

Karissa Haugeberg, *Women against Abortion: Inside the Largest Moral Reform Movement of the Twentieth Century*, Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2017, £19.99, 978-0-252-08246-7 (paperback), pp. viii + 220.

*Women Against Abortion* traces the history of the women in the American antiabortion movement through an exploration of the actions and writings of those 'who shaped the trajectory of the largest moral reform movement of the late twentieth century' (1). Karissa Haugeberg outlines the rise of the movement in the 1960s as legal, legislative and popular support for decriminalisation of abortion began to pose significant challenges to the laws at the time. She then traces the activities of key women activists to present day, outlining the establishment of crisis pregnancy centres, the invention and promotion of 'postabortion syndrome', the connections between the Catholic church and the movement, and the use of lethal violence by members. Haugeberg illustrates the interaction between different elements of the abortion debate, such as between local grassroots organisations and larger national campaigns. Similarly, she actively highlights the connection between the activities of women on the ground to wider social debates of politics and religion – for example, outlining the Christian defence of violence as a tactic for antiabortion campaigners.

Haugeberg approaches the study of the antiabortion campaign from a new perspective, capturing the experience of American women over a forty-year period. As such, the book reveals aspects of the nature of the movement that have been obscured by other studies that have focused on women in particular cities, in particular organisations, or over a short period of time. For example, one perception of the antiabortion movement is that they began in the 1960s as a peaceful movement, becoming violent over time. Haugeberg identifies in her study that, if we examine the careers of key individuals within the movement, tracing their membership in grassroots and conventional organisations, it becomes clear that there is no unified approach in terms of 'intimidating and lethal strategies' (8), as violent extremism fell out of favour among some while was embraced by others.

One of the achievements of the book is the connection drawn between women's sexuality, reproductive rights and abortion. Haugeberg highlights that access to abortion has not been seen as a positive step and liberation for all women. For some women – older women, women who followed the Catholic prohibitions against birth control and for some who could not attend college, the feminist movement and reform of access to birth control and abortion challenged the social order. For these women, motherhood was what mattered most, and so modern developments that meant motherhood was an option – contraception and abortion, challenged their ideas around sex, work and personal fulfilment that often hinged on their perception of the family.

This is a well-written and very well researched history of a fierce, intimidating and, at times, dismissed element of American politics. The book is comprehensive and engaging, connecting personal belief to wider political engagement. Furthermore, it is a balanced account, outlining the beliefs of the women activists, whilst also offering a critique of their illegal and deceitful behaviour, such as members lying to women who engage with crisis pregnancy centres about the gestational age of their foetus to lead them to believe they could not access a legal abortion. Similarly, when analysing the use of violence by activists, Haugeberg engages with both the motivations of the women who used violence, while also acknowledging the destruction and harm of their actions. For example, quoting Dr George Tiller who received numerous death threats and attempts on his life before he became the ninth American murdered by antiabortion extremists – 'two weeks before he was killed, a colleague asked him, "Why are you still doing this George? You certainly don't need to. Why don't you just retire, enjoy life?" Tiller replied, "I can't, I can't leave these women. There's no one else for them"' (140).

This book would not only be of interest to those focused on the history of the politics of abortion in America, but also to those interested in women's engagement with politics, and the implication of activism and politics on women's rights. As Haugeberg notes, one of the consequences of the antiabortion movement has been the class-based, two-tiered system of abortion access now in operation in the US. State-level restrictions have had a

disproportionate effect on poor women's ability to access abortion, particularly in states that require a mandatory waiting period between the initial consultation and the time when the abortion is performed.

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