



Kristen Hogan. *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability*

Kristen Hogan. *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, 382p., ill. ISBN 9780822361299. US \$24.95

Kristen Hogan's *The Feminist Bookstore Movement* argues that feminist bookstores were an important mode of feminist theorizing. The central role of lesbians in this movement and their leadership in anti-racist activism and creating models of feminist accountability guide Hogan's narrative about the rise and fall of this activist-based market intervention.

Hogan's methodology emphasizes archives [especially the *Feminist Bookstore News (FBN)*] and oral histories with key players in the bookstore movement, including Carol Seajay (founder of Old Wives' Tales in San Francisco and editor of *FBN*) and Kit Quan, an employee at Old Wives' Tales. Hogan's own experience working for feminist bookstores in Austin and Toronto also informs her analysis. The rich detail Hogan provides for the development of a feminist print network is the book's greatest strength. Her thorough discussion of the 1976 Women in Print Conference (which features the acronym LICE, the "Literary Industrial Corporate Establishment") reintroduces key players of the Women in Print Movement (WIP).

*The Feminist Bookstore Movement* places feminist bookstores within a larger narrative of the rise of chain bookstores and the demise of independent bookstores in the 1990s and early 2000s. *FBN* used its national network to influence mainstream publishing, as well as support independent presses. They lobbied for new editions of germinal feminist texts; promised an assured minimum of sales for published titles; and even refrained from returning feminist books to the publisher, absorbing the loss through sale discounts to encourage publishers to keep publishing feminist books. Feminist bookstores led to new categories of classification, insisted on multicultural and transnational titles, and dedicated their space to community activism and public readings.

This focus on the merger of political activism and book distribution makes *The Feminist Bookstore Movement* an important contribution to print culture studies. However, Hogan is as interested in using archival sources and oral history interviews to revise our historical memory of second wave feminism as she is in expanding our knowledge of book history. She provides a genealogy of the white lesbians who dominated the feminist bookstore movement, but were consistently written out of the official narrative – women who pioneered anti-racist activism and new structures of accountability. In the 1990s, she argues, feminist bookstores started focusing more on profits than on anti-racist activism. With the demise of the feminist



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bookstore movement (a casualty of big box bookstores and Amazon.com), the role of lesbian anti-racist organizing was almost entirely forgotten.

Hogan's argument is a welcome addition to histories of second-wave feminism, which often reduce a complex cultural and literary movement into a cautionary tale about the limits of white feminism. However, the book does not always acknowledge how internal debates within WIP could become debilitating. What Hogan sees as an exemplary means of maintaining feminist accountability could be read as vicious internal fights around political purity. That was particularly true in the "lesbian sex wars," a topic she does not discuss, even though books she mentions in passing - like Pat Califia's *Sapphistries* (Naiad Press) - were central to those debates about sexuality and feminism. To Hogan's credit, her rich, detailed evidence provides enough raw data to read against the grain. *The Feminist Bookstore Movement* is an important contribution to print culture studies and to feminist history.

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