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Yours in Sisterhood: Ms. Magazine and the Promise of Popular Feminism

Amy Erdman Farrell
University of North Carolina Press The (September 1998)
Unknown $49.95 (232pp)
978-0-8078-2424-5

The history of Ms. Magazine is inherently fascinating and indisputably an important chapter in the ongoing feminist battle. Yours in Sisterhood sets out to examine feminism (and its varying shades) borne from tensions that Ms. Magazine both stirred and fell prey to. The book proclaims itself as driven by numerous questions, such as how did Ms. navigate the emerging tensions as it struggled to strike a balance between its readership demanding truth to the feminist cause and the capitalist machinery it had to feed to stay alive. As Ms. Magazine re-invented itself to meet the demands of advertisers, it seemed to threaten its own ideology.

As an associate professor of American studies and coordinator of women's studies at Dickenson College in Carlisle, Penn., Farrell was armed with ample research grants and archival access to Ms. Magazine's editorial files. However, the sterile tone coupled with numerous redundancies and lengthy chapters took a potentially exciting endeavor and rendered it inaccessible to many, short of feminist scholars and research students. A troubling omission was the book lacked an interview with Gloria Steinem.

Trying to capture the business history and the cultural context of a revolutionary institution in American journalism is a daunting task at best. Farrell's attempt at this undertaking with Ms. Magazine understandably buckled beneath the strain.

KAREN WYCKOFF (August 16, 1998)

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