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- 1 Sirpa Salenius, *An Abolitionist Abroad: Sarah Parker Remond in Cosmopolitan Europe*
- 2 Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.
- 3 Stéphanie Durrans
- 4 Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France
- 5 Based on extensive archival research that was carried out on both sides of the Atlantic, Sirpa Salenius's *An Abolitionist Abroad* is a much needed addition to our understanding of the complex transatlantic networks that developed throughout the nineteenth century. This work is primarily concerned with the life of Sarah Parker Remond, a young African American woman who was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1826 and who went on to play a major part in the fight against both race and gender oppression.
- 6 The introduction, entitled "Sarah Remond and the Black American Grand Tour," sketches out parts of Remond's life that are more fully developed in the course of the following chapters. Its main interest lies in the way it highlights Remond's contribution to the redefinition of a practice that we often tend to associate with middle- or upper-class white men (or more rarely women) who could afford to travel across Europe to complete their education. Salenius draws attention to the fact that, for African Americans, collective rather than individual achievement was the primary driving force behind the decision to cross the Atlantic. However, the Fugitive Slave Law that came into effect in 1850 marked a turning-point by leading growing numbers of free African Americans to flee the U.S. where they risked being kidnapped and sent to Southern plantations. Those who could afford it settled in Great Britain and often continued the fight against slavery by touring the country and moving the crowds through their personal testimonies.
- 7 Chapters One and Two follow Remond from early childhood through to young womanhood. Remond was born to a family where women took an active lead in the fight

for racial progress. Her four sisters were successful professionals, on an equal footing with their father, John Remond, a free black man who had immigrated to Salem from the West Indies in 1798 in order to benefit from better schooling opportunities and who went on to establish a prosperous catering business that remained the most prominent one in Salem for over 50 years. Salenius uses Remond's 1861 autobiographical essay as a primary source of information to throw light on the personality of this talented, spirited young girl who was denied the right to pursue her studies in the school she had chosen after the town decided to enforce strict segregation in schools that had so far been integrated. Chapter Two focuses on Remond's entry in the field of activism in the 1850s. Following in the steps of such leading figures as Maria W. Stewart, Angelina Grimké and Abby Kelley, she started touring the U.S., addressing vast audiences to raise awareness of the horrors of slavery, and eventually joined fellow activists when they travelled to Britain in order to raise funds for abolitionist activities in 1858.

- 8 Chapters Three and Four focus on her life in England over the next 8 years, a turning-point in her life since this was the place where Remond could reinvent herself and find new sources of empowerment, though Salenius wisely brings nuances to the idealized vision of Europe upheld by many African Americans who tended to regard the Old World as a place free from racial prejudice. While many African Americans returned to the U.S. after the Civil War, Remond made the choice to remain in Europe where she continued to lecture publicly and collect money for newly-freed slaves in the U.S. Since 1859 she had also made the most of her stay in England to perfect her formal education, which she did by enrolling as a student first at Bedford College and then at London University College, eventually graduating as a nurse. Meanwhile, she had also formed ties of friendship with another exile who had found in England a welcoming haven: Giuseppe Mazzini.
- 9 Her connections with Italian radicals like Mazzini led her to expand the scope of her activism to encompass the Italian fight for independence, and Chapter Five explores the many intriguing intersections between the Italian nationalist movement and the fight for racial equality that had so far motivated Remond's mission. In such circumstances, it was only natural that her quest for self-fulfillment should continue on Italian soil. Remond's gifts as a linguist no doubt facilitated her entry into a number of social and intellectual circles both in France and in Italy.
- 10 Chapters Six and Seven retrace Remond's life in Florence (where she settled in 1866) and Rome, with a special focus on her contacts with the political and intellectual elite that helped her achieve a new sense of self. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the new capital of the Kingdom of Italy and the relative freedom that she enjoyed there helped her assert her agency even further. Remond applied for admission in one of the most prestigious medical schools of the time and went on to become a doctor (and possibly the first African American doctor) after completing her medical studies in 1868. Readers might feel frustrated by what little we learn about Remond's life thereafter: she appears to have worked as an obstetrician for quite a few years until she married an Italian office worker who came from an educated, upper-class family. She was then almost 51 and Salenius argues that this interracial marriage to a younger man can be seen as another way for Remond not only to battle racist stereotypes but also to assert her right to a career first before settling down in matrimony without any prospect of childbearing. Later reports suggest that she soon fell on hard times (possibly on account of the financial crisis that struck Florence in the late 1870s) and moved to Rome, but the rest of her life is lost in the limbo of history.

- 11 What makes this biography fascinating, however, is not only Remond's life story and how she comes to be seen as a new empowering model of black womanhood in the nineteenth century but also the way in which Salenius incorporates her study into a larger discussion of the transatlantic connections that shaped the destinies of so many people both in Europe and America. The complex ramifications of the social, political and intellectual circles that were instrumental in Remond's formation are vividly delineated. Remond is first positioned within a vast network of white and black activists who dared speak out against all forms of racial and gender oppression on both sides of the Atlantic. Her destiny is then shown to intersect with those of many prominent figures on the European social, political and artistic scene, like the sculptress Edmonia Lewis, another African American who had found in Italy a place more propitious for artistic expression. This book fills in one of the many gaps that exist in our comprehension of transatlantic relationships while engaging with previous scholarship on the topic. It is highly recommended reading for students and scholars in the field of transatlantic and women's studies.
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