempts to escape from slavery from spectacular failures. Josephine F. Pacheco’s well-researched, detailed account of seventy-six runaways and the handful of conspirators who very nearly got them to freedom in 1848 constitutes one of the most remarkable. An important addition to the growing literature on fugitive slaves and the persons who aided them, this volume together with recent biographies of Harriet Tubman helps paint the contours of slave rescue operations in the East that reached into Maryland and the District of Columbia. By skillfully weaving the story of the ill-fated Pearl into the history and politics of slavery in the nation’s capital, Pacheco also provides a revealing vantage point into the larger political debates that swirled in the late 1840s.

After setting the stage with a chapter devoted to the central place of slavery and the slave trade in antebellum Washington, Pacheco chronicles the audacious and breathtakingly simple plan to spirit away the several dozen D.C. slaves determined to make their way to freedom. She traces the impetus for the enterprise to, as was so often the case, an impending sale that threatened the separation of Mary Bell from her husband, Daniel. Made desperate at the failure of a lawsuit to effect the freedom legally due her, Bell turned to a network of abolitionists, spearheaded by the Washington lawyer William Chaplin and masterminded and funded from Philadelphia, Pacheco surmises, by Charles Dexter Cleveland, a close collaborator of Salmon P. Chase in the formation of the Liberty party. The latter arranged for an antislavery waterman, Daniel Drayton, to charter a vessel, the Pearl, to sail from Philadelphia to Washington; there it received and made off with its illicit cargo, getting nearly out to sea before being overtaken while waiting out a dangerous storm.

The denouement of the plot itself, recounted in the second chapter, occupies only a small part of the narrative. The remainder of the monograph relates the intertwined history of the recaptured slaves and their families, the abolitionists who took up their cause, and the impact of the episode on politics in Washington. Prominent figures such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Horace Mann take their place alongside those less well known today, though prominent in their time, such as Mary and Emily Edmondson, in the unfolding drama of a mass escape attempt and its aftermath. In emphasizing the centrality of the Pearl incident to subsequent congressional debate and legislation, Pacheco helps restore the movement broadly known as the Underground Railroad to its rightful place in the history of abolitionism and the politics of slavery. The Pearl offers a compelling chronicle of slavery and freedom in the nation’s capital that at once captures a significant moment in the struggle against slavery and illuminates the larger quest for liberty among the enslaved.

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