

# The Women's Library

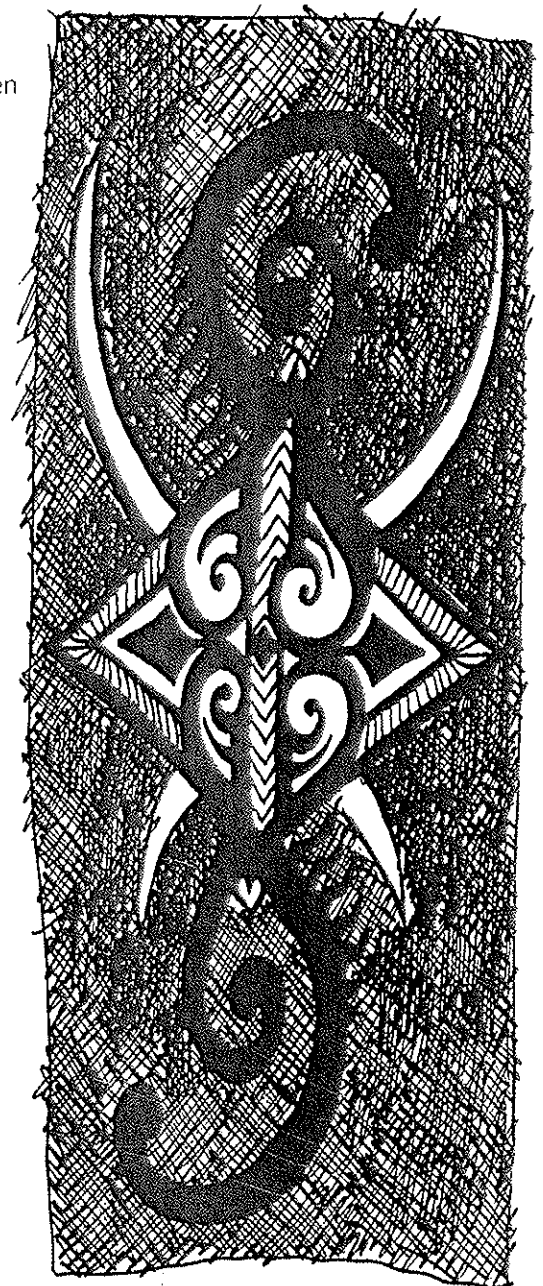
## N E W S L E T T E R

THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY INC. PO BOX 271 NEWTOWN NSW 2042

Vol. 2 No. 1 FEBRUARY 1993

Women interested in The Women's Library have now been meeting for almost two years. In that time we have set solid foundations for the library, but, as most of you will already know, we are still searching for a venue. As the library receives no funding at this stage, we are looking for rent-free or very low-rent situations. Many prominent Australian women have signed a letter of support, letting the government know that the library deserves financial backing. We thank the following women who have signed that letter:

<b>Martha Ansara</b>	Film producer
<b>Robin Archer</b>	Chair, Community Cultural Development Board, Australia Council, Entertainer.
<b>Gillian Armstrong</b>	Film director
<b>Wendy Bacon</b>	Senior lecturer, journalist
<b>Faith Bandler</b>	Author, activist
<b>Rhonda Black</b>	Publisher, Director, Allen & Unwin
<b>Lois Bryson</b>	Chair, National Foundation for Australian Women
<b>Meredith Burgman</b>	Member, Legislative Council (NSW)
<b>Barbara Caine</b>	Associate professor and convenor of Women's Studies, The University of Sydney
<b>Beatriz Copello</b>	Writer, psychotherapist
<b>Eva Cox</b>	Social analyst
<b>Ann Deveson</b>	Writer, film maker
<b>Stephanie Dowrick</b>	Writer, publisher, psychotherapist
<b>Justice Elizabeth Evatt</b>	Law Reform Commission
<b>Elizabeth Fullerton</b>	Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Grass
<b>Susan Harben</b>	President, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras
<b>Melissa Hardy</b>	Academic
<b>Dorothy Hewitt</b>	Writer
<b>Jill Hickson</b>	Literary agent
<b>Caroline Jones</b>	Presenter, Radio National
<b>Helen Leonard</b>	Women's Electoral Lobby
<b>Kate Lilley</b>	Academic
<b>Joan Long</b>	Film producer
<b>Jill Matthews</b>	Convenor Women's Studies, ANU
<b>Wendy McCarthy</b>	Executive director, National Trust of Australia
<b>Gillian Minervini</b>	Co-President, PRIDE Sydney
<b>Clover Moore</b>	State MP, Bligh
<b>Sandra Nori</b>	State MP, Port Jackson
<b>Pat O'Shane</b>	Magistrate
<b>Susan Ryan</b>	Former Federal Minister of Education
<b>Rosemary Sorenson</b>	Editor, Australian Book Review
<b>Dale Spender</b>	Writer, academic
<b>Lynne Spender</b>	Executive Officer, Australian Society of Authors, lawyer, writer
<b>Roberta Sykes</b>	Writer, academic, Executive officer, Black Women Action in Education Foundation.



## Thanks To:

- ▼ Mala Henderson (float design and construction), Celia White and Cath Zimdahl (choreography and direction), Lyndsay Monteath (lighting), performers and other helpers on The Women's Library float at the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.
- ▼ Eva at Distaff for storing furniture for The Women's Library.
- ▼ Our new committee members: Gina Laurie and Jenni Millbank.
- ▼ Sarah Drury for laying out this newsletter.
- ▼ The women who helped with the mailout.
- ▼ The women who helped with the Mardi Gras Fair Day stall (full report in next newsletter).
- ▼ Siren Vintage Clothing for supplying costumes for the Mardi Gras Parade

## Books received from their authors:

*To you the living*, Marjorie Pizer  
*Equinox*, Marjorie Pizer  
*Selected Poems*, Marjorie Pizer  
*Where Did I Really Come From*, Narelle Wickam  
*Working papers in the Women's Studies Series* from Women's Research Centre, University of Western Sydney.

## Publications received: (since last newsletter)

*Australian Women's Book Review*  
*Mountain Lesbian News*  
*Team Sydney*  
*Laughing Medusa*  
*Gay Gazette*  
*Victorian Women's Liberation Newsletter*  
*Sistership*

## Financial donations

The Women's Library is run by a team of volunteers and relies entirely on donations to print and distribute this quarterly newsletter. As our membership increases, so do our printing and postage costs. In order to continue this service we need your financial support. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible and any amount, large or small, will be gratefully received.

## Book Donations

If you would like to donate books for the library's collection, drop off points are:

- ▼ The Feminist Bookshop, Shop 9, Orange Grove Plaza, Balmain Road, Lilyfield.
- ▼ The Newtown Women's Centre, 523 King Street, Newtown.

Please contact us at PO Box 271 Newtown 2042, if you would like us to pick up your donation.

Please note that The Women's Library has a no-strings-attached donations policy. The Women's Library reserves the right to decide whether a donated item will be integrated into the collection, discarded, exchanged or sold.

## Sponsor needed

The Women's Library is looking for a sponsor to buy our first computer. We need approx. \$600. If you know of any organisation or business who might be interested in supporting this project (bearing in mind that donations to The Women's Library are tax deductible), or if you are interested in finding a sponsor, please contact the committee: PO Box 271 Newtown, 2042.

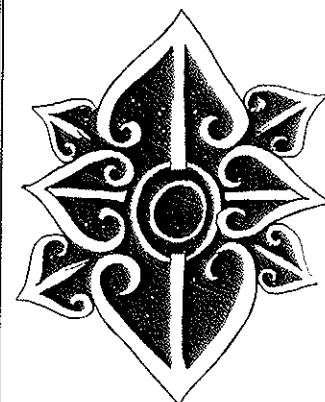
★★★★★★

## International Women's Day

The **Sydney International Women's Day Collective** is gearing up for an exciting range of activities to celebrate IWD 1993 ( a week surrounding March 8). There's a range of subcommittees you could belong to: March/Festival/Rally; art exhibition at Tin Sheds; Multicultural Women's Cabaret. We need diverse input to make this really represent women's experience: women of non-English speaking background and Aboriginal and Islander women are particularly welcome. Meetings are held at 6.30pm every Thursday at Women's Liberation House, 63 Palace Street Petersham. Can't get to meetings? There are things you can do at home: phoning around, folding leaflets, etc.

### MORE INFORMATION

Lou 560 0782; Rose 660 6597(h) or 287 2254(w);  
Marla 5558988 (Tues & Fri) or 560 4474 (Thurs).



# Behind the Looking Glass

If films are mirrors of society, and vice versa, then we could expect the images of gender roles to correspond with the increasing feminist movement. At first glance, *Thelma and Louise* does seem to reflect a new strength of assertion and independence in its leading female protagonists. The very fact that the protagonists of this "buddy genre" movie are women breaks previous conventions in itself. It was rarely seen before such films as this, *Beaches* and *Stella*. Furthermore, the characters Thelma and Louise are shown to have suffered at the hands of men (in rape and other abuses), through injustices of the patriarchal law, media and marriage systems. They are unified in their struggles against their institutions. Because they transgress society in two ways – i.e. by breaking the law and by doing so *as women* – they cannot be re-absorbed into these structures without punishment. Refusing to submit to a future of imprisonment and further injustice, the only option for Thelma and Louise is death...but a death in which they have an *active* role and are, once again, unified.

In contrast to this, *Fatal Attraction* presents its two main female characters as binary opposites. Beth represents the traditional "good woman", subordinate mother and housewife, whilst Alex (note the hint at pseudo-masculinity in the male name abbreviation) is the independent woman and the threat. The conflict thus pivots on this contrast, pitting woman against woman and denying any strength in unity. This preoccupation aims to aggressively reinforce the nuclear family unit in a negative backlash against the feminist movement.

*"[it] gives back to the masculine realm what became unhinged in the collapse of the Victorian patriarchy - sole propriety in the marketplace and the home as haven" (Raschke, in Cineaste, 1988, v XVI, n3: p45).*

The mirror motif is particularly relevant to this film. In the love scene between Dan and Beth, the "good woman" is enclosed, as if in a static photograph, by the borders of a mirror. She takes pleasure in being the object of his desire as he, the voyeur, ogles her breasts and self-caresses. Such a set-up, portrayed as "picture

perfect", reflects a wider cultural consensus. As Rosalind Coward notes, "enmeshed in the power relations of looking...the first image we form of ourselves is an object of pleasure" (*Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today*, 1984: 52). In another scene, the image of Alex materialises behind that of Beth in another mirror. "Psychologically, the mirror...implies a realisation of difference, a sense of absence" (Raschke, *ibid*). The monster meets the rabbit. The devil and the angel in a single reflected image. The steam in the mirror here is significant too. It connotes hell, as do the eternally burning fires around Alex's home.

*Working Girl* is another example in which women are represented by opposing types and the traditional woman is put in a more favourable light. The modern woman is portrayed in this film not as a neurotic but as a joke. She is too powerful in both her career position and her promiscuous sexuality and, being therefore a threat, must be defused. Her fall begins literally – in a satirically sketched skiing accident. It is also interesting to note the choice of actresses for the parts: Melanie Griffiths, with her underdeveloped voice and overdeveloped breasts, is often typecast as a child/woman sex object (e.g. in *Bonfire of the Vanities*) and Sigourney Weaver as the tough new breed (e.g. in *Aliens*). Such intertextual collocations play an important role in the semiotic nuances of the film.

So, when reflecting upon past cycles of female representation, *Thelma and Louise* seems to herald a new image for women in film. But why, then, does this image look like a MAN? Thelma and Louise gain strength by toting guns (a previously male symbol of power) and blowing up semi-trailers. It seems that in order to be a strong woman they must imitate those actions previously denoted as male. The same trend is evident in the recent *Lethal Weapon 3*. The leading female gains respect as a tough cop, but only because she can karate kick with the best of the men and compete with Mel Gibson in a show-and-tell of battle scars. It seems that the mirror image is still distorted and the scene behind the looking glass needs further examination.

Rachael Turk

## ◆◆◆◆◆ Mardi Gras ◆◆◆◆◆

Look out for The Women's Library float in the  
1993 Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

Thanks to Mardi Gras for funding the float. And thanks to  
Mala Henderson, Vicki Harding and Cath Zimdahl  
for co-ordinating the project.

# Where Did I Really Come From

Recently a children's book with a difference was donated to The Women's Library. *Where Did I Really Come From* by Narelle Wickam from Canberra explains conception to children, including donor insemination and lesbian parenting.

Narelle says she initially wrote her book to explain donor insemination to her daughter. Originally the book only covered the 'essential ingredients' (i.e. sperm and egg etc.) and donor insemination. After thinking about this she realised that she didn't want to single out donor insemination as an exceptional method of conception; she wanted to integrate donor insemination into 'mainstream' methods of conception, so that it wouldn't stand out as a novelty. Narelle also wanted to clearly state that donor insemination could be used by a woman who didn't want to have sex with a man and who wanted to bring up a child alone or with another woman.

She says the purpose of this was twofold:

1. to convey that lesbians do have children by donor insemination (not all adults are heterosexual).
2. to raise the awareness of young children that babies are not all made through sexual intercourse.

A motivation for Narelle's book was her belief that children's sexuality can be (and is) manipulated by the total over-representation of heterosexual images and role models.

Signed copies of *Where Did I Really Come From* are available by sending \$12.95 to: PO Box 535 Dickson ACT 2602.

Vicki Harding

★★★★★★

## Other books of interest

1992 bibliography of homosexuality in books for young people:

*Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*

– Margorie Lobban & Dr LA Clyde (publisher: DW Thorpe)

Explicitly non-heterosexist books for children available locally:

*The Entertainer* – Michael Willhoite

*Families* – Michael Willhoite

*Belinda's Bouquet* – Leslea Newman

*Heather has Two Mummies* – Leslea Newman

*Gloria Goes to Gay Pride* – Leslea Newman

*The Daddy Machine* – Johnny Valentine

*The Duke Who Outlawed Jellybeans*

– Johnny Valentine

*How Would You feel if Your Dad was Gay?*

– Ann Horon & Meredith Maran

*The Generous Jefferson Bortleby Jones* – Forman Brown

*Daddy's Room mate* – Michael Willhoite

Non-Sexist titles:

An enormous and ever-increasing range of non-sexist children's titles are available from The Feminist Bookshop, Lilyfield. (Each children's title is checked for sexist, racist or heterosexist content before the Feminist Bookshop will stock it.)

Children's titles recently donated to the Women's Library by New Seed Press:

"New Seed Press publishes children's books free from race, class or gender stereotyping, books that portray all kinds of people living in all kinds of ways."

*The Good Bad Wolf* – Lynn R Horowitz

*Red Ribbons for Emma* – The New Mexico People & Energy Collective

*A Book About Us* – New Seed Press Collective

*The Girls of Summer* – Anita Cornwell

*Sanshen the Magic Bear* – Becky Sarah

*Silas and the Mad-Sad People* – Amber Jayanti

*Frances Ann Speaks Out: My Father Raped Me*

– Helen Chetin

*Green March Moon* – Mary Tallmountain

*Angel Island Prisoner 1922* – Helen Chetin

(English/Chinese)

*Yolanda's Hike* – Tomás Rodríguez Gasper

(English/Spanish)

"...Just as knowledge of dyslexia is vitally important to the second graders whose worlds are dislocated by their difficulty in reading, so the pre-schooler whose mothers happen to be in love with one another or the pre-teen whose father is arrested at an AIDS demonstration...will find information on gay and lesbian issues to be vastly more important than the life cycle of a sphinx moth, or the Sweet Valley Ninja Turtles"

Douglas Eric Anderson,  
Children's and Young Adults Services Librarian, USA.  
From School Library Journal:  
'Gay information: Out of the Closet'



## Reviews

Here is a sample of the kind of books you will be able to find in *The Women's Library*. All of the following titles have been donated by the publishers. Thank you to the following publishers and reviewers for your support.

### Another Love

Erzsebet Galgoczi

1980, Budapest 1991, translated, Cleis Press, USA

This "semi-autobiography" is a mixture of psychological mystery, a lesbian love affair and Hungarian politics around the late 1950s. It was made into a successful film in Hungary in 1982, and the book was translated into English in 1991.

There are two introductions provided by the team effort of Ines Reider, feminist writer and translator from Austria, and Felice Newman, co-publisher and editor from Cleis Press, USA. Reider discusses the issue of lesbianism in Hungary in the 1950s and gives a clear, general summary of the politics in Hungary from 1919 to 1959. Newman gives a more specific review of the author and of her story. There is also a glossary at the end that explains the "real life" of the characters outside the story and relevant Hungarian terminology.

It is classed as a "detective novel" as its style gives the reader a sense of psychological mystery in the relationships between the main characters, and in the general sense of the lack of freedom of Hungary's politicians. It begins and ends with the words, "...one cuts open one's veins...someone else comes along who will explain it...". *Another Love* is detective fiction - not like the Agatha Christie "who killed who" but there is a sense of suspicion and secrecy about the lives of the characters, and the unfolding of the natures of the main characters. There is a sense of fear throughout, a sense of aloneness; and the symbol of breaking open "another bottle of cognac" gives a sense of the characters trying to cope, as the reader is given greater insight into their natures and hard times. The main character's broken lesbian love affair parallels Hungary's lack of personal choice and "passionate freedoms" in Europe's cold war.

I found it so easy to read, I just kept wanting to find out if there would be any resolution. I was 'hungry' for the resolution of the sense of insecurity and fear pervading the story. The mystery is personalised; the story flows in the minds and conversations of the characters and the "facts" are just part of these conversations. It is also the story of unrequited love that fits the image of political choices being out of individual's hands.

Definitely worth reading - it gives insight into the politics of Eastern Europe in the communist era, specifically Hungary, the frustrations of lovers, and the pain of nationalist fervour. Having access to translations allows us to get a closer understanding of other's lives and to encourage connections between all people.

Adrienne Brown.



### Drawing the Line

Susan Stewart, Persimmon Blackbridge & Lizard Jones  
Press Gang Publishers, Vancouver, 1991

*Drawing the Line* is a book of 40 photographic postcards taken from the touring exhibition of the same title (shown in Sydney during the 1990 Mardi Gras festival).

The photographs portray representations of lesbian sex and are arranged in a linear order from "nice" to "naughty", "vanilla" to "transgressive". The authorial intention is that the level of controversy accelerates as the pages are turned. It is this rendering of desire from the "least" to the "most" controversial and the attendant imperative to situate oneself - to draw the line - morally which is one of the book's weaknesses. The framework itself is never brought into question. Its progression is presented as a universal understanding of what constitutes "controversial lesbian sexuality".

Viewers are not expected to challenge this progression, but simply to position themselves at some point along its continuum. At the point where each viewer/reader draws their particular politico-moral line, debate ceases. To draw a line is not to engage with a text, rather it is to mark the point at which one will no longer engage. Most people know their limits. To draw a line is simply to underline one's previously held position within contemporary debates around lesbian sexual representation. It is naive to expect that upon viewing such an exhibition/book attitudes to these debates will shift.

A possible reason for this is that according to the authorial intention, the field of debate is firmly grounded within the content side of the form/content binary. As *Kiss and Tell* (the authors/artists) tell it, "we were asking the audience to make judgements...we wanted the judgements to be about sexual representation, not about whether viewers find a particular size, shape or colour of woman attractive". This emphasis on content alone privileges a moral/political response while foreclosing any engagement with the text on an aesthetic level. However, surely aesthetics can be recognised as politically and morally constituted. By denying this, viewers can be comforted by the idea that they are not objectifying the models, but are instead engaging with the political debates surrounding representation. And ultimately this denial results in a safe, and boring, contribution to these debates.

J. Frare & V. Sowry.

### Popcorn and Sexual Politics

Kathi Maio

The Crossing Press, California, 1991

When we go to see a movie, we are not supposed to make noise. Feminist noise, it seems, is especially likely to bring shushes from others in the audience. Instead, we are expected to swallow the celluloid content in the same way as we eat our popcorn...taken with a grain of salt. After all, films are just harmless entertainment, right?

Wrong. Art is never so distinct from life as we may care to believe. Nor is it politically neutral. In a society which places enormous emphasis on the visual realm, the filmic image is both the product and the propagator of an entire value system. All too often, the picture is distorted in favour of patriarchy and its effects are felt long after the movie ends and we leave through the designated exits.

Kathi Maio is not prepared to leave quietly. In her witty and perspective commentary on movies of today, she examines the discourses of socio-sexual power which flash across our screens. With a rational feminist awareness, she pinpoints injustices in the representation of inter- and intra-sexual relations. She raises questions of sexuality, sensitivity, subordination and stereotyping to which many contemporary films fail to give acceptable answers.

Ultimately, Maio's anger is not directed specifically at men, or women, or even the film-makers themselves. It targets a society which applauds such images, hence increasing the cycle's dynamism and destructive nature, "a society that takes choice away from women".

Not every review is a negative critique – many films are praised for their positive representations. Nor does Maio claim her own analyses to be objective or her conclusions the only possible ones to be drawn. What she offers is a different view of the same picture. And a willingness to speak up about it. We won't be left sitting in the dark with our empty popcorn cartons.

Rachael Turk

**Womanspace: Future and Fantasy.  
Stories and art by women.  
New Victoria Publishers, New Hampshire, 1981**

Speculative fiction - set in worlds and societies other than the ones we live in - can be thought-provoking, allowing the recognition, with a shock, that things need not be as they are, that cultural givens are just that - given, not inevitable or natural. Ironically, science fiction has often perpetuated gender stereotypes, but feminist writing, beginning with a specific perspective on our own culture, can offer a hopeful or inspiring view of how things could be. As the introduction to this collection of thirteen stories points out, "this genre has infinite possibilities for examining our lives, our thought and our relationships, as well as our inventions. It is a particularly useful vehicle for testing women's theories and ideas".

Two stories, 'The Turning' and 'Zero Sum Game', are original and well-crafted, combining the strangeness of an alien world with an immediacy which compels empathy. 'Zero Sum Game' (C. Lamperti and J. Malik) is set against a ritual community game involving the abstracted mental formulation of multi-sensual patterns and forms (like Hesse's 'Glass Bead Game'). The protagonist, Diantha, wins but at the cost of transgressing strict laws and discovering the fallibility of the system she has lived by.

In 'The Turning' (E. McKay Smith), an "Outsider" grows a plant in secrecy amidst the grey sterile conformity of a repressive society. In her lonely dwelling, an abandoned building, it spreads until by the time she is seized by the system, a new form of life capable of reproducing has evolved. However, the uneven and mostly mediocre standard of contributions was disappointing: obscurity ('The Girl With the Cloak' - Julia Older), over-familiar plot (A Miracle, and Other Solutions' - C. Rosenthal, The Devil We Know - E. Kernaghan) and clumsy writing are recurrent problems. Likewise the illustrations range in quality and technique - some are drawings, some collage images - but most are awkward and unformed, generally distracting from the prose.

Despite its problems, the strength of the collection resides in its exploration of the potential of the sci-fi/fantasy genre for feminist self-questioning.

Jane Lydon

## Inversions

Edited by Betsy Warland  
Press Gang Publishers

This book could be titled: "Everything You Wanted to Know About the Slices of Life You Read in Anthologies, But Were Always Unable to Ask". Sometimes the excitement of finding a writer whose work connects with your head, heart or otherwise is brought up short by the inability to contextualise the writing within her other work, let alone her life, politics and belief systems. *Inversions*, edited by Betsy Warland, (she is also a contributor), fills in the gaps, and addresses, amongst other things, the generally unspoken or ignored issues of selection from within a writer's work by the anthologist. As Judy Grahn comments "...anthologies often select the thinnest, smallest slices of my work for reproduction." (p. 81). The contributors to *Inversions* have been asked to write "about" (meaning here: the before, the after and the through of) their writing themselves.

There are as many approaches to writing as there are contributors to the book, (twenty four), and what they have to say works on two intimately related levels. Firstly the discussions of their own lives opens up ways of reading the work that were unavailable or obscured before, and secondly the discussions about their process in arriving at the finished product, (being the only part of the work that is usually perceived by us), provides a broader view of the politics and poetics of "dykes, queers and lesbians" writing for themselves whilst living and working, as we all do and must, in the wider community that is the rest of the world. *Inversions* achieves a placement of the lesbian writer into many different contexts, providing almost incidentally, through the always personal, sometimes painful histories (read: herstories, those who are so inclined), of the contributors, a mapping of the politics of writing and publishing lesbian writing in Canada, (from whence the book originates), and around the world.

Having made the point above about addressing issues of selection from within a particular writer's work, it remains obvious that all anthologies still involve a process of selection concerning who is selected at all. Often the decisions made around inclusion can speak more of tokenism than an awareness by the editor(s) that there is more than one valid voice out there with something lesbian-ly universal to say, but this is not the case here. Whilst women of colour, and of different racial, cultural and class backgrounds are contributors, it is not because they have been set up to pronounce on difference in some kind of monolithic way. Instead they are drawing on their differences, and drawing in their particular areas of concern, sometimes conflict, to discuss what is important about the politics of difference and endless variation in women's writing and lives.

Warland, the editor, has made four divisions in the collected work. The first is called 'Embodying Our Words', and it is here particularly that the body empowering the voice we read and 'hear' is given substance. The second section, 'Head Wind' concerns "external resistances" to this writing, and the third, 'Site Reading' makes "cultural, political, creative and philosophical practices" particular to the (now) embodied lesbian voice. The fourth section, which is not merely coincidentally the last, brings together the writing that addresses 'Questions Beyond Queer', and this is where it all comes together for me. If a writer is a Jewish lesbian who was a child survivor of the Holocaust (Irena Klepfisz), who is her

community, her audience, and how does her work and life challenge both? It is in this section that the threads occurring throughout the book concerning the final element in the writing equation are brought together. The audience and the individual reader, are challenged to confront what they bring to the text, how they read, associate and interpret. We are implicated in and responsible for this writing, and the final word is that this, like the book is a good thing.

Victoria Hunt.

**Bubbe Meisehs By Shayneh Maidelehs**  
**An Anthology of Poetry by Jewish Granddaughters**  
**about our Grandmothers.**  
Edited by Leslea Newman, Herbooks, USA, 1989

A creative writing teacher once told me "When you write, ask yourself why anyone else would want to read it. If it's only personal therapy, keep it to yourself. If you want to show it to others it must offer more."

As I first flicked through this anthology, I wondered whether these poems might belong to the category of personal therapy. I suspected them to be merely vents for familial guilt, emotional elegies which should have been hidden somewhere within the family heirlooms.

Then, as I gave each one the attention it deserves, I realised how wrong my prejudices had been. It is true that every poem contains fragments of women's lives - both the grandmothers' and their granddaughters' - but these fragments unite to form a single story. It is the story of struggle in a society which tried to suppress women and the Jewish faith. To be a part of both made the struggle twice as hard.

But struggle these "bubbes" did. Themes of persecution, immigration and sacrifice are continually illuminated with a determined courage and will to independence. We can draw from such strength in our own struggles as women of today. The reality portrayed in this collection is sometimes tragic, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes humorous. Where else could one find such original advice as this:

"When you want to know a good restaurant in a strange town,  
don't ask at the hotel, just walk a bit, read the menus,  
and smell the air when you walk in.  
You can always tell by the smell.  
And darling, even a good man can be picked that way...  
I always found good men by their smell."

In its depth, insight and truly moving manner, *Bubbe Meisehs By Shayneh Maidelehs* certainly does offer more.

Rachael Turk.

**Speaking Dreams**  
**Severna Park**  
**Firebrand**

I picked up *Speaking Dreams*, by Severna Park, expecting some kind of lesbian cosmic number. Instead, I got a story I couldn't put down, a narrative the pace of an *Aliens* film. The story has two strong, interesting women characters: Mira LoDire, a diplomat for the Emirate empire, and Costa, a slave from Jahar, a planet ruled by Raffail and his son Jezr'el, who breed slaves to sell in other parts of the galaxy. Mira is opposed to the institution of slavery. However, she is on a mission to Jahar to negotiate a real estate deal with Raffail. Her

superior orders her to purchase a slave on the 'when in Rome do as the Romans' basis, and so she buys Costa. Costa has the gift of prescience. Most nights she dreams the events that are to unfold the next day, a pretty handy skill when you find yourself in some of the tight spots these girls get into. I can't tell you anymore without spoiling it for you. If you're an *Aliens* fan, you'll love this.

Annabelle Lukin.

**Cats (and Their Dykes).**  
eds. Irene Reti and Shoney Sien  
Herbooks

This marvelous anthology of cats explores feline/dyke relationships from every angle. It includes stories ancient and modern and reminds us that cats were once sacred to the Egyptians, were persecuted with the ladies (lesbians?) during the witchhunts and that while many of us consider cats to be pets, there are many people who consider cats to be one of the worst kinds of pests.

The real value for me was that nearly every poem, story, photo or drawing evoked a strong memory of one of the many feline friends who have chosen to coexist with me - both the friendly and more psychic ones and the ones who simply shared my food and shelter.

*Cats (and Their Dykes)* is a thought-provoking and balanced book, and would be a great present to give to cat lovers by lovers of cat lovers.

Kate Ann Fearnall.

**Dykekeywords**  
edited by The Lesbian Writing and Publishing  
Collective (Ellen Quigley)  
Women's Press, Canada 1990

Today I said to a dyke friend of mine "You must be my fairy Godmother." She replied "no...just a fairy". We both laughed uproariously. That was when it finally came to me: *Dykekeywords* is not merely an enjoyable lesbian anthology, but also part of the ongoing celebration of dyke liberation and culture. It is an exploration through fiction, poetry, textual prose and drama of the many facets of our lives as lesbians. Contributors realise through their work that many issues surround us as women universally, thus making the collection accessible to all interested women, regardless of their sexuality.

The poetry in this anthology is fresh, the fiction covers a broad range of issues, the texts are incisive, the drama thought-provoking.

*Dykekeywords*: words written by dykes for dykes, and for anyone who has any faith in the words of Beth Follett in this book's first piece of fiction: "I don't equate being gay with being a victim. Too pedestrian..."Enjoy!

Lucie Frankham.



The views and opinions expressed in these reviews are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of The Women's Library committee or individual committee members.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ **MEMBERSHIP FORM** ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

To become a member of The Women's Library (and receive our quarterly newsletter), please fill out and return this form. Membership fees are not compulsory at this stage, but donations are always welcome. Please enclose a couple of stamps to help with the cost of postage. PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS.

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The Women's Library constantly needs volunteers, both to set up the library, and keep it running smoothly once it is established. If you can offer help in any of the following areas, please fill out and return this form. We will contact you when we need to.

- |                                      |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> reviewing books (specify | <input type="checkbox"/> publicity/distribution of newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cataloguing | preferred topics)                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> mailouts                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> renovating  | <input type="checkbox"/> staffing the library     | <input type="checkbox"/> layout                               |

Other skills you would like to offer: \_\_\_\_\_

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