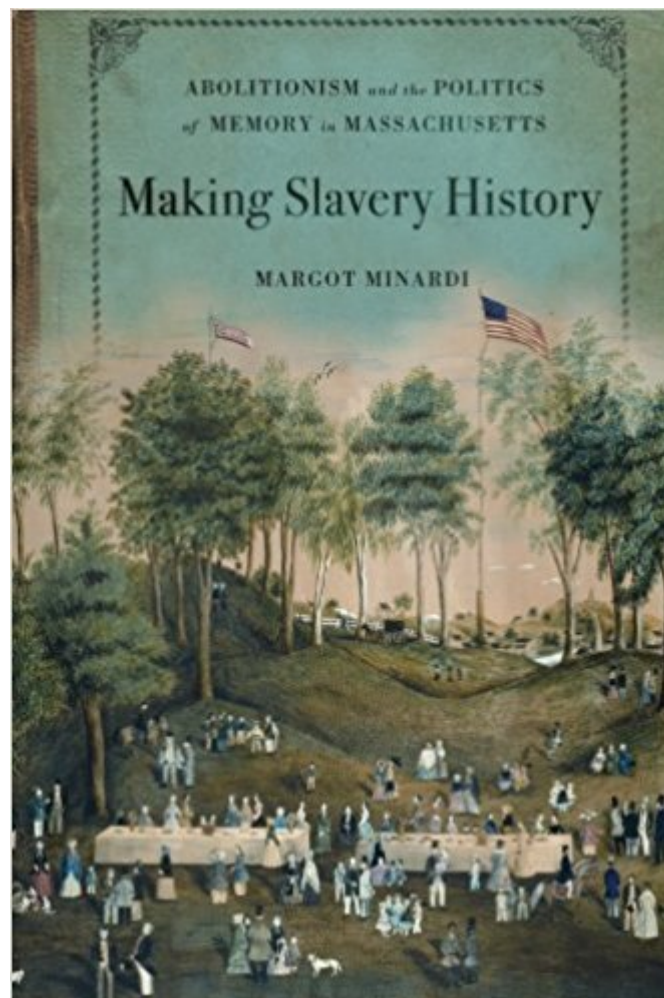


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Making Slavery History: Abolitionism And The Politics Of Memory In Massachusetts



Synopsis

Making Slavery History focuses on how commemorative practices and historical arguments about the American Revolution set the course for antislavery politics in the nineteenth century. The particular setting is a time and place in which people were hyperconscious of their roles as historical actors and narrators: Massachusetts in the period between the Revolution and the Civil War. This book shows how local abolitionists, both black and white, drew on their state's Revolutionary heritage to mobilize public opposition to Southern slavery. When it came to securing the citizenship of free people of color within the Commonwealth, though, black and white abolitionists diverged in terms of how they idealized black historical agency. Although it is often claimed that slavery in New England is a history long concealed, Making Slavery History finds it hidden in plain sight. From memories of Phillis Wheatley and Crispus Attucks to representations of black men at the Battle of Bunker Hill, evidence of the local history of slavery cropped up repeatedly in early national Massachusetts. In fixing attention on these seemingly marginal presences, this book demonstrates that slavery was unavoidably entangled in the commemorative culture of the early republic—even in a place that touted itself as the "cradle of liberty." Transcending the particular contexts of Massachusetts and the early American republic, this book is centrally concerned with the relationship between two ways of making history, through social and political transformation on the one hand and through commemoration, narration, and representation on the other. Making Slavery History examines the relationships between memory and social change, between histories of slavery and dreams of freedom, and between the stories we tell ourselves about who we have been and the possibilities we perceive for who we might become.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *Making Slavery History*, Margot Minardi analyzes how perceptions of events, and those who participate in them, change and how such changes reflect and affect action. She is the first to center on this phenomenon as a means of understanding how, between the American Revolution and the Civil War, people in Massachusetts understood slavery and abolition, African American character, and the antislavery struggle."--*The Historian*"[A] smart, creative, and provocative account...*Making Slavery History* represents one of those rare books that can be savored in part and devoured in whole...Minardi's narrative masters the art of using small stories to tell large tales. She not only reveals who makes history and how history gets made, she reminds readers why the stories the living choose to tell about the dead really matter at all."--*The New England Quarterly*"Minardi's book is a passionate and much-needed reminder both of 'the power of memory to move us, hopefully and purposefully, through a broken and tumultuous world,' as well as the power of memory to sharpen resistance to change and hinder some futures."--*Civil War Book Review*"Excellent monograph...*Making Slavery History* is elegantly written, thought provoking, and deserves to be widely read."--*The Journal of American History*"This is a graceful, elegant book that is also very, very smart. Minardi's subject is history itself and its uses in constructing identity-the chronicling, justifying, memorializing, and explaining of slavery and the Revolutionary-era ending of slavery in Massachusetts. She elaborates, fine-tunes, and textures the 'constructed amnesia' argument about the history of slavery in New England in important ways, demonstrating just how this was in fact a history constructed of both presence and absence. In style and imagination, this manuscript powerfully evokes Jill Lepore's *The Name of War*, and in skillful reading of material objects as well as texts, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *The Age of Homespun*."--Joanne Pope Melish, University of Kentucky"Margot Minardi takes memory studies back to history, and the results are consistently illuminating. A careful, well written, valuable addition to antislavery, New England, and African American history."--David Waldstreicher, Temple University

Margot Minardi is Assistant Professor of History and Humanities at Reed College.

As a descendant of many abolitionists on both my mom's and dad's side (and cousin to JP Jewett, publisher of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; also 2 Jewett cousins were officers in the 54th Mass. and

fought/were wounded at Ft. Wagner and also Olustee, FL -- another of the 54th's engagements), it is heartening to read such an excellent work on the history and memory of slavery and its responses to it throughout New England. I was especially moved at the end of the fabulous and rich book to be in the shoes of Nell as he stood there on State Street, Boston (he having documented the hardships of black Americans for so many years) and feel what he must have felt: to know his people's legacy had a long way to go... but that it was improving... as witnessed by the 1,000 black men marching past him... eyes forward! -Clay Feeter, York, Maine

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