Notes

- 1 This collection is out of print.
- 2 Quote from McRobbie (1979) which originally appeared in Hall (1978).
- 3 This article originally appeared in *Screen Education* (1980) No. 39.
- 4 Cohen (1972); Willis (1977); Hebdidge (1979)
- 5 For those interested there is discussion about this in contemporary subculture: McRobbie (1989). There is also some excellent writing on women and punk in Evans and Thornton (1990). Brake (1985) offers a good summary of early writing on girls and subculture.
- 6 'Girls and Subcultures' essay in McRobbie (1991: 11).
- 7 Barker (1989). These criticisms seem to be adapted from an earlier article: Martin Barker, (1986) 'Methods For Cultural Studies Students' in Punter D.
- 8 Angela McRobbie has contributed journalism to debates about post-modernism including an article in Lisa Appignanesi, editor, (1986) *Postmodernism*, ICA Document 4 published in association with Free Association Books.
- 9 First published in McRobbie and Nava (1984).
- 10 Similar impulses, that is achieving some social mobility but still finding certain doors closed, originally made sixties new wave playwrights – like Osborne. – angry in the first place. In Walkerdine's book, patriarchal, as well as class relations, incite her anger in terms of the way they create an impasse in some academic structures and epistemologies.
- 11 See publishing overview presented by Helen Birch.
- 12 I am personally not against the publishing of artistically or historically significant reprints. But I think the points made by Rebecca O'Rourke in 'Summer Reading' (*Feminist Review*, No. 2) that 'commercial publishers are cashing in on feminism', raised again by Ros Coward on p. 235 of Showalter (1986) are still relevant.
- 13 Williamson (1991) outlines the 'publish or perish' philosophy. Her article

argues British higher education is following the American precedent whereby publishing is what is valued rather than teaching practice.

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From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom: Transforming A Movement

Edited by Marlene Gerber Fried

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The Supreme Court ruling on Roe v. Wade in 1973 was as significant to American women as the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act was for women in Britain. It legalized abortion. Since 1973 some 25 million women have had legal abortions in the USA. The Roe ruling was based on the

right to privacy – any state interference into the doctor–patient relationship and into a woman's procreation decisions was considered violations of that right.

From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom: Transforming a Movement is an anthology, unprecedented in its cultural diversity, which offers an historical and critical account of the abortion rights movement from the late 1960s to the present day. This book is not just about fighting for abortion rights, though it is no coincidence that it was conceived during the period when the Webster v. Reproductive Health Services decision was pending. The subsequent Supreme Court ruling on this case, taken in July 1989, effectively eroded Constitutional protections for abortion. The Court upheld a Missouri law restricting abortion, saying that 'the life of each human being begins at conception' and agreed that individual states had the right to prohibit both 'public facilities' and 'public employees' from being used to perform or assist abortions not required to save the life of the pregnant woman. The Webster decision has paved the way for continued attacks on abortion rights at state level and the real possibility of overturning Roe altogether.

In the USA during the two decades which have followed Roe, there's been a slow chipping away of the gains made by the pro-choice movement. The 1977 Hyde Amendment prohibited federal Medicaid funding of abortion which was to have a serious affect on access to termination, particularly for low-income women. Despite being a serious blow to abortion rights, critics have observed that the Hyde Amendment did not whip up the type of street demonstrations and political action reminiscent of the sixties. The full force of the pro-choice movement only re-emerged to regain its pre-Roe activism because of real threats to recriminalize abortion in the 1980s.

On Sunday 9 April 1989 the

pro-choice movement showed its real strength by mounting a 600,000-person-strong march and rally in Washington DC in support of Roe v. Wade and the Equal Rights Amendment. The March for Women's Equality and Women's Lives was organized by the National Organization for Women to coincide with the latest attack on Roe.

Attacks on abortion rights in the USA have been an opportunity for many reproductive-rights activists to reassess a movement in the light of broader issues affecting women. It's no surprise this right-wing backlash has taken place. In the USA the judiciary have the power to make and break laws, whereas in Britain, Parliament has to vote on these issues. The majority of all federal judges and almost half the Supreme Court Justices have been appointed by the Reagan/Bush administrations. But will the fightback and demands be narrow or broad?

Beyond abortion rights, this anthology is about differences, alliances and coalition-building. It's about a vision of the future which allows for activism around reproductive-rights issues that affect all women and is essential reading for all feminists and others interested in women's struggle for reproductive freedom.

The book is organized into four sections: 'The Politics of the Abortion Rights Movement'; 'Speaking Out for Women: Choosing Ourselves'; 'Defending Abortion Rights: Confronting Threats to Access'; and 'Expanding the Agenda: Building an Inclusive Movement'. The problem about reviewing this anthology is that there are so many diverse and compelling contributions, that it's difficult to give an overall flavour. This is particularly true because, as the title suggests, the book transcends abortion rights. The radical solution is nothing less than reproductive freedom for all women. This is a very tall order and so the anthology addresses a wide number of

issues, including: teenage pregnancy, defending abortion clinics from attack, infant mortality, struggles of Puerto Rican women, lesbian and gay issues, disability rights, AIDS and women's health in the so-called Third World.

The book's contributors include a wide variety of activists, health workers, lawyers, academics and journalists. Some are well-known writers, like Angela Davis who addresses the issue of racism in the abortion-rights and birth-control movements by focusing on eugenics, population control, and sterilization abuse. Others are not so well known outside the USA, like Byllye Avery, Director and founder of the National Black Women's Health Project in Atlanta who relates her moving experiences of helping women to obtain abortions before and after Roe.

In order to address the diversity of reproductive-rights issues the book affirms the necessity to broaden the base of a movement and to widen the agenda in which 'choice' and 'rights' have real meaning for all women, not just those who have economic control over their lives. In the introduction the anthology editor and long-time reproductive-rights activist, Marlene Gerber Fried, explains the background to the book: 'Transforming the abortion rights movement from a relatively narrow one focused on defending the legal right to abortion to a movement for reproductive freedom, from a movement whose membership and leadership is predominantly white to an inclusive movement with a broad and diverse grassroots base, these are key political tasks facing reproductive rights activists. And these are the issues that motivated this book.'

There are some striking statistics in the book which reveal how unhealthy it is to be a poor woman in the richest nation on earth. The chapter entitled 'The Reproductive Health of Black Women and Other Women of Colour' (p. 157) dispels

many myths about black women's health including the misconception that black women don't have abortions.

- In 1969, for example, 75 per cent of the women who died from illegal abortions were women of colour.
- Women of colour constitute over 30 per cent of Title X patients, the ones who will be denied information about the abortion option under the federal regulation upheld by the Supreme Court in *Rust v. Sullivan* (1991). 32 per cent of the Title X patients are adolescents.
- Since the Michigan State Legislature outlawed state Medicaid funding for abortion last year, at least ten low-income women have been admitted to one Detroit hospital alone for treatment of injuries resulting from attempts to self-abort. (National Organization of Women)

If anyone is in doubt about the inequalities of the land of the free, a trip through this chapter will make it numerically clear equality and choice are options for those who can afford them.

Given these glaring inequalities, why aren't low-income women and women of colour in the leadership of the reproductive-rights and pro-choice movements? One reason is echoed by many contributors. For too long, with the exception of a radical, more politically aware element, white women activists in the abortion movement have undervalued the participation of women of colour in the reproductive-rights movement. One of the contributors to the book, Brenda Joyner of the Tallahassee Feminist Women's Health Center, describes herself as identifying as a feminist for twenty years but, she explains, not the kind of feminist being promoted in mainstream organizations. She explains the position of many black activists: 'Perhaps the question is not really where are women of color in the

abortion rights and reproductive rights movement. Rather, where is the primarily white middle-class movement in our struggles for freedom? Where was a white middle-class movement when the Hyde Amendment took away Medicaid funding of abortions for poor women?" (p. 210) For Brenda and others, there can be no involvement in political organizations which do not address 'racism, classism and elitism'. She points out the Hyde Amendment only attacked poor women whereas Webster attacks all women's right to abortion. If there were 600,000 people on the streets over Hyde, perhaps Webster would not have happened.

But the book offers more than just criticism, it poses a revolutionary challenge to the reproductive-rights movement in the USA to become more radical in its demands. It questions the defensive 'right to privacy' argument which has dominated the political agenda of the leading pro-choice organizations in the USA, explaining that this has ignored black women's struggle. Abortion is just one in a long line of struggles for black women. Many contributors to the book are critical of a pro-choice movement which uses ambiguous language of 'choice' and 'personal freedom'. For these terms to take on any real purpose societal changes are needed. Fighting for reproductive rights for all women must include making the personal political again. It does not mean hiding behind the liberal veil of individuality.

The final section of the book illustrates how the struggle for reproductive freedom takes different forms in different communities. The

issues raised cover the endless misery women face because of inequality and injustice.

For those of us engaged in struggles around reproductive rights in Britain, we would do well to read this book and take many notes. Many of us did see the limitations of single-issue campaigns like the National Abortion Campaign. It is clear abortion has never been the only issue. The need to change the political agenda from abortion rights to a reproductive-rights movement led to a split within NAC and the setting up of a broader based Reproductive Rights Campaign. Several years on we face the same fragmentation as our sisters in the USA. We may not face the same kind of violent anti-abortion movement, or the kind of intervention possible by the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, we have faced serious threats to abortion in the form of various Private Members' Bills, and the NHS still only performs less than 50 per cent of the total in England and Wales each year. The Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill reduced the time limit for abortion to 24 weeks and restricts access to infertility treatment or donor insemination through its 'welfare of the child' clause, which specifically refers to the 'need of the child for a father'. There are many battles for us to fight but how do we win the war for reproductive freedom? It's not easy to transform a movement, as the contributors to this book illustrate so eloquently. This anthology is a rich source of those and for those who are trying hard to make it happen.

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