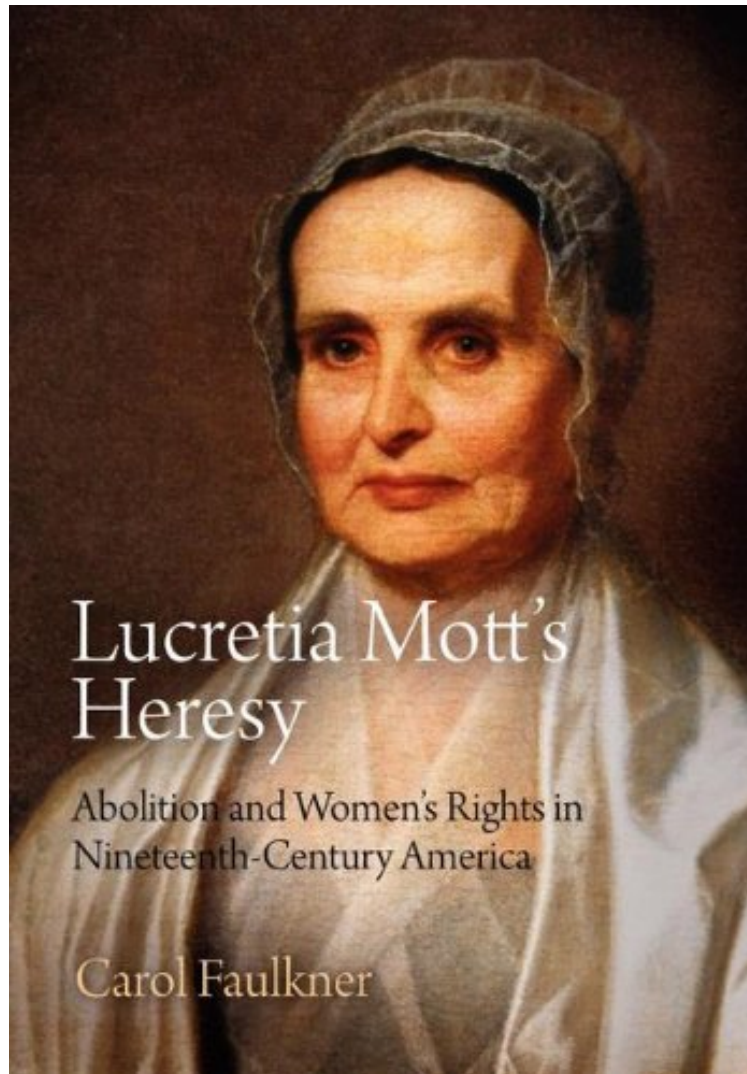


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remarkable 19th century leader. All students of 19th century reform movements should have a copy of this biography.

Lucretia Coffin Mott was one of the most famous and controversial women in nineteenth-century America. Now overshadowed by abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mott was viewed in her time as a dominant figure in the dual struggles for racial and sexual equality. History has often depicted her as a gentle Quaker lady and a mother figure, but her outspoken challenges to authority riled ministers, journalists, politicians, urban mobs, and her fellow Quakers. In the first biography of Mott in a generation, historian Carol Faulkner reveals the motivations of this radical egalitarian from Nantucket. Mott's deep faith and ties to the Society of Friends do not fully explain her activism; her roots in post-Revolutionary New England also shaped her views on slavery, patriarchy, and the church, as well as her expansive interests in peace, temperance, prison reform, religious freedom, and Native American rights. While Mott was known as the "moving spirit" of the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, her commitment to women's rights never trumped her support for abolition or racial equality. She envisioned women's rights not as a new and separate movement but rather as an extension of the universal principles of liberty and equality. Mott was among the first white Americans to call for an immediate end to slavery. Her long-term collaboration with white and black women in the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society was remarkable by any standards. *Lucretia Mott's Heresy* reintroduces readers to an amazing woman whose work and ideas inspired the transformation of American society.

"This much-needed, coherently argued, and beautifully written biography does justice to Mott's centrality to the history of antislavery, woman's rights, Quakerism, and Philadelphia." Lori D. Ginzberg, author of *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* "Mott did not make her biographer's task easy; except for a three-month period in 1840, she kept no diary, and although, like her compatriot Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she often spoke publicly, unlike Stanton, she seldom wrote for publication. Faulkner has more than met the challenge; her book is interesting and well written, offering fresh perspectives at every turn on Mott's roles within Quakerism and the antislavery and women's rights movements while also providing glimpses of her personal life. . . . With this timely book, Faulkner makes a compelling case for Mott's contemporary significance." *Journal of American History* "Lucretia Mott is as important to the birth of the women's rights movement as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Sophisticated, lively, direct, and often riveting, *Lucretia Mott's Heresy* will be the definitive biography of Mott for decades to come." Bruce Dorsey, author of *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* "This is the first biography of Mott in thirty years, and it proves to be thoroughly researched, well written, and fascinating. Faulkner's accessible writing style makes this book appropriate for any reader interested in women's history generally or the history of the U.S. abolitionist and women's suffrage movements." *Library Journal* About the Author Carol Faulkner is Associate Professor of History at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, and author of *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement*, also available from the University of Pennsylvania Press. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. On February 11, 1849, Lucretia Mott gave an unusual sermon in her usual place of worship, Cherry Street Meetinghouse in Philadelphia. The petite fifty-six-year-old Quaker minister was one of the most famous women in America. During the previous year alone, she had addressed the first women's rights conventions at Seneca Falls and Rochester, Seneca Indians on the Cattaraugus reservation, former slaves living in Canada, and the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York City. Yet her audience on that winter day was filled, not with Quakers, African Americans, reformers, or politicians, but with white medical students from Thomas Jefferson Medical College and the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Many of these students were born in the south. And, although a female medical school would open in Philadelphia the next year, all these students were men. Her sermon was unique to its time and place. In 1849, Philadelphia was the fourth largest city in the United States, with a population of 121,376. The diverse city was home to the largest population of free blacks in any northern state. It also contained the oldest and most prestigious anti-slavery society in the country, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, founded by Quakers. With borders touching the slave states of Delaware and Maryland, Pennsylvania was regularly infiltrated by fugitive slaves. Philadelphia's black abolitionists established a Vigilance Committee to aid these fugitives. Mott was a member of two anti-slavery organizations, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. Both of these interracial organizations denounced slavery as a sin and called for its immediate end. Yet, despite the presence of this vibrant anti-slavery community, the majority of Philadelphia residents were openly hostile to abolitionism. In the previous decades, the City of Brotherly Love had witnessed multiple race riots. Philadelphia's elites cultivated ties with their southern counterparts. Southern slave owners were welcomed in the city's churches, museums, concert halls, and universities. Philadelphia's free blacks were not. In order to appeal to these young southern gentlemen, Mott relied on the striking contrast between her virtuous femininity and her anti-slavery radicalism. Walking the streets of Philadelphia, and seeing these young men "separated from the tender care, the cautionary admonition of parents, of a beloved mother or sister," Mott communicated her maternal interest in their lives. She wished to guard their "innocence and purity" against the "allurements" and "vice" of the city. But she did not dwell on the predictable topic

of sexual immorality. Instead, she declared, "I am a worshipper after the way called heresy a believer after the manner which many deem infidel." Mott challenged the medical students to question the received wisdom of organized religion and polite society on the "great evil" of slavery. She prayed that they were "willing to receive that which conflicts with their education, their prejudices, and their preconceived notions." Mott wanted to open their hearts and minds to the degrading and brutalizing reality of plantation slavery. This sermon was not the first, or last, time she addressed white southerners on the topic. Her demure appearance as a Quaker matron enabled her to preach her radical message of individual liberty and racial equality to a wide variety of audiences, including those hostile to her views.² Throughout her long career, Mott identified as a heretic, adopting the term to explain her iconoclasm as much as her theology. In another speech, she declared that it was the obligation of reformers to "stand out in our heresy," to defy social norms, unjust laws, and religious traditions. Her choice of the physical verb "to stand" was deliberate. Mott rejected the idea that the peace testimony of the Society of Friends meant quietism. She told an audience of abolitionists that, "the early Friends were agitators; disturbers of the peace." She advised them to be equally "obnoxious."³ Lucretia followed her own counsel. She used her powerful feminine voice and her physical body to confront slavery and racial prejudice as well as sexual inequality, religious intolerance, and war. Though she demonstrated enormous personal bravery, she did not advocate violence. Instead, as she did in her sermon to the medical students, she used reason and example to contrast "moral purity" to the "moral corruption" of slavery.⁴ Too often Lucretia Mott is misunderstood as a "quiet Quaker."⁵ Scholars have followed the lead of nineteenth-century commentators like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who wrote that she "worshipped" Mott, regarding her as "above ordinary mortals."⁶ Reviled by her opponents, Mott was hailed by her friends as a pious, benevolent, self-sacrificing woman, the perfect nineteenth-century wife, mother, and grandmother. Such perfection has intimidated historians and biographers. Despite her iconic status in the history of the anti-slavery and women's rights movements, there have been only two scholarly biographies of her in the last sixty years. In the most recent biography, Valiant Friend, published in 1980, Margaret Hope Bacon argues, "Victorians made a living legend of Lucretia Mott, emphasizing her sweetness and calm." Bacon tried to correct this image, focusing on the repressed anger that drove Lucretia's activism and threatened her health, only to be undermined by her publisher, who proclaimed Mott a "gentle Quaker" on the cover.⁷ Mott's very real devotion to her family further complicates efforts to rescue her from sainthood. In 1884, Anna Davis Hallowell published a joint biography of her grandparents, James and Lucretia Mott, *Life and Letters*. In many ways, Hallowell's instinct to meld the two biographies was correct. The couple's private and public lives were deeply intertwined. Lucretia and James were married for almost fifty-seven years. They had five children who lived to adulthood. James was an important abolitionist in his own right. Very deliberately, however, Hallowell emphasized "the domestic side" of Lucretia Mott. She wanted to "offset the prevailing fallacy that a woman cannot attend to public service except at the sacrifice of household duties."⁸ Like other Quaker ministers, Mott's religious calling required her to balance her vocation and her family life. Ironically, her ministry made her more economically dependent than other female activists. Since Lucretia could not accept any pay for preaching, a sin denounced by the Society of Friends in their phrase "hireling minister," she relied on James for financial support.⁹ Lucretia was a traditionalist in other ways as well. She used her married name for her entire adult life, for example, even after it became fashionable among other women's rights activists, including her sister Martha Coffin Wright, to include their maiden names. Nevertheless, Hallowell's description of Mott's homemaking skills—particularly in cooking Nantucket delicacies and sewing rag carpets—softens her radicalism.¹⁰