



Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865

Clare Midgley

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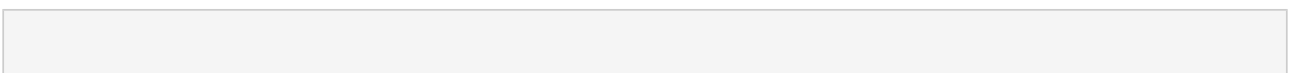
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Feminism and Empire establishes the foundational impact that Britain's position as leading imperial power had on the origins of modern western feminism. Based on extensive new research, this study exposes the intimate links between debates on the 'woman question' and the constitution of 'colonial discourse' in order to highlight the centrality of empire to white middle-class women's activism in Britain.

The book begins by exploring the relationship between the construction of new knowledge about colonised others and the framing of debates on the 'woman question' among advocates of women's rights and their evangelical opponents. Moving on to examine white middle-class women's activism on imperial issues in Britain, topics include the anti-slavery boycott of Caribbean sugar, the campaign against widow-burning in colonial India, and women's role in the foreign missionary movement prior to direct employment by the major missionary societies. Finally, Clare Midgley highlights how the organised feminist movement which emerged in the late 1850s linked promotion of female emigration to Britain's white settler colonies to a new ideal of independent English womanhood.

This original work throws fascinating new light on the roots of later 'imperial feminism' and contemporary debates concerning women's rights in an era of globalisation and neo-imperialism.



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