



Evolutionary Rhetoric: Sex, Science, and Free Love in Nineteenth-Century Feminism (Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms)

Wendy Hayden

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In *Evolutionary Rhetoric*, scholar Wendy Hayden provides a comprehensive examination of the relationship between scientific and feminist rhetorics in free-love feminism, studying the movement from its inception in the 1850s to its dark turn toward eugenics in the early 1900s. Hayden organizes her provocative study by scientific discipline—evolution, physiology, bacteriology, embryology, and heredity. Each chapter explores how free-love feminists adopted the evidence of that discipline in their arguments for increased sex education, women’s sexual rights, reproductive freedom, and the abolition of a marriage system that repressed the rights and the sexuality of women.

Hayden takes our conventional understanding of the relationship between nineteenth-century feminism and science and expands it. The author provides examples of the powerful words of free-love feminists to show exactly how these exceptional women used science as a rhetorical platform to promote feminist, and often radical, social reforms.

Considering why the free-love movement has not yet been studied, Hayden also discusses how the recovery of this movement may impact larger goals in the recovery of women’s rhetoric. This important and timely study of a long-forgotten movement adds to our understanding of the complexities of the history of feminism.

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