



THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY

NEWS LETTER

VOL. 4 NO. 2

MAY 1995

ISSN 1320 601X

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

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT

\$15,000 FUNDING TO THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY

In April, The Women's Library was promised funding to facilitate the creation of a **Domestic Violence Resource Listing and Collection**. \$15,000 from the Department for Women (formerly the Ministry for Status and Advancement of Women) has been approved for the library for this purpose, as part of the Women's Grants Program.

We envisage that the collection will comprise books, serials, videos and government publications as well as copies of relevant articles and discussion papers. The collection will include fiction as well as non-fiction material and it will be particularly useful for researchers, students and interested individuals.

Volunteers at the library will research all references to material on domestic violence and then proceed to seek out donations for the new collection. The listing will include details of the Domestic Violence Collection as well as references to material that is located but cannot be procured for the library.

While the grant does not include funds to purchase new books and serials, it does mean that the library will be in a position to buy a library software package so that new and existing collections can be catalogued.

The Women's Library already has a valuable beginning to the collection – a set of videos on domestic violence which were donated by the Ministry for the Status and Advancement of Women last year. These videos are available to members for borrowing. (A list of the titles we hold is reproduced at the end of this article.)

If you require further information, or are interested in being involved, please contact **Vicki** at The Women's Library on (02) 319 0529.

VIDEO COLLECTION

Following are the titles currently available:

- **Domestic Violence**
Produced by Seven Dimensions (25 min)
- **Domestic Violence – Quandary**
Produced by Seven Dimensions (includes booklet) 1989 (60 min)
- **Domestic Violence Trigger Tapes**
Produced by Seven Dimensions (7 min)
- **Loved, Honoured and Bruised**
Produced by Educational Media Australia, 1980 (25 min)
- **No Myth**
Produced by Australian Film Institute, 1987 (27 min)
- **Devrim**
Produced by Australian Film Institute, 1984 (13 min)
- **Guns and Roses**
Produced by Australian Film Institute, 1990 (28 min)
- **Homefront**
Produced by Australian Film Institute, 1983 (24 min)
- **Something's Wrong At My House: Children in Domestic Violence**
Produced by Educational Media Australia (includes booklet), 1990 (20 min)
- **Marching Orders**
Produced by Pictures of Health Video Production Company, 1990 (20 min)

These videos are available for loan to members of The Women's Library for a period of one week. A holding deposit of \$50 for institutions or \$20 for individuals must be lodged with each loan.

OPENING HOURS

TUESDAY TO FRIDAY - 11AM TO 8PM
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY - 11AM TO 5PM
CLOSED ON MONDAYS
73 GARDEN ST, ALEXANDRIA
PHONE (02) 319 0529

TWVL INFOPAGE

How The Women's Library works

■ MEMBERSHIP

You must become a member of The Women's Library to be eligible to borrow books.

Membership fees per year are:

- \$50 funded institutions
- \$30 unfunded institutions and waged individuals
- \$20 unwaged individuals
- \$5 high school students

■ LOAN PERIOD

Two weeks for all books except required Women's Studies texts, which can be borrowed for one week. Videos can be borrowed for one week only.

■ LOAN DEPOSIT

Members must lodge a \$10 deposit with us before borrowing. This deposit is retained by The Women's Library if a book is not returned or is returned damaged. It may also be retained if a book becomes very overdue. This deposit is held by The Women's Library until you are no longer a member. Members who have done volunteer work for the library on a number of occasions (active members) are exempt from this deposit.

■ PERIODICALS

Serials, magazines, journals and reference materials cannot be borrowed, but may be read in the library. We have a photocopier for library users.

■ BORROWING BOOKS

Members can borrow up to six books at a time.

The Women's Library houses required reading for Women's Studies courses. Only three titles can be borrowed from this collection at any one time.

■ BORROWING VIDEOS

Videos are available for loan by members for a period of one week and require a refundable holding deposit for each loan of \$50 for institutions and \$20 for individual members.

■ RENEWALS

Loans may be renewed in person or by phone, unless they are on reserve.

Ways You Can Support The Women's Library

■ BECOME A MEMBER

Please fill out the form attached to this newsletter, and become a member of The Women's Library. At this stage The Women's Library is unfunded and membership fees keep the library alive.

As a member you are entitled to borrow books from the library and receive The Women's Library Newsletter four times a year.

■ BUY A BOOK TO JOIN THE LIBRARY

You can buy a book to donate to The Women's Library in lieu of membership fees.

THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT...

The only books we can accept in place of fees should be purchased from the list of titles lodged with The Feminist Bookshop (address below).

This list contains titles that are required reading for Women's Studies courses, and this system will ensure that we do not receive multiple copies of some titles and no copies of others. Simply bring your book, membership form and receipt to The Women's Library during opening hours and we will be happy to process your membership on the spot.

■ BOOK DONATIONS

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

- The Women's Library
73 Garden Street, Alexandria
- The Feminist Bookshop
Shop 9, Orange Grove Plaza, Balmain Road, Lilyfield

Please contact us on 319 0529 if you need 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.

■ TAX DEDUCTIBILITY

To make it more inviting for you to donate money to The Women's Library, your donations are tax deductible. Similarly you can donate a collection of books (which must be valued by an approved valuer) or any item that has been purchased by you within the last twelve months, and claim the value of that donation as a deduction on your tax return.

■ BEQUESTS

Maybe you would like to consider making provisions for leaving your personal library and/or a donation to The Women's Library in your will. Please contact the library if you need details on how to do this.

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

EDITOR VICKI HARDING

DESIGN & PRODUCTION INGRID URH

INTERWEAVING

AUSTRALIAN GENDER AND CULTURAL INCLUSIVE
RESOURCE MATERIALS ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Produced for SA Women's Suffrage Centenary
by the MARIA Professional Development Group
for Women of NESB.

Includes both audio-visual and literary, fiction
and non-fiction materials suitable for researcher,
writers, educators, students.

Send \$12 cheque made out to ILDI WETHERELL,
Multicultural Education Coordinating Committee,
4th Floor, GPO Box 1152, Adelaide, 5001.

The Women's Library Aims

To house a comprehensive range of feminist
and lesbian novels, texts, journals and magazines,
and in particular to house all Australian lesbian
books and magazines

To house all required reading for tertiary courses
in Sydney that focus on women's issues

To house the works of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander women

To house a collection relevant to women
of non-English speaking backgrounds

To provide a comfortable and accessible space
for borrowing, reading and relaxing

To act as a local women's resource centre

To provide a children's room with a range
of great children's books



The Feminist Bookshop

SHOP 9,
ORANGE GROVE PLAZA,
BALMAIN ROAD, LILYFIELD
New South Wales 2040
Telephone (02) 810 2666

Mon-Fri 10.30am-6pm
Sat & Sun 10.30am-4pm

BOOKLISTS available on Health,
Addiction/Co-Dependency,
Women's Studies, Therapy,
Sexuality, Assertiveness,
Lesbians, Spirituality, Incest
Aborigine, Education, Theatre Etc
Send a self-addressed,
stamped envelope for each
booklist you require

THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY WOMEN'S STUDIES FORUMS

The first of the Women's Studies forums organised
by The Women's Library's Outreach and Publicity
Committee was held on Wednesday 26 April.
WENDY BRADY, a member of the Wiradjhuri nation,
spoke on the topic of *Ethical Practice in Indigenous Research*.

Wendy has been involved in Aboriginal education for
15 years and is committed to changing the practice of
research to ensure self-determination for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander people. Wendy says she'll go
anywhere and talk to anyone.

While the substance of Wendy's talk was highly relevant
to all research, she made clear the urgent need for change
in practices in indigenous research. Aboriginal people have
been highly researched. For example, although millions of
dollars have been spent on Aboriginal health, health
standards in Aboriginal communities are declining.

Wendy raised many issues such as:

- The importance of research being defined by/
in consultation with research participants
- Research must be of direct benefit to research participants
- Research participants must be empowered,
not disempowered through the research process
- Research must be accountable to research participants
- Who owns the research?
- How is data stored?
- How is data disposed of?

Wendy's presentation was sprinkled with interesting
anecdotes to illustrate the points she made. Thanks again
to Wendy for a terrific presentation.

FUTURE FORUMS

Future forums will be held on the last Wednesday of
each month at The Women's Library at 7.30pm. The
forums are free and refreshments will be provided. Some
of the speakers we have lined up include:

WEDNESDAY 31 MAY

- JEANNE ELLARD
Gender Relations in Family Law in Australia
- NICOLE MOORE
*Representations of Abortion in Australian Women's
Writing in the 1920s and '30s*
- PAT PARKER
*A History of the Waterside Workers Women's Committee
1952-1974*

WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE

- TRISH FARRAR
*Relinquish and Abjection: A semanalysis of the meaning
of giving up a baby for adoption*
- BERINDA LARNEY
*The Birth Experience as an Intervening Variable in
Parent-Child Relationships (To be confirmed)*

WEDNESDAY 26 JULY

- ALLISON BEST AND EMILY BALLAO
The Story of 'I' Writing the Addict, Writing the Anorexic

WOW

MAY 27 & 28 VALHALLA CINEMA

Women on Women FILM FESTIVAL



A full weekend of film and video work by women film makers? WOW!

The 1995 Women on Women (WOW) Film Festival is an initiative of WIFT (Women in Film and Television) and, in its earlier incarnations, of Metro TV. The festival has been bringing the work of a diverse range of Australian women film makers to the big screen since 1989.

This year the festival is expanding to six sessions over two days. As well as the overseas features (including DALLAS DOLL, starring Sandra Bernhard), two sessions are dedicated to screening successful entrants in a competition of Australian and New Zealand women's short films. With over 100 works having been submitted for consideration, both the need and desire for a such a forum clearly exists.

Alongside these contemporary works, provision has been made for an examination of women in early Australian cinema (from its first appearance around 1896 to the end of the silent era in the early 1930s).

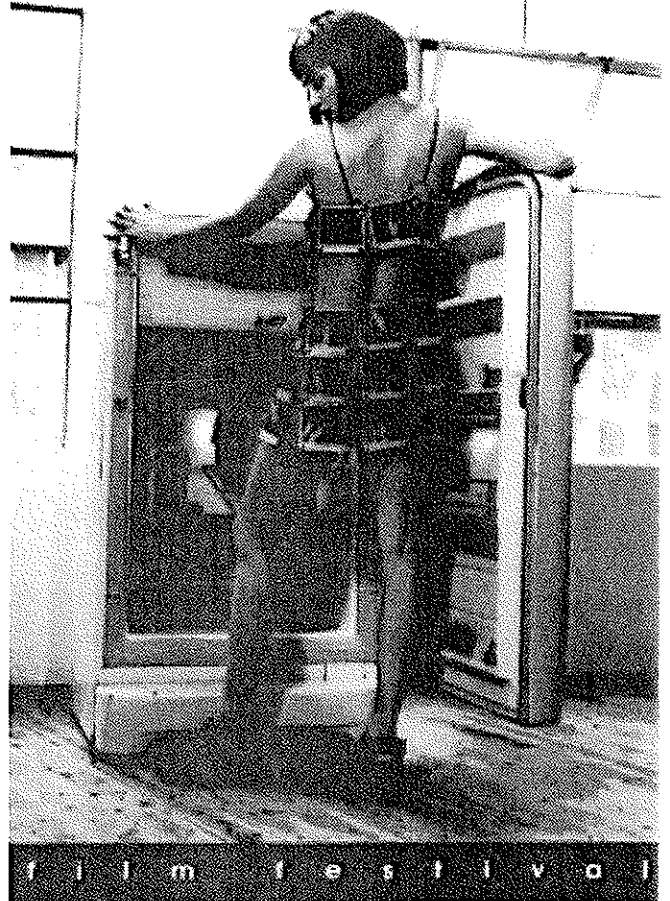
Because filming was a new pursuit at that time and the conventions of participation were not yet defined, women were very much involved in areas such as producing, directing, scriptwriting, art direction and editing. Women are only now re-establishing themselves in significant numbers in these areas.

Marilyn Dooley, a Senior Project Officer at the National Film and Sound Archives in Canberra, will be giving a seminar (see 'Upcoming Events' on page 11 for details) on the historical and culturally significant aspects of women in early Australian cinema. She says,

'The range of films made by women in early Australian cinema embraced all genres – melodramas were popular, outdoor adventures and romances and the exploits of our bush pioneers became prominent themes, and the problem plays exposing social issues of morality and religion were controversial but box office successes. While the themes of these films often reflected thportunity to see (telecine) excerpts from the 63 examples, many fragments, of remaining early women's film making efforts.

Titles such as JEWELLED NIGHTS (which was produced, directed, written, publicised and edited by women and established Louise Lovely's Hollywood career) PAINTED DAUGHTERS, THE WOMAN SUFFERS and the magnificent THE CHEATERS by Sydney's McDonagh sisters, all tantalise.

w o m e n o n w o m e n

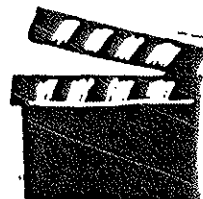


It's interesting, and in no small way distressing, to note that no Australian feature films were directed by women in the period 1932 (The McDonagh sisters' THE CHEATERS) to 1979 (when Gillian Armstrong directed MY BRILLIANT CAREER).

The space for this article is fast running out, and I haven't yet mentioned the program of video clips and advertisements by women directors, or the interactive multimedia works that will be operating in the Valhalla foyer – so maybe you'll just have to discover them for yourself!

BE THERE or be crazy enough to miss out on a wonderful weekend celebrating women's work and creativity, past and present.

VICTORIA HUNT



RESOURCELIST

The Women's Library aims to provide an easy means for women to access information. Part of this aim is to provide referral to other services which offer information for women. Listed below are contact details of a sample of library and information services that you may not know about.

■ **DYMPHNA HOUSE LIBRARY**

PO Box 22, Haberfield, 2045
PHONE (02) 797 6733 FAX (02) 799 6095
HOURS: Mon-Fri 9am- 5pm (Closed Wednesdays)
Library use by appointment
SUBJECTS: All aspects of sexual assault
MATERIALS: books, journals, articles

■ **CENTRE FOR INFORMATION ON DRUGS AND ALCOHOL (CEIDA) LIBRARY**

Rozelle Hospital Grounds,
Balmain Rd (opposite Cecily St), Rozelle, 2039
PHONE (02) 818 0401 FAX (02) 818 0464
TTY (02) 818 2993
SUBJECTS: All aspects of drugs/alcohol
MATERIALS: Books, journals, videos, kits, CD ROM

■ **JESSIE STREET WOMEN'S LIBRARY**

NSW Writers Centre, Rozelle Hospital Grounds
Balmain Rd, Rozelle, 2039
PHONE (02) 555 9376 FAX (02) 555 9376
• A national women's library which houses material relating to women
• Please call for information about opening hours

■ **NATIONAL WOMEN'S MEDIA CENTRE**

107 Denison St, Camperdown
PHONE (02) 550 6734 FAX (02) 550 6734
• Resources for women in the media
• Monitors the portrayal of women in the media

■ **LESBIAN & GAY ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT**

PO Box 1178, Darlinghurst, 2010
PHONE (02) 360 5587 FAX (02) 380 5848
• Aims to reduce the incidence of violence and harassment against lesbians and gays
• Publications *Streetwatch*, *Off Our Backs*, *Count and Counter* provide information and statistics

■ **ALBION STREET CENTRE LIBRARY**

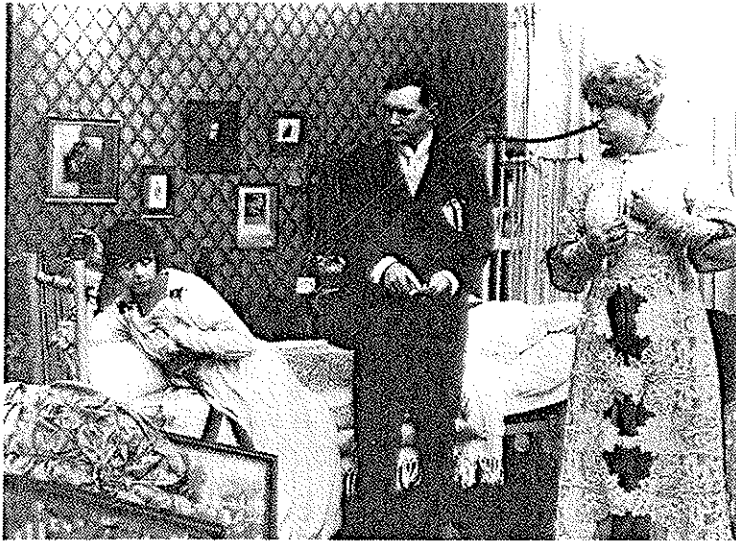
150 Albion st, Surry Hills, 2010
PHONE (02) 332 1090 FAX (02) 332 4219
SUBJECTS: General HIV/AIDS collection – specialising in clinical, nutritional, medical, psychosocial aspects
MATERIALS: Books, videos, journals, newspaper clippings, kits, audio cassettes

■ **FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION LIBRARY**

328 Liverpool Rd, Ashfield, 2131
PHONE (02) 804 5445 FAX (02) 804 5460
SUBJECTS: Birth control, sexuality, sex education, gynaecology, sexuality and disability
MATERIALS: Books, journals, pamphlets, Medline on CD ROM

This is only a small selection of the organisations/ services which provide information and resources. The Women's Information and Referral Service can be contacted on 008 817 227 if you are looking for information not covered in this listing.

COLLATED BY TAMARIS CAMERON



STILL FROM THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

The Woman Suffers

This is a still from the 1918 Raymond Longford silent production THE WOMAN SUFFERS, the latest significant find of the Last Film Search.

'The woman suffers – while the man goes free' is the film's theme, with the brother of a dishonoured girl seeking revenge on the seducer, only to find that the culprit was retaliating for the same wrong done to his own sister by this very man.

It rates as an early feminist film, and stars Lottie Lyell, Longford's longtime creative partner. This is only the fourth Longford film known to still exist – he made 29 in all.



WIFT NSW

Women in Film and Television (WIFT) is a professional, non-profit organisation representing women in film, television, video and multimedia.

Membership is open to women who are working or training in these areas, and costs \$60/\$40 per annum.

CONTACT

WIFT Office

66 Albion St Surry Hills 2010

PHONE (02) 281 2058

FAX (02) 281 1968

Are you reading enough Non-

The non-fiction collection of The Women's Library is an interesting but challenging area to maintain. Due to space limitations and the developing focus of the library, as well as the variety of books donated, the non-fiction collection has changed since the library opened.

Rather than keeping everything related to women, however vaguely, we are now taking into consideration how the age of the book may affect its relevance, how readily available this book may be in public libraries and how closely it relates to feminism, lesbian issues and women's lives in general.

Deciding which category a book belongs in can be quite a political decision and there have been a few heated discussions in this area. Emotive topics such as 'abortion' and 'pornography' have come up.

The Women's Library decided that 'abortion' and any books pertaining to the politics of fertility would be in HEALTH AND BODY POLITICS rather than MOTHERHOOD AND PARENTING. 'Pornography' required a whole new category as it didn't quite fit in MEDIA, VISUAL ARTS, PERFORMING ARTS or anything else, so the category REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN was created.

I will take you through a quick browse of some of the non-fiction collection to give you an idea of the interesting and varied books The Women's Library has collected for our members.

The non-fiction collection is currently divided into 38 categories. This does not include BIOGRAPHY or POETRY which are maintained as separate areas.

There are some non-fiction subject areas that we believe are relevant to women's lives without being specifically feminist, for example, COMPUTERS, which includes the book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to PCs*

There are also some general categories that were originally combined under the banner LIVING SKILLS. This area has been divided and culled somewhat. The subject areas are now SPORT & FITNESS with *Tai Chi* and *Self Defence Handbook for Women*; HOUSE AND GARDEN (sounds like a good name for a magazine!!) with *Basic Carpentry*;

FOOD AND COOKING with *The Political Palate* and TRAVEL with a book titles *Our Sister's London: Feminist Walking Tours*.

If The Women's Library had to stick with traditional methods of cataloguing books, most of our other categories fit basically into the Dewey Decimal area of 300 for Social Sciences and the subject heading Feminism or Women and...

To avoid this we have made up a lot of our own subject headings as well as borrowing from a book of women's subject headings. Even this book is quite conservative in its subject areas.

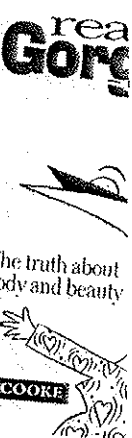
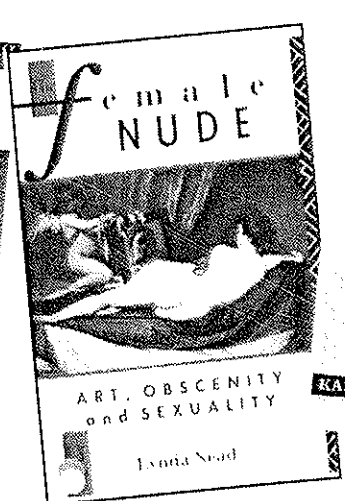
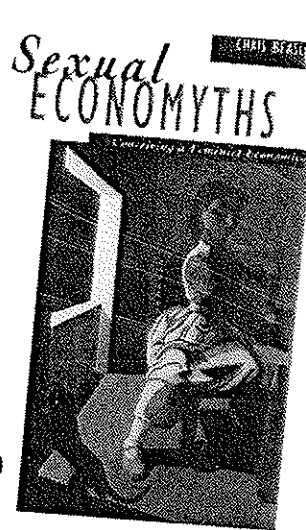
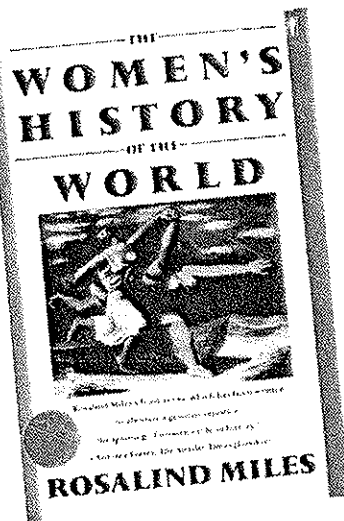
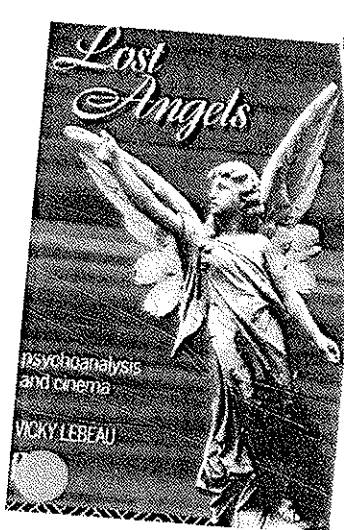
HEALTH AND BODY POLITICS is very broad and one of the largest sections. It includes general books about women's health and bodies written by women. It also includes alternative therapies, cancer, HIV/AIDS, many books about eating disorders and body image, PMT and menopause and addiction.

Some of the titles in HEALTH AND BODY POLITICS are *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf, *The Natural Remedy Book For Women* and *Real Gorgeous: the truth about body and beauty* by Kaz Cooke.

SELF-HELP includes titles such as *Personal Change through self-hypnosis* and *Everyone can win: how to resolve conflict*. This section is very interesting and includes guides and personal stories dealing with many issues that people face and may need a little help with.

SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY tends to be one of those areas where lots of bits and pieces that don't seem to fit in any other subject area, end up! This section includes the books *Power and Protest: movements for change in Australian Society* and *Women and Planning: creating gendered realities* which is about women's involvement in town planning.

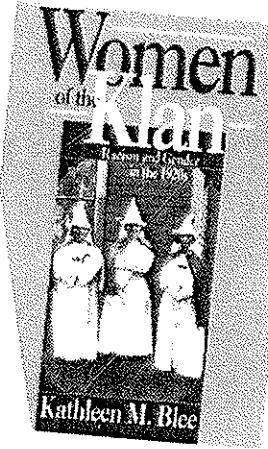
SEX, not surprisingly, has proven to be a very popular area with our members (and volunteers!). It includes a variety of guides, manuals and humorous tales concerning all sorts of sexual varieties. Some of the titles are *The art of sexual ecstasy: the path of sacred sexuality for western lovers*, *Susie Sexpert's Lesbian sex world* and *Coming to Power: writings and graphics on Lesbian S/M*.



Fiction?

THANK YOU

N & PLANNING
using good old fashion
 CLARA H. GREED



RACE & ETHNICITY has a general section and then is further divided into geographical areas. These areas are AUSTRALIA, EASTERN EUROPE, UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND, LATIN AMERICA, MIDDLE EAST, USA AND CANADA, PACIFIC ISLANDS, ASIA AND AFRICA.

Some titles in this section are *Outlaw Culture: resisting representations* and *Women of the Klan: racism and gender of the 1920s*.

A meeting with a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women concluded that, at this stage, it is preferable to have a separate section in the library of books by and pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women.

This section is divided into FICTION, NON-FICTION, POETRY, BIOGRAPHY and ANTHOLOGIES. While it is still a very small section, we hope it will continue to grow into a more comprehensive collection.

If you're interested in finding out more about the non-fiction collection or helping to process, categorise and maintain the collection just call **Samantha** on **(02) 519 2451** or leave a message at The Women's Library.

Remember, you don't have to be a Librarian to help out in The Women's Library, you just need a little bit of spare time and motivation!!!

SAMANTHA BEATY

MARDI GRAS PARTY CLOAK ROOM (\$2,000 RAISED)

CO-ORDINATOR – Natalie McDonagh
 The Women's Library Committee and Alison Carter, Donna Shaw, Glennifer Roberts, Hail Cordingley, Joanne Roddis, Judith, Maja Berilazic, Nikki Twentyman, Paula Benson, Sharon Talbot, Sioux Janke, Sue Goodman

MAILOUT

CO-ORDINATOR – Vicki Harding
 Claire Koetsier, Kylie Cochrane, Meredith Connie, Sue Williamson, Ute Greiving

MARDI GRAS FAIR DAY

(\$1,200 RAISED)

CO-ORDINATORS – Anne Jones, Donna Wilcox, Suzanne Delaney
 The Women's Library Committee and Angela Sokialis, Brady, Fiona Kerr, Karen Dubb, Karen Easson, Natalya Lusty, Nicola O'Shea, Paula Wallace, Terrie Chin

TEMPRESS CLOAKROOM

CO-ORDINATORS – Nikki Twentyman, Natalie McDonagh
 The Women's Library Committee and Maja Berilazic, Paula Wallace, Katrina, Kate, Jenny, Karina, Kym Hodder, Donna Shaw

IWD STALL (\$350 RAISED)

CO-ORDINATORS – Natalie McDonagh, Nikki Twentyman, Nicola O'Shea
 The Women's Library Committee and Fiona Kerr, Natalya Lusty, Rody Myers

MARDI GRAS READING EVENT

CO-ORDINATOR – Anneliese French
 The Women's Library Committee and Meredith Connie, Margaret Bradstock, Louise Wakeling, Romaine, Dorothy Porter, Allison Lee, Trish Spears

BOOKFAIR AND GARAGE SALE

(\$2,100 RAISED)

CO-ORDINATORS – Anne Jones, Donna Wilcox, Nikki Twentyman
 The Women's Library Committee and Anna Fitzpatrick, Emily Clark, Helen Garnaut, Inez Gershon, Julie Earngy, Kylie Cochrane, Kym Hodder, Maja Berilazic, Meredith Connie, Mona Attamimi, Ros Feltham, Ruth Carman, Sharon Luke, Stephanie Sparke, Suzanne Delaney, Therese McNamara, Ute Greiving, Wendy Holz

SPECIAL THANKS to Marrickville Council for permission set up the bookfair and garage sale on the street in Newtown

DONATIONS

COMPUTER – Kate Worth
 BROCHURE STANDS – Newtown Neighbourhood Centre
 TV AND STEREO – Julia Hancock

STAFFING

CO-ORDINATOR – Vicki Harding
 The Women's Library Committee and Angela Sokialis, Anna Fitzpatrick, Astrid Przeziecki, Carole Neal, Christine Petschler, Claire Koetsier, Clare Walsh, Colene Woods, Elizabeth Smedley, Emily Clark, Helen Garnaut, Helen Waters, Inez Gershon, Joanne Roddis, Julie Earngy, Kate Fearnall-Heath, Kate Pritchard, Kylie Cochrane, Leanne Hodges, Maja Berilazic, Margaret Smith, Marny Kilby, Mary O'Brien, Megan Williams, Melinda Conry, Meredith Connie, Myra Flynn, Nerida Wood, Nicola O'Shea, Paula Major, Rody Myers, Ros Feltham, Ruth Carman, Sandra Coleman, Shirry Rebolledo, Stephanie Sparke, Sue Williamson, Susan Bowra, Trish Spears, Ute Greiving, Vima Devia, Wendy Holz

WOMEN'S STUDIES FORUMS

CO-ORDINATORS – Annabelle Lukin, Anneliese French and Allison Lee
 Also Wendy Brady

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

NEWSLETTER – Ingrid Urh
 RENEWAL FORM – Jill Segedin

LOAN OF LAMINATING EQUIPMENT

Penny Pitcairn,
 University of NSW Student Guild
 Finn Drury,
 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

DRAFT OF COLLECTION

DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Ann Hocking

SPECIAL WELCOME TO NEW

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS – Rose Bollen, Tamaris Cameron



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 or the author. Thank you to the following publishers, authors and reviewers for your support.

BEYOND BLOOD: WRITINGS ON THE LESBIAN AND GAY FAMILY

LOUISE WAKELING AND MARGARET BRADSTOCK (EDS)
BLACKWATTLE PRESS, 1995

The minds behind the creation of *Beyond Blood* were inspired, it would seem, by the definitional exclusion by the Australian government of lesbian and gay families from last year's International Year of the Family.

The 1994 Year of the Family was certainly responsible (albeit unintentionally) for bringing to the fore the question "What IS a family?" And for all the New Right's efforts to return the nuclear family unit quickly to its rightful place, it is a question that has not gone away.

The multifarious contributions contained in *Beyond Blood* do more than question who and what equals a family. Between them, the authors strip the nuclear family of its hypocritical yet sacred clothes and look beyond blood for safer, happier, more equitable alternatives.

The collection is made up of essays, autobiographical prose and poetry. The authors include lesbian birth mothers, co-mothers, sperm donors, donor 'uncles', children of so-called alternative families and a gay Reverend of the Metropolitan Community Church. Individually and collectively their words offer a valuable and unique perspective on the subject of gay and lesbian families.

Beyond Blood is not however, beyond reproach. I would question for example, the assertion that Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's marriage was one of convenience, "to escape social censure and to engender children"- none of Vita's or Harold's letters or diaries lend themselves to such an interpretation. Regardless of how desperately we want to reclaim rolemodels from the past, to claim Vita and Harold's marriage as setting an historical precedent for lesbian and gay parenting is to tread on dangerous and dishonest ground.

I am also a little uneasy about the interconnectedness of the contributions. I felt at times as though I was playing join the dots in trying to work out 'who was on with whom' and who was 'related' to whom.

That these connections were for the most part left implicit, seems strangely incongruous in a book concerned with speaking the unspoken and redressing the balance of material available on alternative families. It left me with a feeling of uncertainty about the breadth of the book and who exactly it represented.

The fact that Australian lesbians have consciously been having children by way of artificial insemination for over twenty years now is something that is barely recognised in Australian society. There is little acknowledgment that there are people out there already well into their twenties who were conceived via artificial insemination and raised

by lesbians. There is little acknowledgment in the wider society that such arrangements and similar ones continue to exist today. Publications like *Beyond Blood* create the possibility for a wider acknowledgment of this unspoken past and invisible present.

Such acknowledgment can only be of value to a society which sooner or later must admit to the fact that the nuclear family is (thankfully) headed towards extinction.

JUDITH ION

THE MONKEY'S MASK

DOROTHY PORTER
HYLAND HOUSE, 1994

To be honest, I leapt at the chance to read and review Dorothy Porter's *The Monkey's Mask*.

What is all the fuss about? Well, Porter has taken all the ingredients for GLT (Good Lesbian Trash), by which I mean one lesbian private investigator, one missing/murdered young woman, one beautiful-though-snooty lecturer, and a number of ugly nasty male poets, and written a murder mystery. So far, so normal. The catch is that she's done it through poetry.

Well. Well well well. If, and let me repeat if, this was a simple lesbian detective novel, I'd give it two thumbs down. Jill, the blinded-by-just private eye who seems to live on alcohol, is just not the sort of woman I'd consider taking home to meet mom. Furthermore, while she might be blind to the identity of the killers, discerning readers are not.

But. *The Monkey's Mask* isn't a novel - it's poetry. And Dorothy Porter manages to convey what's going on under the skin of her characters. So what if it's not all sweetness and light, it's light years more thought-provoking than "sparkling emerald eyes and tousled auburn hair". The book is a captivating intriguing read. A mixed review? Yes. Story line, hohum. Character development, read the book.

LUCY TATMAN

MURAWINA,

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN OF HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

TEXT BY ROBERTA SYKES
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SANDY EDWARDS
TRANSWORLD PUBLISHERS, 1994

In the introduction, Roberta Sykes says that some well-meaning whites asked her if she could find enough women to fill a whole book of profiles on Aboriginal women of high achievement.

One of the triumphs of *Murawina* is that you soon discover that Sykes is not boasting when she says that her real trouble was leaving hundreds of deserving women out. There are so many unsung heroines in this book, most of them having overcome adversity and disadvantage against the odds, that you sense that each is representative of many, many others.

It is the recurring patterns that are most distressing. Most of these women were taken from their mothers and

families when very young. Most had a poor educational start and have made up the gap themselves later in life despite children and economic hardship. Many have become high achievers while continuing to care for family and community.

Sykes has chosen her women well. Time and again the white reader will be surprised by the level of achievement; the head of department, the international dance ambassador, the Harvard degree. But there are also traditional women who have the deep respect of their community, and women who have worked quietly behind the scenes, simply giving their intelligence and warmth to those around them.

So many extraordinary women. So few known to the general public. Pat O'Shane and Oodgeroo and Tracy Moffatt we know of. What about Glenda Humes and Mutilna Ganambarr and Olive Mitchell, to name a few.

The format Sykes has chosen is effective and simple. Each woman gives her name and tribal groupings (a few no longer know, many had to track them down later in life), then talks about how she grew up, her life's work and aspirations. Each is accompanied by Sandy Edwards' terrific photographs.

One of my few gripes is that because the format is unvarying, not enough of the individual voices emerge. And I would have liked to hear from one or two really young women and more really old women. The age range tends to sit around middle life. But that in itself gives fascinating room for comparison, between the much travelled sophisticates and traditional women in Northern Australia.

There is a good deal of history to be picked up in these three or four page life stories. It's the best kind of history – learned through our empathy with each woman's story. But disturbing knowledge. There's nothing like it in the history books, nothing like it in the newspapers.

SUSAN VARGA

THE KALI CONNECTION

CLAUDIA MCKAY

NEW VICTORIA PUBLISHERS INC, 1994

Lynn Evans is an investigative reporter for the *Hartfield City Chronicle*. On the first page of the book we learn she is in the process of grieving over a break-up with her lover Shirley.

This personal crisis has given Evans the reason to look at her life and question herself over some previously taken-for-granted attitudes – in particular her often total immersion in her work to the detriment of her personal relationships.

The story then proceeds to focus on Evans' investigations into the suspicious death of an ex-drug addict by the name of Sam Jenson. Although his death appears to be a drug related suicide, Lynn Evans soon has suspicions. Her inquiries quickly turn to an examination of his affiliation with the Kalimaya Society – a religious group who worship the Hindu triple goddess of Kali.

As in all crime fiction there is a continual shifting between revelation and concealment. As Evans becomes more deeply embroiled in the case she must undergo her own particular personal (as well as solving-the-case type) revelation – and there is always the desired and pursued romance with the enigmatic (murder suspect) Marta

Handly to occupy her mind. The story unfolds, adequately incorporating the genre's conventional dose of obligatory fear, uncertainty and danger to life and limb to be faced and overcome by the protagonist.

The 'truth' that Lynn finds out about the Kalimaya organisation is not a prejudicial religious judgement but a revelation of how such an organisation can be used by unscrupulous individuals to conceal criminal actions. Essentially Evans' quest is to reveal a contamination of the spiritual plane through actions taken on the earthly plane. She also experiences first-hand the political ramifications and personal costs of trying to reveal the corruptions of an institutional system.

LORRAINE BARROW

THE HOTTEST NIGHT OF THE CENTURY

GLENDADAMS

CANE HILL PRESS, 1979

Donated by the author

This book was an absolute delight to read. Each story held me captivated to the end – very poignant little anecdotes of life. Glenda Adams brought her characters to life and the reader is able to gain insights into their minds.

My favourite story in this collection would have to be 'Friends'. This story captures the closeness and disappointment of friendship. It reminded me of how close friends are at different stages of life and how this relationship falters as each individual grows in different ways.

I found that most of the stories struck a chord with me in one way or another. They dealt with the hopes and dreams of every person. This is especially true of 'Twelf Night, or The Passion'. Anyone who has been desperately awaiting a phone call from a loved one or new love will definitely identify with this story of trying not to sit next to the telephone waiting for it to ring.

Glenda Adams has written about everyday occurrences with charm, wit and style. Each story shows a different view of society. Although not every story had a happy ending, each was thought-provoking and did not finish with the last word.

VICKI BATES

THE FEMALE NUDE - ART, OBSCENITY AND SEXUALITY

LYNDA NEAD

ROUTLEDGE, 1992

This book is an attempt to place images of female nudes within a cultural context, and the discussion has the breadth to include every such image. It is not intended as an historical perspective, but places representative images and events within their contextual 'frames'.

Frames are a pervasive concept throughout the book, as Nead concludes that both the high art tradition and pornography spring from the same need for containment, or placing the female body within limits, a patriarchal scrutiny to find and contain sexuality.

The Female Nude begins by exploring recent feminist philosophical theories in relation to female nudes, and reads like a commonsense guide for the application of basic concepts such as the mind/body split and public/private spheres. These binaries are not only laden with gender implications (attributable to masculine and

feminine respectively), but can also chart the elevation of the female nude in painting, and the perpetuation of its status by institutions.

The institutions critiqued here cover a wide range – the galleries, the press and legislative powers who define what is art, what is obscene, and who may have access to either category. Nead's analysis connects up the links in a diverse chain, making this a thorough and convincing cultural investigation.

Feminist revisions of the nude female body are also charted. Pornography and high art are placed within a continuum as part of the same structured system, defining each other by what they are not. Feminist art, then, needs to operate outside these systems, and the good intentions of radical feminist artists of the '70s do not measure up against these requirements.

Nead examines later art as able to achieve this by using images of the female nude that are not of accepted 'normality'. These images of strength are from the disabled, Blacks, Asians and other ethnic groups perceived by the dominant culture as 'marginal', disfigured women, no longer young women, and lesbian erotica.

These examples are described by Nead as alternatives that are able to escape the pervasive "patriarchal structuring of voyeurism and exhibitionism" that is so problematic for any image of the female nude.

Nead's book, most of all, is a cultural critique with far-reaching implications, yet is also a plea and an encouragement for practitioners of feminist art – to be able to conceptualise the restrictions placed on the female body and transgress them.

MEREDITH CONNIE

**PARIS, WHEN IT'S NAKED. AND
OF CITIES AND WOMEN**

ETEL ADNAN

THE POST-APPOLLO PRESS, 1993

These are two books from the Post-Appollo Press by Etel Adnan. I had not previously heard of this writer, who has in fact written nine books of poetry and a novel, *Sitt Marie-Rose*.

Etel Adnan is a poet and painter who was born in Beirut and now lives in exile in Paris and San Francisco. In these two books she combines her artistic talents; she paints with words and creates palpable environments of her thoughts.

Paris, When It's Naked lays bare the writer and the city and delves into the global psyche. Adnan's writing flows effortlessly from intimate and personal details to political and social concerns and gave me a strong sense of the interconnectedness of things.

Reading each of the two to three page 'day in the life' segments, each titled Paris, When It's Naked, made me feel that I was there, inside Adnan's head, watching from behind her eyes the rain-spattered street as she walked to her favourite cafe, transported with her thoughts, to London "where it rains", to Africa, where it doesn't, into the minds of others on the street, immigrants afraid of deportation, Parisians afraid of the European Community, other artists, beggars, even pigeons.

This review has taken me a long time to get on to paper because the books are so individual and so wide ranging that any statement I make about them seems to

shrink the experience of reading them. They are so deeply descriptive that to try to describe them is to limit the seemingly unlimited emotional, social, personal and political scope they have.

Adnan is an artist and a feminist, she travels widely and lectures and talks on both subjects in many cities of the world. *Of Cities and Women* follows her through eight cities over two years. She lectures, visits and considers the situation of women in Barcelona, Aix-en-Provence, Skopelos, Murcia, Amsterdam, Berlin, Beirut and Rome.

Adnan brings us her daily life – writing, drawing, walking, reading, going to cafes, being interviewed, entertaining, going to bed, dreaming, her thoughts of Djuna Barnes, Beaudalaire, the Algerian crises, the rise of fascism, the expansiveness of the universe, the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of each life and her feelings.

She has the generosity as a writer to allow us into the expanses of her life, from the banality of which cheese to buy for supper, to her fears for life on this planet. I found these books inspiring and exciting to read.

SUSAN AMBLER

A SURROGATE MOTHER'S STORY

PATRICIA ADAIR

PAPERJACKS, 1988

Donated by Rubicon Books

Here is the first-hand story of a woman who chose to become a surrogate mother for an infertile couple. A highly charged issue of our times, surrogate motherhood is still receiving much attention.

Pat Adair said she had no problem handing over the baby to which she gave birth, to the couple from Philadelphia. It was their baby, she was simply having it – "I have never thought of myself as the mother. It isn't having a child that makes you a mother, it's raising the child."

After reading Patricia Adair's story many people may now understand more fully, and with compassion, the reasons behind being a surrogate mother and why it is needed. Making such a difficult decision involves weighing up immediate and long term considerations – emotional, psychological, physical and monetary – for both the biological mother and the parenting couple.

RUBICON BOOKS

APOLOGY

Apologies are extended to ARLENE CHATTAKAR-AITKINS for two typographical errors which appeared in her review of *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances* in the last issue of *The Women's Library Newsletter*. We have reprinted the paragraph, as it should have appeared, to clarify the meaning of Arlene's review...

The underlying theme of all the essays is that of women working together. I found it heartening to read of so many alliances of women which have successfully weathered storms and flourished – I hesitate to say "in spite of" differences, as these stories seem to indicate that difference in terms of ethnicity, culture, class and sexuality, when acknowledged and negotiated, will contribute to the strength, vibrancy and creativity of women's alliances.

INFORMATION PAGE

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **WOMEN ON WOMEN FILM FESTIVAL**
Valhalla Cinema, 166d Glebe Point Rd, Glebe
May 27 and 28 – Tickets can be purchased for individual sessions (\$8/\$11) or the entire weekend (\$42) **TICKET RESERVATIONS** Jo Cadman at Perpetual Motion Pictures (02) 955 3188
- **YOUNG WOMEN AND POLITICS FORUM**
66 Albion St, Surry Hills
May 27 **ENQUIRIES** Younger WEL (02) 214 4374
- **THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY WOMEN'S STUDIES FORUM TWO**
73 Garden St, Alexandria
May 31, 7.30pm **ENQUIRIES** (02) 319 0529
- **THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY WOMEN'S STUDIES FORUM THREE**
73 Garden St, Alexandria
June 28, 7.30pm **ENQUIRIES** (02) 319 0529
- **STAGE I PLAYWRIGHTS COURSE**
Australian National Playwright Centre
July 4 – Sept 12 **ENQUIRIES** (02) 555 9377
- **SOCIAL POLICY AND THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL CHANGE**
1995 NATIONAL SOCIAL POLICY CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NSW
July 5 – 7 **ENQUIRIES** (02) 385 3863
- **NEW DRAMATISTS AWARD**
Winning script will be taken to New York for workshopping
Australian National Playwright Centre
Closing Date: July 10 **ENQUIRIES** (02) 555 9377
- **THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY WOMEN'S STUDIES FORUM FOUR**
73 Garden St, Alexandria
July 26, 7.30pm **ENQUIRIES** (02) 319 0529
- **WOMEN, MANAGEMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**
Hilton Hotel, George Street, Sydney
August 15 – 16 **ENQUIRIES** Pam Morpeth (02) 319 0529
- **5TH WOMEN AND LABOUR CONFERENCE**
Macquarie University
September 29 – October 1 **ENQUIRIES** (02) 850 8985

BOOKS DONATED

BY AUTHORS/CONTRIBUTORS/EDITORS

- *Older Women: Consultation, Participation and Empowerment* – University of Western Sydney, Women's Research Centre
- *Women, Madness and Medicine* – Denise Russell
- *Living in the Margins* – Jan Pettman
- *The Waterlily* – Kate Llewellyn
- *Figs* – Kate Llewellyn
- *Honey* – Kate Llewellyn
- *Luxury* – Kate Llewellyn
- *Crosshatched* – Kate Llewellyn
- *Feminist Theology Reader* (collected readings for undergraduate course) – Erin White

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

- *Access* – Positive Radio News
- *Action News* – Newsletter of Affirmative Action Agency
- *Ask Any Woman* – A report of a phone-in on women and safety in Liverpool
- Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research *Newsletter*
- Equal Opportunity Tribunal papers
- Gay and Lesbian Radio Information and News Service (GRINS)
- GLPCI Network (Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International)
- International Women's Development Agency Report
- *MA News* (Maternity Alliance)
- *National Library of Australia News*
- National Women's Media Centre *Newsletter*
- *Network* – Newsletter of the Rural Women's Network
- NSW Department for Women (formerly NSW Ministry for the Status and Advancement of Women)
 - NSW Pap Test Register
 - Directory of Organisations for Women in NSW and ACT
 - Women in NSW
- Sydney Women's Liberation *Newsletter*
- Women's Research Centre *Newsletter*
- Working Women's Centre *Newsletter*
- *Belles Letters*
- *Grapevine*
- *Hersay*
- *HQ*
- *Inner Voice*
- *Lesbian Space Newsletter*
- *Lesbiana*
- *Mountain Lesbian News*
- *Pandora*
- *PRIDE Newsletter*
- *Public Library News*
- *Queensland Pride*
- *Rouge*
- *Sappho of the Hunter*
- *Screaming Hyena*
- *Spinifex Scoops*
- *Streetwise*
- *SWAN Newsletter*
- *Warm Update*
- *WEL Informed*
- *Wholistic Living Matters*
- *Wicked Women*
- *Women and Work*
- *Women – Church*
- *Women in Focus*

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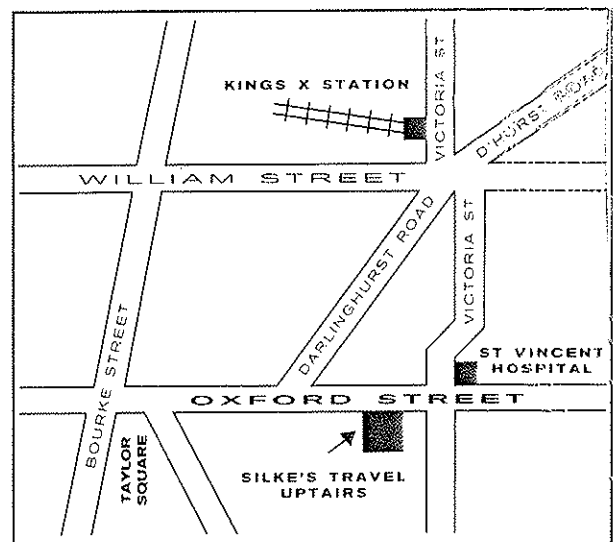
Michigan Women's Music Festival

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Lesbian Conference Alice Spring

5-9 October

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