

ANN SNITOW MEETS CZECH FEMINISTS / IVA ŠMÍDOVÁ, IVAN VODOCHODSKÝ

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Ann Snitow, Professor of Literature and Gender Studies at the New School in New York City, is known for her love and passion for travelling feminism. She has been an outstanding supporter of Czech feminists and one of the core enthusiastic representatives of thematic East-West feminist debates. Book grants from the Network of East-West Women, of which she is a co-founder, significantly cultivated feminist endeavours after 1989 in the Czech context and beyond.

Ann Snitow has been a feminist activist since 1969. She was a founding member of New York Radical Feminists and for six years was Director of the Gender Studies Program at the New School. She has been engaged in shaping the direction of feminist debates on sexuality (*Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, 1983), taking a critical standpoint towards censorship, defending the right to one's fantasies, and, most of all, advocating for diversity and openness while provoking radical questions.

Her academic engagement in travelling feminism followed a very practical path, as she has spent significant time teaching in Poland, Serbia, Romania, and Albania. In addition to this, her complex and always passionate involvement in feminism – as an activist, a writer, and a university professor – is reflected in the personal essay and feminist memory as her research interests. She co-edited *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (2007), collecting memories of leading feminist activists of the late 1960s and interconnecting the personal and the political, a link that is a core value in feminist thought.

As Ann Snitow puts it in her own words on her personal profile at the university web page, her joys are 'imagining and reading about change, being skeptical about the meaning of particular social changes, being part of change. What I wish for my students: action and criticism of the action taken, engagement and distance, and, finally, pleasure in this inside/outside life'. An interview with Ann Snitow, 'Swimming Upstream and Radically Changing the Social

World: Feminism!' was published in this journal (*Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 2012: 13 (2): 91–95).

As an inherent counterpart of her long-time support of Czech feminisms, Ann Snitow has always encouraged analytical explorations into masculinity. She sees the Czech situation and trend in addressing men as specific in comparison to other countries with well-established and uninterrupted traditions of a women's movement and feminist theory. Despite receiving some critical feedback, Snitow continues to insist that the phenomenon of 'gender includes men' took a different trajectory in the Czech context in comparison to the very gradual inclusion of discussions of masculinity in the United States of America or the Western democratic tradition. It is exactly the lack of continuity of feminism under communism (or its existence only in a distorted version) that makes the chronologically overlapping time period, during which critical studies of men and masculinities have developed here and there, surprising and challenging, a history Snitow describes in this essay.

Snitow has always been a careful listener, posing provocative critical insights and new perspectives to seemingly ordinary agendas. She has the gift of being able to unveil and name the 'blank spaces'. She originally presented the following text as a keynote speech at the 'Second Czech and Slovak Feminist Studies Conference: Borders and Beyond' in November 2011 in Brno. It sensitively addresses the gaps, similarities, and differences in East-West feminist debates on the inclusion of men in feminist thought. We asked Snitow to publish this now historical document in the first thematic issue on men and masculinities of this Czech feminist journal. We are honoured to have Snitow's piece in our thematic volume published in the summer of 2015, as it overlaps with another important date. Ann Snitow is the first recipient of the Courage in Public Scholarship Award, which was presented to her on 9 June 2015 by the New School for Social Research – Europe in Warsaw.