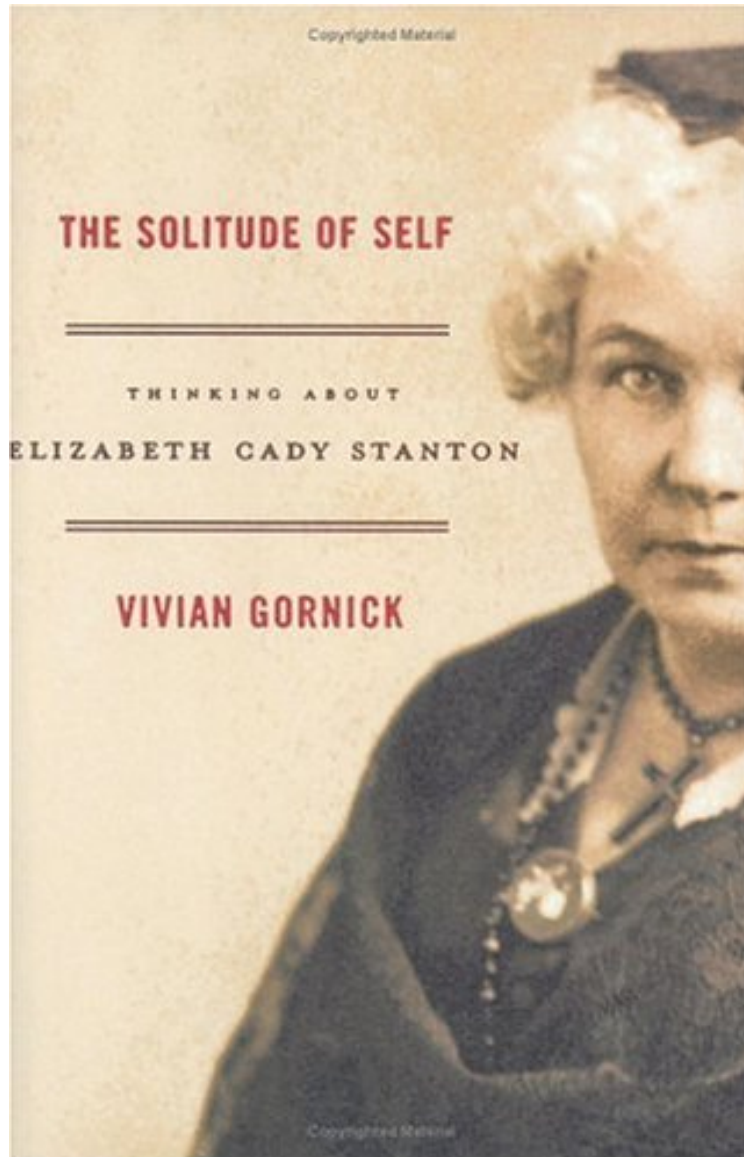


(Free read ebook) The Solitude of Self: Thinking About Elizabeth Cady Stanton

## The Solitude of Self: Thinking About Elizabeth Cady Stanton

*Vivian Gornick*

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**Vivian Gornick : The Solitude of Self: Thinking About Elizabeth Cady Stanton** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Solitude of Self: Thinking About Elizabeth Cady Stanton:

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Stanton was the greatest influence on female culture in the history of women's suffrage, while not as well known as Anthony. She was the mind behind the movement.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton along with her comrade-in-arms, Susan B. Anthony was one of the most important leaders of the movement to gain American women the vote. But, as Vivian Gornick argues in this passionate, vivid biographical essay, Stanton is also the greatest feminist thinker of the nineteenth century. Endowed with a philosophical cast of mind large enough to grasp the immensity that women's rights addressed, Stanton developed a devotion to equality uniquely American in character. Her writing and life make clear why feminism as a liberation movement has flourished here as nowhere else in the world. Born in 1815 into a conservative family of privilege, Stanton was radicalized by her experience in the abolitionist movement. Attending the first international conference on slavery in London in 1840, she found herself amazed when the conference officials refused to seat her because of her sex. At that moment she realized that In the eyes of the world I was not as I was in my own eyes, I was only a woman. At the same moment she saw what it meant for the American republic to have failed to deliver on its fundamental promise of equality for all. In her last public address, *The Solitude of Self*, (delivered in 1892), she argued for women's political equality on the grounds that loneliness is the human condition, and that each citizen therefore needs the tools to fight alone for his or her interests. Vivian Gornick first encountered *The Solitude of Self* thirty years ago. Of that moment Gornick writes, I hardly knew who Stanton was, much less what this speech meant in her life, or in our history, but it can still remember thinking with excitement and gratitude, as I read these words for the first time, eighty years after they were written, We are beginning where she left off. *The Solitude of Self* is a profound, distilled meditation on what makes American feminism American from one of the finest critics of our time.

From Publishers Weekly  
Starred . Without the inimitable Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the voice of 19th-century feminists would have been much less forceful. Essayist and memoirist Gornick (*Approaching Eye Level*) reflects on Stanton's (1815-1902) thought regarding the question of women's suffrage. Gornick anchors these rich ruminations on Stanton's final speech, vividly describing her subject, who, after some 40 years of striving for women's equality, focused on the vote as the critical right. She stood in front of her lifelong compatriots and enemies and argued that the inherent isolation of the human condition demands that people be allowed to be responsible for their own lives; thus, denying women the vote violates a basic human right to self-determination. Gornick explicates Stanton that "[p]olitics is meant to mitigate the misery to which the human condition consigns us, not add to it." This revelation resonates as Gornick investigates the development of Stanton's engagement with the ideas affecting her world, the resistance those ideas met with, and the choices she made, which defined the future of "radical" feminism. Though Gornick considers her own awakening in the early 1970s, she rarely strays to the current state of feminism. However, her intriguing ideas leave the reader hoping for more thinking from her on the subject. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.  
From Booklist  
An icon of the American feminist movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton devoted her life to the cause of women's suffrage, founding and leading the National Woman Suffrage Association, traveling ceaselessly, speaking passionately about the issue that she felt should define her generation. A century later, Gornick was introduced to Stanton's final public address, a speech that inspired Gornick to question her own generation's debt to Stanton's leadership, and to evaluate how best to honor and promulgate her legacy. In this critical and yet deeply personal examination of Stanton's development as a feminist, Gornick eloquently accomplishes in a very few pages what enthusiastic biographers so often fail to achieve through more voluminous and comprehensive works: she shows us the female behind the feminism, the woman behind the words that inspired a movement. Stanton fairly jumps off the page--her zeal, her frustration, her intelligence, her sensitivity--all flow out of Gornick's obvious respect for a woman whose contribution to this nation's civil rights is immeasurable. Carol Haggas  
Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "I love writers who treat thinking as a dynamic process. Ms Gornick does--here and in all her books. Imagine a photographer of the psyche. She studies her subject from all angles. Whether in close-up or on a landscape crowded with political and religious movements, she explores the public and private selves ... What a potent book this is!" --The New York Times