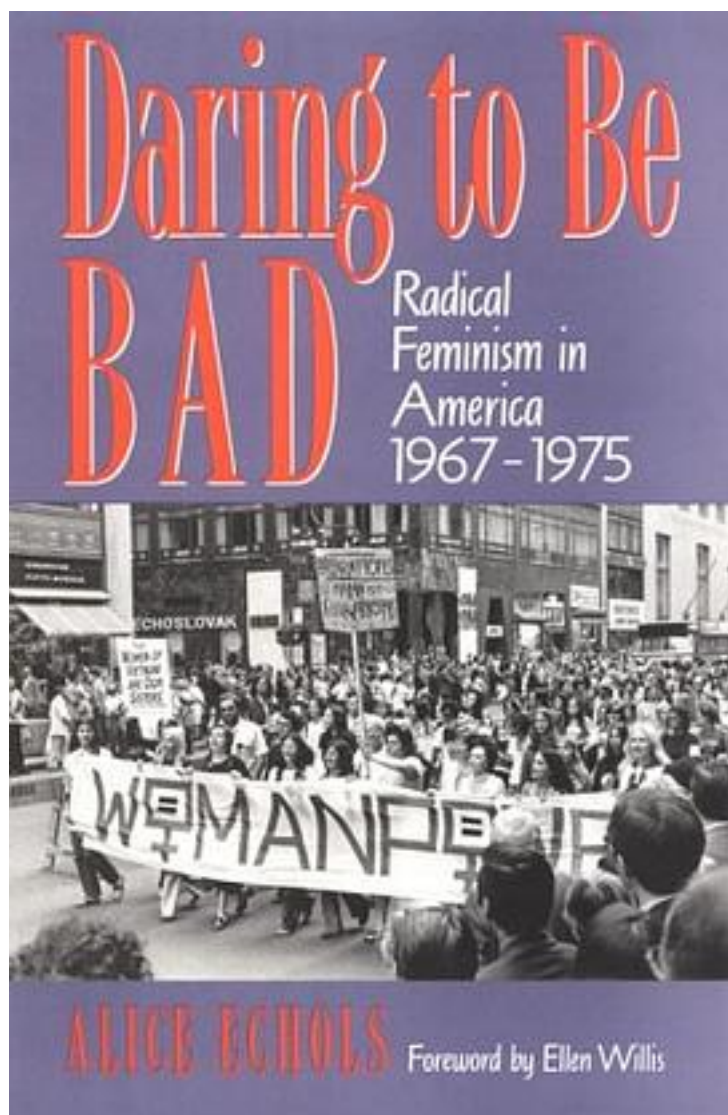


Daring To Be Bad



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Author Alice Echols wrote in the introduction to this 1989 book, “It has been over twenty years since the emergence of the women’s liberation movement and yet, with the exception of Sara Evans’ s ground-breaking monograph *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left*, there has been no book-length scholarly study of the movement... It is my hope that this study will begin to fill the lacuna in the literature. This book analyzes the trajectory of the radical feminist movement from its beleaguered beginnings in 1967, through its ascendancy as the dominant tendency within the movement, to its decline and supplanting by cultural feminism in the mid- ‘70s. This is not a comprehensive history of the contemporary women’s movement... Rather, this is a thorough history of one wing of the women’s movement.” (Pg. 5-6)

Later, she adds, “My task is to make the ‘60s, or at least the women’s rebellion of that era, more comprehensible. It is also my hope that by excavating the history of radical feminism I can demonstrate that radical feminism was far more varied and fluid, not to mention more radical, than what is generally thought of as radical feminism today... it is my hope that by illuminating the reasons for the movement’s decline, this study will help to stimulate discussion on how the movement might be revitalized.” (Pg. 19)

She defines ‘radical feminists’ as those “who opposed the subordination of women’s liberation to the left and for whom male supremacy was not a mere epiphenomenon of capitalism... Radical feminism rejected both the politico position that socialist revolution would bring about women’s liberation and the liberal feminist solution of integrating women into the public sphere. Radical feminists argued that women constituted a sex-class, that relations between women and men needed to be recast in political terms, and that gender rather than class was the primary contradiction... And in defying the cultural injunction against female self-assertion and subjectivity, radical feminists ‘dared to be bad.’ ” (Pg. 3-4)

She laments, “by the early ‘70s radical feminism began to flounder, and after 1975 it was eclipsed by cultural feminists... With the rise of cultural feminism the movement turned its attention away from opposing male supremacy to creating a female counterculture... where ‘male’ values would be exorcised and ‘female’ values nurtured... And by 1975 radical feminism virtually ceased to exist as a movement... activism became largely the province of liberal feminists.” (Pg. 4-5)

She notes, ‘Radical women agreed that they needed to organize separately from men, but they disagreed over the nature and purpose of the separation. Indeed, was it a separation or a divorce that they wanted? ... Should women’s groups focus exclusively on women’s issues, or should they commit themselves to struggling against the war and racism as well?... And, perhaps most troublesome of all, what or who was the enemy? From the beginning radical women debated these questions, often hotly.’ (Pg. 51)

She acknowledges, “it is fair to say that most early women’s liberationists were college-educated women in their mid-to-late twenties who grew up in middle class families... most of these women were unable to parlay their college degrees into good-paying jobs.” (Pg. 65) She adds, “These groups were composed of women whose backgrounds were very similar and who were denizens of a Movement subculture which was in some respects as exclusionary as a sorority... the cliquishness of these groups impeded the acculturation of new women outside the left and promoted parochialism within the movement.” (Pg. 72)

Of the famous 1968 protest at the Miss America pageant, she points out, “Some women… tossed ‘instruments of torture to women’ ---high-heeled shoes, bras, girdles… into a ‘Freedom Trash Can,’ … Although the protesters had hoped to turn the contents of the ‘Freedom Trash Can,’ they were prohibited from doing so by the city… The women decided to comply with the city order because they envisioned the protest as a ‘zap action’ to raise the public’s consciousness about beauty contests rather than as an opportunity to do battle with the police… The protesters were also anxious to avoid arrests because the group lacked the resources to cover legal expenses… But at least one of the organizers of the protest leaked word of the bra-burning to the press to stimulate media interest in the action. Those feminists who sanctimoniously disavowed bra-burning as a media fabrication were either misinformed or disingenuous.” (Pg. 93-94)

She observes, “From the beginning, the women’s liberation movement was internally fractured. In fact, it is virtually impossible to understand radical feminism without referring to the movement’s divided beginnings. Radical feminism was, in part, a response to the anti-feminism of the left and the reluctant feminism of the politicians. Radical feminists’ tendency to privilege gender over race and class, and to treat women as a homogenized unity, was in large measure a reaction to the left’s dismissal of gender as a ‘secondary contradiction.’ Moreover, the politico-feminist schism was so debilitating that it seemed to confirm radical feminists’ suspicions that difference and sisterhood were mutually exclusive.” (Pg. 101)

She points out, “black women who identified with black power were typically unsympathetic to women’s liberation. Even black women who spoke out against sexism felt that racism was by far the more pressing issue. Ironically, the rise of black power, so important in fostering feminist consciousness among white women, had very different consequences for black women. Black power, as it was articulated by black men, involved laying claim to masculine privileges denied them by white supremacist society. Within the black liberation movement black women were expected to ‘step back into a domestic, submissive role’ so that black men could freely exercise their masculine prerogatives.” (Pg. 106)

Of one group, she notes, “‘The Feminists’ were the first of many radical feminist groups to interpret ‘the personal is political’ prescriptively. For ‘The Feminists,’ one’s personal life was a reflection of one’s politics, a barometer of one’s radicalism and commitment to feminism. While ‘The Feminists’ proscribed heterosexual relationships rather than heterosexual sex, it was just a matter of time before the standard became even narrower and more confining. Indeed, ‘The Feminists’ advocacy of separatism established the theoretical foundation for lesbian separatism.” (Pg. 185)

Of the ending of the New York Radical Feminists group [aka “Stanton-Anthony”], she recounts, “The dissolution of Stanton-Anthony marked the end of [Shulamith] Firestone’s and [Anne] Koedt’s involvement with the organized movement. Reportedly they felt they had been deposed because their analysis was too radical. By the time Firestone’s book was published in October 1970, she had already dropped out of the movement. Koedt co-edited ‘Notes from the Third Year’ and the aboveground anthology Radical Feminism, which was published in 1973, but she kept her distance from the movement… [Susan] Brownmiller’s analysis suggests that Koedt and Firestone sought personal control. But it seems just as likely that they wanted the power to define the movement and prevent its attenuation. However, by 1970, this was a power the founders were rapidly losing.” (Pg. 195)

She continues, “by 1973, the radical feminist movement was actually in decline. The groups responsible for making the important theoretical breakthroughs were either dead or moribund... A number of movement pioneers had withdrawn from the movement, often... as a result of being attacked as ‘elitist,’ ‘middle class,’ or ‘unsisterly.’ ... Then there were the divisive struggles over class, elitism, and sexual preference which started to consume the movement in 1970... The radical feminist wing of the movement became so absorbed in its own internal struggles that it sometimes found it difficult to look outside itself, to focus on the larger problem of male supremacy.” (Pg. 198)

Of another important radical group, she comments, “Estranged from the larger feminist community, The Furies grew increasingly isolated and insular. In March 1972, the group challenged [founder Rita Mae] Brown on her imperious style. Brown considered it a purge, while others claim Brown left before she could be expelled. [Charlotte] Bunch contends that Brown’s departure set in motion a ‘dynamic of backbiting and internal fighting,’ which Bunch felt would continue unabated unless the group disbanded. The Furies dissolved in April 1972, a month after Brown’s departure and only a year after its founding... it is ironic that The Furies, who did so much to advance the movement’s understanding of women’s differences, were completely unable to tolerate differences among themselves.” (Pg. 238)

She states, “[The Redstockings] insinuated that Ms. magazine was part of a CIA strategy to replace radical feminism with liberal feminism. Ms. magazine had been a source of irritation to many feminists since its inception. A number of feminist writers were especially angry when Ms. first formed and went outside the movement for its writers and editors... Generally, radical feminists complained of the magazine’s liberal orientation and attributed Ms.’s denatured feminism to the magazine’s commercial orientation.” (Pg. 266)

She concludes, “By 1975 it was too late for a revival of radical feminism. The economic, political, and cultural constriction of the ‘70s and the collapse of other oppositional movements in this period made radical activism of any sort difficult. Much of the movement’s original leadership had been ‘decapitated’ during the acrimonious struggles over class and elitism. And, of course, a number of the founders had retreated from the movement when lesbianism was advocated as the natural and logical consequence of feminism... radical feminism was derailed, at least in part, by its own theoretical limitations... NOW was a major beneficiary of radical feminism’s disintegration as first the schisms and later the countercultural focus encouraged some radical feminists to join an organization which they had initially disparaged... But liberal feminism had floundered without the benefit of a vocal radical feminist movement... That the radical feminist movement was unable to sustain itself is hardly remarkable. This is, after all, the fate of all social change movements.” (Pg. 284-285)

This is a highly informative, very detailed summary of a crucial period in the development of the modern women’s movement; and Echols doesn’t shy away from discussing frankly the “problems” the movement had (“Third Wavers,” take note!). This book will be “must reading” for anyone studying the early “radical” days of the women’s movement.

作者介绍:

Alice Echols is Professor of History and the Barbra Streisand Chair of Contemporary Gender Studies at the University of Southern California. She has written four books that

explore the culture and politics of the “long Sixties,” including *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin* and *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture*. Her forthcoming book explores an earlier period of U.S. history. *Shortfall: Family Secrets, Financial Collapse, and a Hidden History of American Banking* (The New Press), concerns a devastating Depression-era banking scandal and its connection to the cratering of the country’s building and loan industry. At the center of her narrative is her maternal grandfather, an ambitious building and loan operator in Colorado Springs, Colorado. *Shortfall* chronicles the fall-out from the industry's failure, examines how its history came to be forgotten, and the consequences that followed from that cultural forgetting. It stands as a cautionary tale about the seductions and dangers of unfettered capitalism. She lives in Los Angeles.

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标签

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评论

The Eruption of Difference. 1).

以justice为核心的社运如何对待自己内部的领导权问题和权力关系呢？本文讲述了六七十年代美国女权运动内部的phobia about leaders and elitism, 介绍了the Class Workshop的反精英反偶像agenda，他们抨击被媒体放大的女权明星，但媒体还是继续指认个别人作为运动的领袖和发言人，把领导的认定权从运动身上剥夺，这种反精英主义本身也打击了有才能的参与者的积极性；2). 女性主义和性解放与女同主义的关系应如何？在一众倡导者的推动下，运动从恐同走向有争议的理解和接纳

史料丰富，一次性能了解不少关于60年代radical feminism的细节，虽然historiography值得推敲。而且Echols与Willis应该都有些怀念activism。

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书评

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