



NEWS LETTER

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

Rooms with a View

[Part II] After months of scraping walls and sanding floors, The Women's Library now has two great new rooms. (Thanks to all those volunteers who sacrificed their Saturdays in this endeavour!) For those of you who haven't visited the new rooms yet, here's a preview. They feature...

- ◆ A fabulous space available for hire to community groups for women's workshops and courses
- ◆ A separate, quiet reading and studying space (lots of greenery, french windows and plenty of sunlight)
- ◆ A wonderful use of space – the main library has been completely rearranged (the serials have been moved next door) so you can find those interesting and specialised sections easily – poetry and plays, languages other than English (mainly German at the moment), anthologies and an Aboriginal collection
- ◆ A spot for the soon to be finished domestic violence collection
- ◆ A selection of women's music – choose from over 70 CDs and cassettes, including k d lang, Michelle Shocked, Clara Schumann and Bulgarian Women's Choirs – plug in and listen!
- ◆ An array of videos for borrowing or watching at the library – try *Go Fish*, *Mardi Gras*, or the *Gay & Lesbian Choir* (donations always appreciated)
- ◆ A completely revamped kiddies' corner complete with cushions, tiny table and chairs. We also found room for a recommended junior fiction stand, so bring your children and have a browse. And we're always looking for donations of high quality, non-stereotyped kids books.



A PLACE OF OUR OWN (APOLOGIES TO VIRGINIA)

With over 500 members and 100 wonderful volunteers, the Library has now well and truly established itself as a dynamic community centre.

We continue to pursue funding for a full-time coordinator who will ensure the smooth running of the Library's activities. As you may know, our Sponsor-a-Coordinator scheme is well underway, and your contributions to this bring us closer to this goal.

With the current collection bursting off the shelves, it was essential that TWL found some room to grow – with the help of South Sydney Council, this room was found right across the hall.

With this new space, we aim to provide members with Internet access as well as a comprehensive collection of Australian domestic violence resources, consisting of journal articles, books and audio-visual tapes.

Searching for books will be much easier in the not-too-distant future with a computerised catalogue. Next time you drop a book off, why not check out the new rooms, browse through a previously unexplored section of the collection, or relax and read the paper in the new reading room.

We encourage members, friends, and children to enjoy the new Library space, and we welcome your comments.



PHOTOGRAPH - C. MOORE HARDY

JULIE MCCROSSIN WITH FRIENDS AT THE OPENING OF TWL'S NEW ROOMS

TWL KNOWHOW

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

The Women's Library now accepts Visa, Bankcard, and Mastercard.

■ LOAN PERIOD

Two weeks for all books.

Members can borrow up to six books at a time.

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.

■ LONG DISTANCE BORROWING

If you live outside the metropolitan area or have a great deal of difficulty getting here, The Women's Library will be happy to send particular titles to you by mail. (You will need to contact the library to enquire about particular titles as, at this stage, we do not have a catalogue available.) This service is available to members only, and the library asks that you finance the cost of returning the books.

■ 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, receive The Women's Library Newsletter four times a year, and are eligible to vote at our AGM.

■ 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 we especially would like to house in the library, 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 9319 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 new 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.

* Books donated under this scheme need to be valued at a minimum of \$25.00 for waged membership, \$15.00 for unwaged membership.

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

EDITORS SHELLY PEARCE + SIMONE FORD

DESIGN & PRODUCTION INGRID URH

TYPING VICKI HARDING

Party Round-up!

Whilst sipping on a Barbara Cartland (aka strawberry margarita), gay and lesbian advocate and performer Julie McCrossin delighted the revellers celebrating the second birthday of The Women's Library with her descriptions of the many faces of the Library.

Local writer Pearlie McNeill also entertained the packed room with her alternately funny and sobering coming-out tales, and offered advice from her wealth of writing experience to potential writers.

Appropriately, Vicki Harding, a founder of The Women's Library, cut the ceremonial chiffon to officially open the new and fabulously renovated rooms.

Literary cocktails were quaffed, salmon roulade gorged, and congratulations and thank-yous shared around. Those with the energy partied on at Top Gun. Thanks to all who attended, for another great celebration.

RAFFLE RESULTS

- ◆ Weekend for two at Swami Sarasvati Rejuvenation Farm Kay Sielden
- ◆ Tarot reading and Massage by Dianna Jett Donita Shadwick
- ◆ \$100 body piercing services from the Piercing Urge Gina
- ◆ Hand designed copper and silver pendant by Tracey Keogh-Bates Megan Paul
- ◆ Photographic accessories from Double-Quick Photos Ellen Shenfield
- ◆ Consultation from Inner West Veterinary Hospital and pet food from Pet's Nest, Balmain Maureen Cooney
- ◆ Voucher from Leichhardt Garden Centre R Stewart
- ◆ Dinner for two at Angelo's Restaurant, Paddington S Groenewegen
- ◆ Cut and blowdry from Headcase Judith

The Women's Library sends a big THANK YOU to all the businesses and individuals who donated prizes to our annual raffle.

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 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 WOMEN'S LIBRARY OPENING HOURS

TUESDAY TO FRIDAY - 11AM TO 8PM
 SATURDAY AND SUNDAY - 11AM TO 5PM
 Closed on Mondays
 73 GARDEN ST, ALEXANDRIA
 PHONE (02) 9319 0529



FROM L TO R: CATHY GALLAGHER, EMILY CLARK, ANNABELLE LUKIN AND PAULA KLASS CELEBRATING AT TWL'S 2ND BIRTHDAY PARTY

PHOTOGRAPH - C MOORE HARDY

THANK YOU

RENOVATIONS

COORDINATORS – Helen Wells, Jools Graeme, Miriam Bonello

The Women's Library Committee* and Anna Conn, Glennifer Roberts, Liz Smedley, Julie Earngey, Helen McCormack, Linda Morris, Sara Johnstone, Sheree Wilson, Stacey Carter, Kimberly Kitchener, Meredith Connie, Nicola O'Shea, Leila, Diane Swan, Barbara Wilson, Lilith Black, Marejja Gradon, Sonja Mahs, Jennie Burrows, Cecilia Gore, Anne Steng

SECOND BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

COORDINATORS – Amanda Elliot and Jo Angri

The Women's Library Committee and Berrivale Orchards, Orlando Wines, Coca Cola, Salubrious Cafe, Leichhardt Hotel, Liquor Land, Janelle Mussared of Truffles Restaurant in Bowral, Bob and Steve at Top Gun, Lexie Bradfield, Mitch, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Pearlie McNeill, Julie McCrossin, Sydney Star Observer, Capital Q, Lesbians on the Loose, Pact Theatre, Qantas, Myra Flynn, Margaret Thurgood, Maureen Cooney, Marny Kilby, Jo Angri, Cathy Gallagher, Wendy Holz, Anne Hocking, Lisa Howard, Fiona Powers, Samantha Beatty

FRIDA FUNDRAISER

COORDINATOR – Cathy Gallagher
MAILOUT – Greg and Peter Mason,

Emily Clark, Cathy Gallagher
VALHALLA – Ana J, Chris, Avice, Dale

CATALOGUERS

Marea Fillis, Beverley Moreman, Katherine Raper

STALLS

The Women's Library Committee and Liz Smedley, Gina Laurie, Rody Myers, Marny Kilby, Julie Earngey, Cathy Gallagher

STAFFING

COORDINATORS – Marny Kilby and Vicki Harding

The Women's Library Committee and Anna Conn, Anna Fitzpatrick, Anne Hocking, Annette Moore, Barbara Wilson, Carol Arrowsmith, Catherine Clements, Cathy Gallagher, Christine Petschler, Dianna Jett, Ellen Shenfield, Emily Clark, Emma Wedekind, Helen Wells, Inez Gershon, Jane Phillips, Jo Angri, Joanne Russo, Jocelyn Yem, Julie Earngey, Katalin Virag, Kate Fearnall-Heath, Kimberly Kitchener, Leila, Lilly, Lisa Mulholland, Liz Smedley, Margaret Smith, Margaret Thurgood, Marejja Gradon, Marion Buckley, Marny Kilby, Maureen Cooney, Megan Casey, Melinda Conry, Melissa Hook, Meredith Connie, Myra Flynn, Nerida Wood, Nicola O'Shea, Rody Myers, Ros Feltham, Ruth Carman, Samia Iskander, Stacy Carter, Stephanie Sparke, Sue Williamson, Susan McBride, Trish Spears, Ute Greiving, Wendy Holz

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

NEWSLETTER – Ingrid Urh

LOAN OF LAMINATING EQUIPMENT

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

PLANT MAINTENANCE

Glennifer Roberts

WORKING BEE

The Women's Library Committee and Marny Kilby, Lisa Howard, Miriam, Martin

MAILOUT

COORDINATORS – Donna Wilcox and Marny Kilby

The Women's Library Committee and Anneliese French, Megan Tutt, Wendy Hunt, Margaret Jones, Ute Greiving, Leila

BOOK COLLECTIONS & REFERRALS

The Feminist Bookshop

FURNITURE DONATIONS

CD PLAYER – Suzanne Pope

ADVERTISING

Paula Wallace

COMPUTER MAINTENANCE

Torleis Samundsett, Martin

DONATION OF SIX MONTHS

INTERNET SERVICE

Mary O'Brien

LOAN OF PRINTER

Jo Angri

*The Women's Library Committee consists of Donna Wilcox, Anne Jones, Simone Ford, Shelly Pearce, Amanda Elliot and Rose Bollen

MEMBERSHIP FORM

To become a member of THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY please fill out this form and enclose a cheque or money order payable to THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY INC. Membership fees are listed below.

Donation of a new title specified on a list at The Feminist Bookshop will be accepted in place of the membership fee.

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS.

NAME DATE

ADDRESS

POSTCODE PHONE (HOME) (WORK)

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY?

FEE ENCLOSED: \$50 FUNDED INSTITUTIONS PER YEAR \$30 WAGED PER YEAR
 \$20 UNWAGED PER YEAR \$5 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PER YEAR

PLEASE RETURN this form to THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY INC. PO BOX 271, NEWTOWN 2042

Thank You

Thank you to the following organisations, publishers and authors who have generously donated material to our **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT**...

- ◆ Ethnic Affairs Commission
- ◆ Department for Women
- ◆ Joint Board of Christian Education
- ◆ Domestic Violence Advocacy Service
- ◆ Redfern Legal Centre
- ◆ Southern Sydney Health Promotion Unit
- ◆ Ruth Frances – Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Co-operative Ltd
- ◆ Women's Information and Referral Centre, Canberra
- ◆ Office of the Status of Women, Tasmania
- ◆ Liverpool Women's Resource Centre
- ◆ Women's Information Centre, Alice Springs
- ◆ Domestic Violence Resource Centre, Brisbane
- ◆ Sydney City Mission
- ◆ Leo Cussen Institute
- ◆ Social Development Committee, Victorian Parliament
- ◆ Lower North Shore Domestic Violence Committee
- ◆ 2SERFM
- ◆ Law Society of NSW
- ◆ Parliamentary Library
- ◆ *The Canberra Times*
- ◆ Attorney-General's Department, Family and Admin Law Branch
- ◆ Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia
- ◆ Western Sydney Area Health Service
- ◆ Centre for Rural and Social Research
- ◆ Pluto Press
- ◆ Illawarra Legal Centre Inc
- ◆ The Victorian Community Council Against Violence
- ◆ Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
- ◆ Glenys Conrade
- ◆ Family and Children's Service, Perth
- ◆ Bill Wheeler

TWL AGM

The Women's Library's **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** is coming up on **24 November 1996** – all members are welcome to vote and attend. More details next issue.

New Volunteers Needed

The Women's Library is urgently looking for volunteers for several library projects.

If you have an interest in **cataloguing** or **data entry** please leave a message for Rose at the Library – **PHONE 9319 0529**. A commitment to this project will involve coming along to a working bee for 4 hours one weekend day a month. There will also be an initial training session.

The **Library Processes Sub-committee** is looking for new members. You may be interested in joining this committee if you enjoy working with and devising library systems. Librarians are particularly encouraged to come along. Please leave a message for Rose at the Library on **9319 0529** for further information.

We also need women to **voluntarily staff the library**. A commitment to staffing involves a 3 hour shift each week or fortnight. New volunteers are given an orientation and will always be on shift with a more experienced volunteer. Please call Vicki on **9319 0529** if you are interested. (Leave a message for Vicki if she's not in the Library.)

Thank You

THANKS to Victoria and Jo for editing the last two issues of this newsletter. **WELCOME** to a new group of editors – Simone Ford, Shelly Pearce and Amanda Elliot.

The Women's Library extends a very special belated (sorry, sorry, sorry!) **THANK YOU** to Cathy Gallagher for her outstanding efforts as coordinator for our film fundraisers in March.

Get on-line at TWL

By the time you read this, the Internet should be a happening thing at the Library, with a Home Page on the way. A big **THANK YOU** to Mary O'Brien for donating six months' connection time and making this possible.

Do we really n

KATHY HALE presents the second in a series of articles profiling
The Women's Library's collection...

THAT

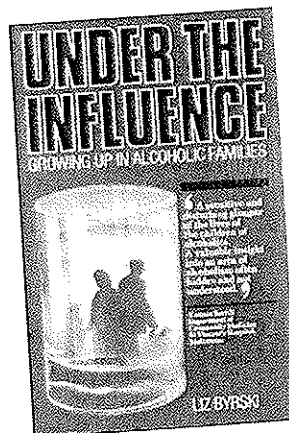
Much to our pride, Julie McCrossin of *The Sydney Star Observer* commented on the size of The Women's Library self-help section last month (11th July).

The range of concerns covered by this section of the collection are experiential, relational, spiritual and physical in nature – have I missed anything out? As well as literature for individual use, there are group workbooks and guides for those practicing self-help counselling. Knowing where to turn for help is clear with such a resource on hand.

Having recently decided to conscientiously reduce the number of chemicals in my immediate environment I was very interested in the alternative health books.

However, there were many other titles in the self-help section that caught my attention, and I found limiting the number of books I chose was a hard task.

Here I briefly describe eight books I settled on, giving you just a taste of what The Women's Library collection offers to those seeking to help themselves.

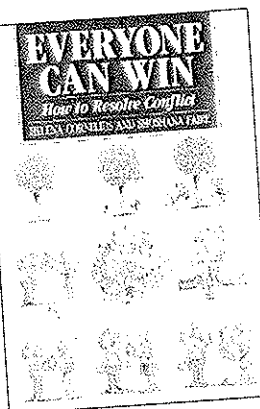


Under The Influence: Growing Up In Alcoholic Families

BYRSKI, L.

Collins Dove, North Blackburn
1987

Personally recounted experiences of Australian teenagers and adults who grew up in alcoholic families. Through these stories, examples of how to solve resulting problems and establish control of your life are presented.



Everyone Can Win: How to Resolve Conflict

CORNELIUS, H & FAIRE, S

Simon & Schuster, East Roseville
1994

Explains communication patterns that create conflict and provides techniques for managing these. A great book for anyone who wants to be assertive in their daily relationships at home or work.



Facing The Unthinkable: A Survival Guide for Mothers Whose Children Have Been Sexually Abused

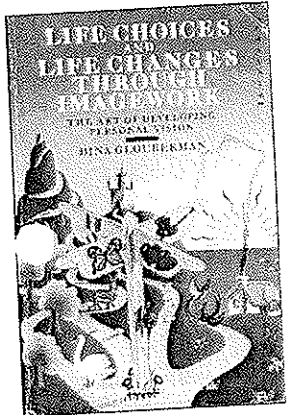
DYMPNA HOUSE EDITORIAL/
WRITERS' COLLECTIVE

Dympna House Inc., Haberfield
1990

Information on what to do if your child is being abused by someone you know. Personal experiences of other mothers in the same situation are spaced throughout the book, and contact details of support groups are given.

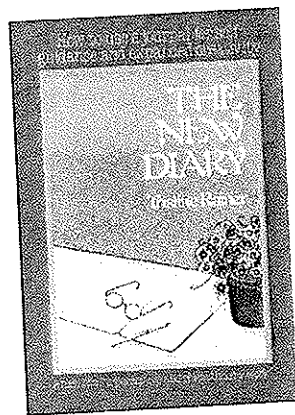
eed by kathy hale

MUCH help?



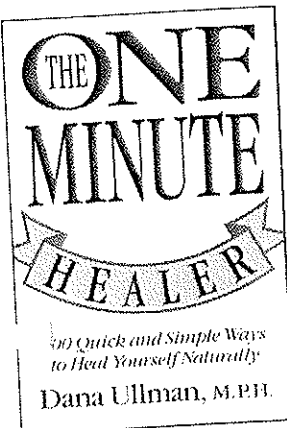
Life Choices and Life Changes Through Imagework: The Art of Developing a Personal Vision
GLOUBERMAN, D
 Unwin Hyman Limited, London 1989

Guides the reader in the use of mental images for tapping into, exploring and changing their life.



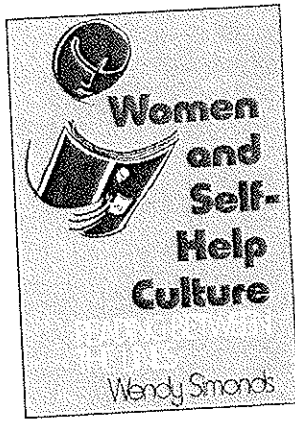
The New Diary: How to Use a Journal for Self Guidance and Expanded Creativity
RAINER, T
 Collins/Angus and Robertson, Pymble, 1990

Offers numerous suggestions on how to use a diary as a personal workbook of your life rather than as a daily calendar.



The One Minute Healer: 500 Quick and Simple Ways to Heal Yourself Naturally
ULMAN, D
 Bookman Press, Melbourne, 1991

Natural remedies for both treating and preventing common illnesses. The descriptive headings used in this book make it easy to find relevant information and easy to read. Heaps of neat quotes in this one too!




Women and Self-Help Culture: Reading Between the Lines
SIMONDS, W
 Rutgers University Press, USA 1992

A scholarly look at the self-help genre that examines why self-help literature is so popular and what effect it has on its readers and society as a whole.



Quiet Magic: A Fantasy. Introduction to Relaxation and Meditation for Children
MCKINNON, P
 David Lovell Publishing, Ringwood, 1990

A story book with a message that aims to introduce children aged around ten to the value of meditation. Ways to begin learning how to meditate are provided within the story.



The Feminist Bookshop

Shop 9, Orange Grove Plaza,
 Balmain Road, Lilyfield, Sydney, NSW 2040
 Fax (02) 818 5745
 Phone (02) 810 2666

Monday to Friday 10.30am — 6pm
 Saturday & Sunday 10.30am — 4pm

For all the best in women's books, music, gifts and cards.
 Booklists available on request for postal orders.

REVIEWS

Here is a sample of the kind of books you can 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.

WOMEN AND BISEXUALITY

SUE GEORGE

SCARLET PRESS, 1993

I've admired Sue George for a number of her writings, mainly from *Spare Rib*. She's always struck me as sensible and lucid. This book is no exception, and proved to be interesting, informative and thought-provoking. George cannot be accused of being a dry academic, but she also doesn't shirk on the research.

The first few chapters put bisexuality into theoretical and historical context, and hammer home that what George is talking about is British bisexuality as it affects white, middle class, reasonably educated women who have access to either the nascent bisexual community or the gay community.

Most of the material in the rest of the book comes from a comprehensive questionnaire she sent to respondents to advertisements placed in various journals. The quotes from those women enhance how their bisexuality had affected their lives in various ways.

If you're at all curious about bisexuality and its particular impact on women, then I recommend this book as a great overview.

SARAH J GROENEWEGEN

IDOLS TO INCUBATORS: REPRODUCTION THEORY THROUGH THE AGES

JULIA STONEHOUSE

SCARLET PRESS, LONDON, 1994

Where do babies come from? Prior to the turn of the 20th century, answers to this question were purely speculative because the fusion of the ovum and the sperm was not known. Unaware of this biological occurrence, people held various beliefs and ideas which, Julia Stonehouse argues, have profoundly affected our understanding of the 'nature' of women and men.

Her book, *Idols to Incubators*, scrutinises the development and impact for reproduction theory through the ages, commencing with the biological discoveries of the recent past and journeying back prior to 8000BC and to the notion of a parthenogenetic woman.

She divides her book into three parts. The first, 'Man the Seed, Woman the Incubator', explores the 'seed and soil' theory of reproduction which dominated thinking for nearly five hundred years and was not scientifically disproved until the beginning of the twentieth century. This theory maintains that human 'seed' – or one's genetic inheritance – comes from men who plant their seed in the 'soil' of the uterus, the woman.

Women, as this theory goes, nurture or grow what men have planted or created. Women do not create life

according to this viewpoint, they merely provide the incubator for what men have created. In some cultures, this male-seed theory remains the cornerstone of social and religious organisation.

In this section, Stonehouse explores issues such as how biology became destiny, the influence of religion and the wide-ranging ramifications of the seed theory such as inheritance laws, the proprietary rights of the father, child brides, domestic violence, ethnic cleansing, clitoridectomy and infibulation and rape as well as many others.

In the second section, 'Woman the Seed, Man the Stimulator', Stonehouse moves back in time to the period between 8000 and 3000BC in which it was believed that the 'seed' of future generations was housed within the bodies of women and that somehow men were needed to stimulate the seed to grow.

This, according to Stonehouse, was the period of female-centred creativity, where women were revered and men were required to simply help or facilitate the reproductive process. Stonehouse cites the predominance of historical artefacts of images of women and women's sexual parts and the scarcity of representation of men and (even rarer) of phalli which have survived from this period as evidence of female significance.

This was the age of the female goddess and of woman's spiritual authority and queenship, she claims. However, by the third century BC all of this had changed. Men were in control. What had caused the change? Stonehouse proposes several causes including the male take-over of agriculture around 3000BC and with an increased interest in animal 'husbandry', the observed generative importance of the male ('no ram = no lamb').

In the final section of her book, 'The Parthenogenetic Woman', Stonehouse goes further back in history to the period prior to 8000BC to the earliest reproduction theory – that women produced on their own, without men. She suggests that perhaps it was thought that babies were plucked from the body of a woman as fruit is plucked from the trees or from roots under the ground. Alternatively, she suggests, reproduction might have been a spiritual venture between the spirits of dead ancestors and women.

From Idols to Incubators is an attempt to shed new light on how relations between men and women – especially male control of women through male religions and male inheritance laws – followed from women being seen as nothing but incubators for the male seed. She uses a wealth of historical, anthropological and archaeological detail (including many pictorial illustrations) to argue that the past, present and future cannot be understood without acknowledging the place of reproductive theory.

Stonehouse's research is extensive. The book's text is 198 pages in length and is supplemented by comprehensive endnotes. She incorporates a comprehensive bibliography (with feminist as well as mainstream references).

As for shortcomings, her depth of research carries with it a double-edged sword. This is a dense book – fact after fact after fact. It also tends to be repetitious in parts. For example, the information contained on pages 80-81 is repeated almost word for word on page 151. This might not be an issue for the reader who does not sit down and read the book from cover to cover in one sitting, as I did.

Stonehouse also slips into 'rhetoric mode' with some regularity. Once again, that may not be a problem for some readers. Despite these shortcomings, the book is well researched and written in an accessible style. It would appeal to women with an interest in women's studies, women's health, anthropology or similar.

MAREE RAFTOS

I TOOK MY HARP TO A PARTY

ALEXANDRA LONG
PICADOR, SYDNEY, 1993
Donated by the author

In this collection of short stories dealing with love, death and the beginning of life, Alexandra Long reveals an ironic view of the world, and writes of a society which is fixated on the concept of love but has difficulty actualising these emotions.

Her characters are complex, chameleon-like and multi-layered. In 'Too Close to the Moon' her analysis of the breakdown of a marriage is wry, humorous and dispassionate. The superficiality of daily routines and weekend rituals are mercilessly exposed giving me the feeling that if the kaleidoscope was twisted just once more it would be *Women's Day*.

In a later story, 'I Took My Harp to a Party', Stanley, the central character, traverses his six lives with the skill of a water beetle skating across a pond's surface. His thoughts seem frozen within him and as the narrative develops his face and body are disguised by a cat suit and a cloak so that he is the invisible man.

Long's dexterity and skill with words are evident throughout this collection. I look forward to reading more of her work which might reflect a greater concern with developing her characters in an extended form. Occasionally her writing appears facile but her perceptive observations and humour ensure her solidity as a short story writer. Her collection will bring a smile to the face of any reader embroiled in the demands of daily living in a big city.

MAUREEN COONEY

DRINKING THE RAIN

ALIX KATES SHULMAN
BLOOMSBURY, LONDON, 1995

"After half a lifetime of adapting to the needs of others in the high tide of the family, here at fifty, with no one to ask or answer to, I'm beginning to see who I am when the tide goes out."

I have a weakness for books that explore the complexities surrounding "a woman alone in the wilderness". This weakness (as well as being drawn to the title and the cover) is what drew me to Alix Kates Shulman's *Drinking the Rain*. In many ways the book reminds me of May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* and Joan Barfoot's *Gaining*

Ground. All three are rich in the details of the moment; all three celebrate the wonder and beauty of nature, of food; all three grapple with the polarity of luxury versus survival; all three dive down deep to unravel what it means to be a woman in 20th century Western society; all three contain a selection of absolute gems to be read, pondered and re-read.

Drinking the Rain is a delightful, thought-provoking, gentle, brutal read. Beautifully written, it delves deep into questions of mind and body, culture and nature, man and woman. Two things about the book, given its explicitly feminist overtones, do however continue to puzzle me.

The first – why the over-reliance on the profound thoughts of dead white men (Thoreau, Baldwin, Kafka, Plato, Russell...)? And the second, odd in a book so perceptive, so thoughtful, so questioning, that (hetero)sexuality is so readily taken for granted.

Odd that the profound connection between the two women on the island can never go beyond the boundary of friendship; odd that Charles takes up the position of lover by virtue it seems of his maleness – for what is the difference between him and Margaret as they are presented in the book? Both exploring the world beyond fifty from an ideology based in New Age Philosophy, both shunning the expectations placed on them by capitalism, by patriarchy – well, except that of heterosexuality...

These are but two of the questions I'll continue to ponder in the afterglow of reading *Drinking the Rain*. Is the "I" in the book Alix Kates Shulman? Why is that not made explicit? What is the connection between autobiography and fiction? If this is autobiography, do I as reviewer have the right to ask the questions I have, or should such questions be reserved for fiction alone? Am I questioning the limits of the text or the limits of the person?

JUDITH ION

RETURN OF THE GREAT GODDESS

EDITED BY BURLEIGH MUTEN
GILL & MACMILLAN, DUBLIN, 1994
Donated by Banyan Tree Distributors

Return of the Great Goddess is an anthology of nearly two hundred pages brimming with images and literary passages that re/present the various faces and focus of the Divine Feminine and women's relationship with Her. They hark back to a time when women's innate wisdom, their "knowing", was respected and when their power to bleed, birth and crone was held sacred.

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The images represent women in all of their guises and glorify the connection between their cycles and nature. Paramount is the concept that the Goddess is enduring and in all things: "She is darkness as well as light. Her cycles encompass all moods and all phases...creativity and death" (p.22) - "everywhere is her abode" (p.44).

In all, the anthology proclaims the strength and majesty of the feminine experience, reminds us of our spiritual heritage and innate wisdom, the integrity of our bodies and their rites of passage, and the global - and growing - community of women who are part of the Goddess spirituality movement.

Return of the Great Goddess makes for good reading and my only wish is that the stages of the virgin and crone were as equally well represented as that of the mother.

KHARLA INGRID KEDGLEY

MOTHER JOURNEYS:

FEMINIST WRITING ABOUT MOTHERING

M REDDY, M ROTH & A SHELDON (EDS)

SPINSTERS, MINNESOTA, 1994

MOTHERS GROWING UP: UNDERSTANDING THE HEARTACHES OF MOTHERHOOD

JUNE E DE VAUS

ALLEN AND UNWIN, NORTH SYDNEY, 1992

Donated by the author

I've had *Mother Journeys* for about one year and I will be rather sad handing it back to the library. It is the kind of book that is great to dip into and warrants more than a single reading. I began reading it when I was considering having a child and I find that now, four months after the birth of my first child, it is still as relevant, interesting, challenging and affirming as when I first opened it.

Mother Journeys helps to fill a gap in the market. It is a collection of writing by American women, in a wide range of genre, about the experience of mothering or being mothered. (It would be great to see an Australian collection published.)

Not all the women wrote as mothers themselves but reflected upon their experiences in styles ranging from personal anecdotes, poetry and academic essays. This is one aspect that makes the book rather more interesting and varied than simply a collection of women's anecdotes or narratives of their mothering experiences. The book is well balanced with a realistic range of views, attitudes and values explored by the writers, who come from diverse backgrounds.

The topics dealt with were neither sanitised nor sensationalised. I found the realism of Linda P Aaker's 'Birthing Death' poignant and moving. Her daughter, born with extensive deformities, dies fifteen and one half days after her birth. The writing gave me an insight into the fluctuating emotions that could be experienced during such an event together with a shifting view of the doctor's emotional connection and input into their lives throughout the traumatic period.

'Two Mums, Two Kids and a Dog' by Sarah Brukner explores heterosexist assumptions in a society that defines 'family' in such a limited way as to assume that parenting is done with someone of the opposite sex. Race, poverty, the gendered nature of childcare and society, and the sensual experience of mothering are but a few of the topics dealt with in this great anthology.

You don't need to be a mother or considering procreation to appreciate this book. If you are interested in considering your own position of having been mothered or to read many thoughtful and refreshing accounts and explorations of what that broad term 'mother' means, from a range of societal positions, then this book will have many rich offerings for you to pick from.

Mothers Growing Up is a welcome addition to the feminist literature on motherhood and parenting. It is written by an Australian psychologist, with many case studies illustrating the main tenets of the text. I found the book informative, thought provoking and accessible.

Anyone wanting to more clearly understand their own upbringing and the effect this may have, or have had, on their parenting style and strategies may find the analysis offered in this book quite useful.

De Vaus addresses what she sees as the common problems of motherhood: anxiety and confusion, vicarious living, maternal guilt and relationship strategies. She labels particular categories of mothers with problems, and describes them as the conditional mother, the rejected mother, the unimportant mother and the precocious mother. Through case descriptions she analyses the problems behind the presenting behaviours and the kind of strategies the women need to learn to change their approach to mothering and thereby change their experience of motherhood, from one full of heartache to one of joy.

The book is a feminist analysis of motherhood and has at its core the imperative that women must understand their own needs in order to develop positive and enjoyable relationships. It is quite critical of earlier feminist positions that labelled the state of motherhood as an oppressive institution in itself, with analysis centring on sex role theories and the gendered nature of society.

De Vaus suggests that changing girls' upbringing and the possibility of entering into shared parenting in a more equitable society, as not sufficient to change the heartaches some women find in mothering. If women are unable to change their relational patterns with their children, partners and society, to ones that are healthy and fulfilling, they will continue to be weighed down by issues of anxiety and dependency, with a fear of failure and a sense of hopelessness and helplessness the most likely presenting symptoms.

NERIDA WOOD

Contributions NEEDED

To all budding journo's - *TWL Newsletter* is looking for contributions. Regular areas of contribution include interviews, book reviews, and up and coming events, but we are very open to your ideas. So if you have the time, inclination and enthusiasm, leave a message for Shelly, Amanda or Simone at the Library, or send submissions to the Editorial Committee, care of the Library.

INFORMATION PAGE

UPCOMING EVENTS

◆ WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE OF PEACE AND FREEDOM

Guest Speaker: Alexandra Menegakis discussing the feminist critique of International Relations
September 14, 2.00pm Unitarian Church Hall
13 Francis Street, Sydney

◆ THE POLITICS OF CYBERFEMINISM

Deakin University, Victoria
September 21 ENQUIRIES (052) 272 262

◆ NATIONAL BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS CONFERENCE

Hobart
October 1-4 ENQUIRIES FAX (03) 9277 5500

◆ HEALTH IN DIFFERENCE

Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research,
Sydney University
October 3 to 5 ENQUIRIES Sonia Lawless 9351 5562

◆ NATIONAL HOMEBIRTH CONFERENCE

Laetare Gardens, Moonah, Tasmania
November 1 to 3 ENQUIRIES Unitas Consulting
Phone (003) 243 044

◆ AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

November 27 to 29 ENQUIRIES (09) 360 2269

◆ FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VIOLENCE IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Parks Community Centre, Adelaide
April 10 and 11, 1997 ENQUIRIES BM Saraswati,
Southern Women's Health Centre, PO Box 437,
Noarlunga Centre SA 5166

RESOURCES RECEIVED

RESOURCES DONATED BY AUTHORS, CONTRIBUTORS, AND EDITORS

- *Women's Research & Employment Initiatives Program* (Set of three) – DEET
- *Self Defence for Women Video* – Penny Gulliver
- *How to Learn Faster & Easier* – Deborah Joy Braithwaite
- *Women's Voices; Refugee Lives* – Pealie McNeill & Meg Coulson (eds) Donated by Pealie McNeill

- *Building Bridges* – Don Dunoon in collaboration with Donna Wilcox; donated by Donna Wilcox
- *The Wife Who Spoke Japanese in Her Sleep* – Vivienne Plumb
- *Femocrats & Ecorats* – Marian Sawyer

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

- *Active* – magazine of the Women and Sport Unit
- *ALGA Newsletter*
- *AGENDA*
- *ANESBWA Newsletter* – Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia
- Australian Tyre Manufacturers' Association Newsletter
- *AIWRAP-UP* – The Australian Institute for Women's Research and Policy
- *Bandaged Bear*
- *The Bulletin of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*
- *Charities Bulletin*
- Coalition of Activist Lesbians Australia Newsletter
- Conflict Resolution Network News
- *Crossing Press*
- *Earthwise Women*
- Equal Opportunity Tribunal Papers
- *Gayzette*
- *GLPCI Network* – Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International
- *Grapevine*
- *Hooter*
- *HQ*
- *Inmagic News*
- *Inner Voice*
- *International Newsletter on Women's Information Services*
- *International Peace Update*
- *Issues in Child Abuse Prevention*
- Jessie Street National Women's Library Newsletter
- Journal of Australian Lesbian Feminist Studies
- *Lesbiana*
- *Lesbians on the Loose*
- *Lezbiz Focus*
- *Lifesaver* – Journal of the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project
- *Mountain Lesbian News*
- *National Library News*
- *Network* – Rural Women's Network
- *Newswrite*
- *Newtown Bridge*
- NSW Equal Opportunity Tribunal Report
- *Out of the Ashes*
- *Pandora*
- *Peace & Freedom*
- *Public Library News*
- *Queensland Pride*
- *Screaming Hyena*
- *Sisters in Crime*
- *Spinsters Ink Spring Catalogue*
- *SWAN* – School of Women Artists Network
- *Sydney Star Observer*
- *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*
- *WARM Update*
- *The Volunteer Issue*
- *WEL-Informed*
- *What's On at The Y*
- *Women Incest Survivors Network*
- *Women in Film & Television Newsletter*
- *Women in Focus*

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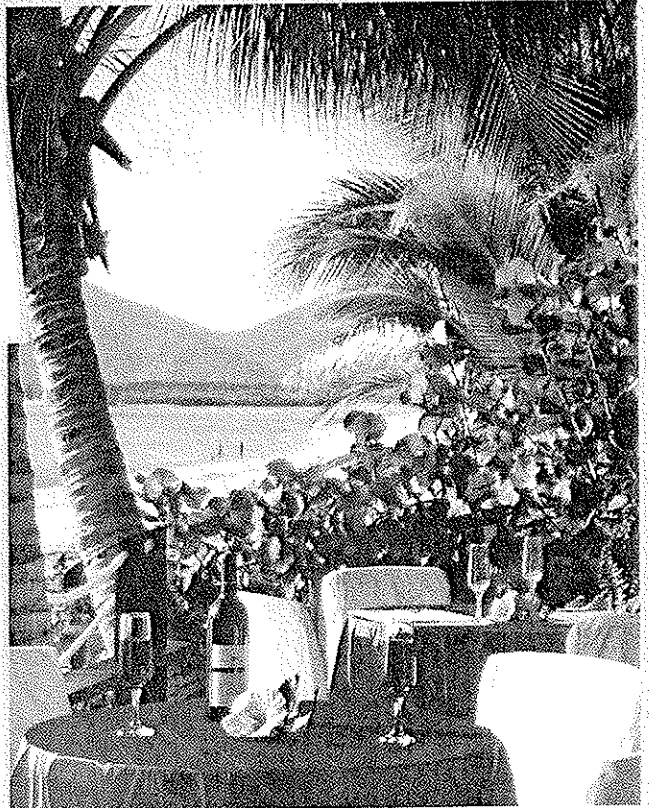
COMING UP - 1997

- **WOMEN'S-ONLY WEEK**
in the Daintree 4 - 9 Jan
- **GAY + LESBIAN**
Fitzroy Island 8 - 9 March
- **WOMEN'S FORTNIGHT**
Man Friday Resort, Fiji July
- **SOUTH AMERICA -**
Inca trail for women 5 - 26 Sept

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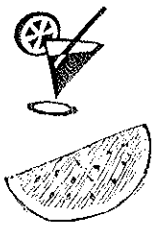
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