

it in the academy. Its relevancy for women who have not made it, not made it yet, or will never make it, is perhaps more ambiguous.

Ela Przybylo is a Ph.D. student of the Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies Program at York University, Toronto. While her primary research project is on the sexual identity of asexuality, she has broader interests in feminist approaches to sexuality, the body, and science. Her work has been published and is forthcoming in journals such as Sexualities and Feminism and Psychology, as well as in a couple of book collections on asexuality. Ela is a lover of mountains, trees, shrubs, and wildflowers.

BATTLING PORNOGRAPHY: THE AMERICAN FEMINIST ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY MOVEMENT, 1976-1986

Carolyn Bronstein
Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2011

REVIEWED BY DARJA DAVYDOVA

Due to its anti-sexual attitudes and affiliation with radical right-wing politics the contemporary anti-pornography feminism gained a negative reputation of a moral crusader among academics and sex workers. However, as Carolyn Bronstein demonstrates in her chronological account of American activism against violence against women, second-wave feminism has not always conceptualized pornography as inherently evil and harmful for women. It also has not always promoted its complete abolition. In fact, what we know today as the anti-pornography activism started up with a quite different grassroots agenda.

Battling Pornography is an engaging and nuanced historical book addressing the rise and decline of the nation-wide American anti-violence and anti-pornography movements in '70s and '80s. The book puts feminist grassroots activism against pornography in the socio-cultural context of sexual revolution and proliferation of public advertising. It demonstrates how the movement arose from women's concerns and dissatisfaction with these social changes. While the sexual revolution was liberating for men, many women found themselves being unable to refuse unwanted sex and resisted the culture that glorified sexual accessibility of women. The emergence of radical feminism provided a theoretical grounding for these concerns as it maintained that there was an innately positive female way of life that has potential to challenge sexually oppressive patriarchal culture.

Using original archival research, Bronstein documents the initiation and evolution of three key feminist anti-violence movements—the Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), the Women Against Violence in Media and Pornography (WAVMP), and the Women Against Pornography (WAP). The WAVAW organized against depiction of rape and violence in films, advertisement, and on record covers. Even though it opposed pornographic horror movies, this movement avoided identifying pornography as a primary target of anti-violence activism. By contrast, WAVMP saw a causal relationship between pornography and female abuse. It protested against the porn industry and media, seeing advertising that used female bodies as inevitably pornographic. In the early '80s, the WAP, which united specifically against pornography, came to dominate the nation-wide anti-violence movement due to its strong alliance with the state, elite feminism, and right-wing, and religious groups. It campaigned for legal restrictions of pornography and quickly progressed towards opposing the depiction of

any sexual activity in the media.

Bronstein's analysis effectively demonstrates that for a wide range of feminist movements across the country pornography became a unifying issue providing strategy to confront patriarchy and sexism permeating the image-saturated Western culture. However, the focus on pornography also turned many feminists away from the anti-violence activism, as they found it dangerous to invite the state to regulate sexual speech and become a primary protector of women. In conclusion, the book chronicles the failure of the movement's attempts to install censorship, sex workers' criticism and campaigns against WAP, and the technological change that made pornography accessible to everyone. These challenges led to the marginalization and decline of pro-censorship feminism.

Bronstein's description of the turbulent history of anti-pornography activism shows how conceptualizing pornography as violence against women easily leads to campaigning for censorship and marginalizing non-normative sex. At the same time, her analysis challenges our understanding of the anti-pornography movement as elitist, static, and unified. Bronstein does not provide an easy answer to the question of how to address violence in the media and pornography without giving up sexual freedoms. However, this book contributes not only to the history of sexual regulation in the United States, but also to the history of social movements, as it demonstrates that they always consist of differently organized groups, subcultures, and individuals who share a common recognition of a social problem, but differ regarding desirable solutions.

Darja Davydova is a Ph.D. student in Women's Studies at York University. She has previously conducted ethnographic research on homophobia and nationalist activism in Lithuania. Her current interests include sexual politics, sex work, social movements, and nationalism