

Slavery in the International Women's Movement, 1832–1914

In this book, Sophie van den Elzen shows how advocates for women's rights, in the absence of their 'own' history, used the antislavery movement as a historical reference point and model. Through a detailed analysis of a wide range of sources produced over the span of almost a century, including novels, journals, speeches, pamphlets, and posters, van den Elzen reveals how the women's movement gradually diverged from a position of solidarity with the enslaved into one of opposition, based on hierarchical assumptions about class and race. This inclusive cultural survey provides a new understanding of the ways in which the cultural memory of Anglo-American antislavery was imported and adapted across Europe and the Atlantic world, and it breaks new ground in studying the 'woman–slave analogy' from a longitudinal and transnational comparative perspective. This title is also available as open access on Cambridge Core.

Sophie van den Elzen is Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Literatures in English at the Department of Languages, Literature and Communication at Utrecht University. She specialises in the interrelationships of social movements, culture, and memory.

‘Deeply researched and compellingly argued, Sophie van den Elzen’s book marks the emergence of a new stage of historical studies of Euro-American women. Bringing new life and significance to the vast international range of historical writings by women activists that featured slavery and abolitionism, its pages illuminate the era as a whole and renew the foundation for future studies of women’s activism generally.’

Kathryn Kish Sklar, author of Women’s Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement: A Short History with Documents, 1830–1870

‘Sophie van den Elzen has given us a fascinating study of how abolitionism provided a model for early feminism. Theoretically refined and grounded in detail, this is a tour de force. Highly recommended for everyone interested in the history of feminism or the role of cultural memory in emancipation movements.’

Ann Rigney, author of Remembering Hope: The Cultural Afterlife of Protest

‘Sophie van den Elzen offers readers a thoughtful and carefully researched inquiry into the ongoing significance of the woman–slave analogy and early nineteenth-century American antislavery campaigns as founding moments in the historical memory of the international women’s movement. Her premise is that cultural memory work, by emphasising some aspects of the historical past and blocking out others, may actually shape subsequent action.’

Karen Offen, author of The Woman Question in France, 1400–1870 and Debating the Woman Question in the French Third Republic, 1870–1920

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Slaveries since Emancipation publishes scholarship that links slavery's past to its present, consciously scanning history for lessons of relevance to contemporary abolitionism, and that directly engages current issues of interest to activists by contextualizing them historically.

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Memory Work and the Legacy of Abolitionism

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