

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker: A Reader in Documents and Essays by Ellen Carol DuBois and Richard Cândida Smith

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Source: *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 105, No. 4 (Autumn 2007), pp. 715-717

Published by: Kentucky Historical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23387280>

Accessed: 09-08-2017 19:36 UTC

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Then he had read newspaper reports of the stealthy goings and comings of rebel spies in our midst, and of their purposes and their two or three startling achievements, till his imagination was all aflame on the subject" (p. 210). One wonders what Clemens would make of our own addled times.

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Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist as Thinker: A Reader in Documents and Essays. Edited by Ellen Carol DuBois and Richard Cândida Smith. (New York: New York University Press, 2007. Pp. v, 328. \$75.00 cloth; \$23.00 paper.)

For most Americans, Elizabeth Cady Stanton is one half of a dedicated pair of nineteenth-century suffragists. This volume considers Stanton on her own terms, for good and ill, and establishes her as perhaps the most important feminist in U.S. history. The editors have divided the book into two sections: the first is composed of scholarly essays that engage each other and the reader in a dialogue about Stanton, women's rights, and race. The second part of the volume selects important but hard-to-find examples of Stanton's speeches and writings. In both sections, Stanton emerges as a complex, frustrating, and dynamic activist.

The eight essays are readable, concise, and forcefully argued. The first essay, by Vivian Gornick, is both an overview of Stanton's life and a spirited defense (against those who accuse her of racism) of Stanton as a feminist visionary. Gornick's essay is followed by Christine Stansell's reconsideration of Stanton's relationship to the antislavery movement. As Stansell points out, "Stanton's experience of abolition was more muted than she let on" (p. 35). These two articles set the tone for the rest of the collection. Barbara Caine and Richard Cândida Smith place Stanton in the context of transatlantic feminism and intellectual history. While Caine compares Stanton and John Stuart Mill as theorists of women's status, Smith analyzes Stanton's use of the term "self" in her most famous speech, "Solitude of Self" (easily available online and thus not included in the collection). The next two essays tackle Stanton's controversial beliefs that marriage and religion were at the root of women's oppression. Stanton identi-

fied marriage as legalized prostitution and called for liberal divorce laws, positions that were scandalous in her time. While Americans may feel confident that they have resolved the inequities in marriage today, Ellen Dubois points out that Stanton's analysis of the connection between marriage and women's subordination "remains incomplete" in light of the debate over gay marriage (pp. 90-91). Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*, excerpted in the documents section, is the starting point for Kathi Kern's examination of Stanton's critique of religion, which was influenced by intellectual developments such as positivism and theosophy. In these essays, Stanton clearly emerges as a radical and influential thinker.

The final two essays tackle the important debate over Stanton's racism. Following the Civil War, as Michele Mitchell notes, Stanton "harbored a fixation of sorts over 'Patrick, Sambo, Hans, and Yung Tung'" (p. 128). Ann Gordon argues that historians must consider Stanton's language in the context of the evolving fight over the vote. Rather than seeing the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment as a "humiliation" for white women (p. 111), Stanton viewed the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments as placing dangerous new restrictions on the right to vote. Her advocacy of educated suffrage in the 1890s came from a desire for any expansion in the suffrage; black leaders also turned to this strategy in desperation. The only way to understand Stanton's arguments, Gordon asserts, is to understand the political and legal forces arrayed against women's suffrage. Michele Mitchell takes on Gordon directly, placing Stanton's language instead in the context of nineteenth-century evolutionary science. Though she did not directly connect black male political rights to the threat of miscegenation, Stanton's discussion of the sexual exploitation of women in the context of manhood suffrage "played upon a host of fears, including the panicked anxiety that miscegenation would compromise the Anglo-Saxon's position in the scale of being" (p. 140). Mitchell concludes that historians should "hold Stanton accountable for a strategic choice that she made of her own volition" (p. 146). Readers can form their own opinion on this debate by reading some of the documents in the second section, particularly "Address to Anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association, May 12, 1869, New York City" and "National Protection for National Citizens, Address to the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, January 11, 1878, Washington, D.C."

This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of feminism. The format is also perfect for use in the undergraduate classroom. The scholarly disputes are accessible and will provoke

debate among students. Stanton's writing is as vibrant today as it was in the nineteenth century, with implications for current discussions of feminism, marriage, religion, and equality in American society.

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Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History. By Stephanie Y. Evans. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007. Pp. xvi, 275. \$59.95 cloth; \$24.95 paper.)

The years between 1850 and 1954 gave us powerful black women such as Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, Ann Plato, just to name a few, and a number of others. These women were truly remarkable in the fact that they were individuals who managed to achieve and persevere in spite of chronic racism, sexism, and other endemic injustices that permeated the mid-nineteenth-to mid-twentieth-century American landscape.

In her formidably enlightening and refreshing book, Stephanie Evans, a trailblazing young scholar and assistant professor of African American and Women's studies at the University of Florida, demonstrates that, despite whatever societal obstacles they were confronted with (and there were many), this era was one of considerable accomplishment for many black women. Evans introduces readers to Lucy Stanton who becomes the first black woman to have a degree conferred upon her in 1850, Anna Julia Cooper, who was born a slave, yet manages to earn a PhD at the age of sixty and Mary McLeod Bethune who was the founder of Bethune-Cookman College and was well respected by a number of political figures, including presidents Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman in that she was actively involved on some level in each of these presidential administrations.

Evans divides her book into two parts. Part one examines the initial years of knocking down the previously impervious doors of higher education that had often either subtly or blatantly excluded black women from obtaining higher education, let alone advanced degrees. In this section of her book, Evans manages to create a very informative, yet sympathetic narrative for the reader. The number of triumphs, frequent setbacks, pain, gains, and other events that a number of these pioneering women endured not just for themselves, but in an effort to improve life for others, especially black Americans