



Women in Libraries

Volume 26, Number 2

The Feminist Task Force—25 Years

Winter 1997



FTF, ready to take the capitol by storm

Midwinter '97: Washington, D.C.

FTF agenda to include: elections, racism, more

Election endorsements will be high on the list of tasks at Midwinter. Two candidates for ALA Council are well known to the Feminist Task Force; others may be announced at the Midwinter Conference. GraceAnne DeCandido, involved in women's issues for many years, is a candidate for Council. She has been an editor for H. W. Wilson until recently, and before that, for *Library Journal*.

Susana Hinojosa is also running for Council; she was instrumental in developing the FTF racism preconference in Berkeley in 1987.

Another goal includes finding additional means to promote anti-racist training and awareness. At Annual, we also discussed encouraging *American Libraries* to reinstate its policy of including salary ranges in employment advertisements, revising the FTF brochure, updating the SHARE (Sisters Have Resources Everywhere) Directory, and revisiting the issue of ALA-sponsored conference day care.

See the folding pocket calendar, pages 5 and 6, for selected meeting times.

In this issue:

Conference News, pages 2 and 5

Midwinter calendar, pages 5 and 6

Book reviews:

Human Rights • Self Defense • Short Stories • Poetry • More

Beginning on page 3

Berman receives Intellectual Freedom Award

Sanford Berman has been selected to receive the Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award for 1996. Berman will receive the award at a reception on Saturday, February 15, 1997, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Dupont Plaza Hotel, during the ALA Mid-Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Berman's work influenced the Library of Congress to adopt new, less-biased subject headings, and his efforts contributed to the American Library Association Council's adopting a policy on providing library access and services to the poor.

A winner is selected annually by the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The award acknowledges individuals or groups who have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom, particularly as it impacts libraries and information centers and the dissemination of ideas. Granted to those who have resisted censorship or efforts to abridge the freedom of individuals to read or view materials of their choice, the award may be in recognition of a particular action or long-term interest in, and dedication to, the cause of intellectual freedom.

Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., Westport, Connecticut, supports the award by providing an honorarium to the recipient and co-hosting the reception.

Earlier recipients include Eleanor and Elliot Goldstein, founders of the Social Issues Resources Series, Inc. [SIRS] (1995); Maggie Breen, collection coordinator, Jefferson County (CO) Public Library (1994); Nat Hentoff, writer and journalist (1993); Mary Jo Goodwin, former editor of the Wilson Library Bulletin (1992); and Dennis Barrie and the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center (1991).

Book to come out on varied sexuality of librarians

Liberating minds: the stories and professional lives of gay, lesbian and bisexual librarians and their advocates, to be released in June, examines the "coming out" experiences of gay, lesbian, and bisexual librarians in the United States, Canada, Germany and New Zealand. The book contains more than 35 selections, from narratives, memoirs, interviews, speeches, letters, short stories, and research papers by Sanford Berman, Barbara Gomez, Ellen Greenblatt, library educator James V. Carmichael, Jr., and others, and a foreword by Cal Gough. McFarland & Company is the publisher.

In bringing together an international collection of accounts, the book spotlights alternative sexual orientations and pertinent issues among library

professionals, their advocates, library users, book-sellers, and others.

The author, Norman G. Kester, MLIS, is a librarian in Ontario, Canada and is a columnist and contributor to two upcoming monographs—*Civil rights, libraries, and black librarianship* and *Darting to find our names: the search for lesbian/gay library history*.

Promotion activities are scheduled in San Francisco at ALA's 1997 Annual Conference, with a World Wide Web site set to go up within a few months.

Parastoo

Continued from page 7

The jacket of *Parastoo* indicates the book "echoes with the sorrow of exile yet offers the tender promise of rejuvenation." If physical and/or emotional death is a form of rejuvenation, perhaps. This book can be recommended for extensive collections of Middle Eastern literature only.

—K. Thompson



Women in Libraries

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~holman/FTF/>

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Send articles, comments, or materials for review, but not subscription questions, to: Madeleine Tainton, Media Services Librarian, West Texas A&M University, WTAMU Box 736, Canyon, TX 79016-0736. Phone: 806-656-2407; Fax 806-656-2213; e-mail: mtainton@wtamu.edu.

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Rights and fiction: El Salvador and elsewhere

✦ Tula, María Teresa. *Este es mi testimonio: María Teresa Tula, luchadora pro-derechos humanos de El Salvador*. With Lynn Stephen. Boston: South End Press, 1994. Cloth, ISBN 0-896084-85-X, \$30.00; paper, ISBN 0-896084-84-1, \$14.00.

Hear my testimony is a compelling, auto-biographical account of a human rights activist in El Salvador during its worst episodes of political and social violence. In her own words, as recorded by Lynn Stephen, María Teresa Tula tells about her childhood growing up poor in a small town, Izalco. When her father abandoned the family, she went to live with her mother and stepfather in Santa Ana. There she reunited with her first love, Rafael Canales, and they had three children. Her husband got a job in a sugar mill where the working conditions were horrible; consequently, he and his fellow workers went on strike. The army intervened, clearly on the side of the employer, telling the workers their strike was hurting the economy and thereby illegal. Canales was among twenty-one workers arrested, whom the media characterized as "terrorists". Up to this point, the couple were simply trying to make ends meet.

Tula's first taste of political activism came with the arrest of her husband. She then got involved with CO-MADRES (Committee of Salvadorean Mothers and Families of Political Prisoners, Missing Persons, and those Murdered), which did not sit well with her husband, who found himself black-listed and unemployed. Eventually, he became supportive of Tula's work of keeping track of the victims of government repression. In the midst of heightened tensions and the Salvadoran government's denials of clandestine "cementaries," Canales was taken prisoner. The newspaper later reported that he was killed in a "shoot-out" with police. The 1980 assassination of Archbishop Romero, who had been speaking out against the government's inability to control the army's gross violations of human rights, added fuel to the fire. With arms and money, the United States shamelessly continued to support a government that tolerated right-wing death squads and opposed, together with the elites, much needed land reform. In fact, the article by Kelley Ready in this volume provides a historical background to the land problem in El Salvador which was the underlying cause of the insurgency in the countryside.

Guilt-by-association was often used as a justification to eliminate entire families. To avoid capture and possible harm to her family, Tula left the country and became a spokesperson for CO-MADRES while traveling through Mexico, Canada, the United States, and Europe. Upon her return to El Salvador in 1984, she was imprisoned and there

tortured and raped. She reveals nothing about the CO-MADRES workers; they use pseudonyms and do not even tell their own families what exactly they do. In the book, she pointedly states that international pressure forced the government to release her, and in no way was this amnesty initiated by the government. She again went into exile. Nevertheless, she ends her story on an optimistic note. The peace agreement signed between the government and the insurgents (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional) in 1991 give her hope that one day she will return to El Salvador to participate in the process of reconciliation.

Tula's story is certainly good reading. It should further convince the American people of what was actually going on in El Salvador, especially if ever translated into English. Many Americans at the time did not buy her story and, instead, believed that the U.S. government was sending aid to El Salvador in order to restore democracy. Hopefully, the misinformation will be relegated to the garbage bin of history.

—P. Charney

✦ Randall, Margaret. *The price you pay: the hidden cost of women's relationship to money*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 0-415912-03-2, \$59.95; paper, ISBN 0-415912-04-0, \$16.95.

Margaret Randall, poet, committed socialist and activist, has written a book on money. In a recent talk at New Words Bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she described the book as a "poet's study rather than an academic study" of the relationship of women and money.

In her introductory section, she notes that the women's movement has created safe spaces for us to speak of formerly unspeakable things: rape, incest, child abuse, spousal abuse, our sexuality. We are, however, often conflicted when asked about our income, state of personal finances, or the monetary resources at our disposal. Throughout the book, she quotes heavily from responses to a survey she sent to 830 women from a wide variety of backgrounds varying in class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and economic status. With a written response rate of about 11%, she followed up 37 of the responses with in-depth interviews. She was surprised by the number of friends and acquaintances who agreed verbally to respond to the survey, but who ultimately did not.

The book asks more questions than it answers. The issues raised are very intriguing and encourage us to examine the metaphors, myths, lies, and/or rules which surround money or financial concerns

Book Review Section

Continued from page 3

in our families of origin and the families we have created in adulthood.

She relates her discussions with women to our tendency to lie casually about money issues, e.g., raising or lowering our salary when asked to respond to cues from questioner, lowering it if we feel ashamed that we earn more than our friends or raising it because we equate our worth with the amount paid for our labor. She reveals, also, the power of our early socialization. Although she has spent most of her adult life in socialist Cuba or Nicaragua and thought she had escaped our own culture's deifying of money, she, too, acted in manipulative ways with her own children when it came to money—pretending to give money freely only to criticize the choice of where to spend it! In the last chapter, her daughter tells her story, and we glimpse the process we all need to go through to clear the demons surrounding money and its power from our psyches.

The book's primary value is in raising the issues—it goes way beyond the often-noted exclusion of women and girls from financial information and delves into how this exclusion affects our personal relationships with friends, lovers, and co-workers, and our political relationships in organizations and to our governments. It also gives us a peek at what feminist responses to financial organization can bring—beyond sliding scales of fees and voluntary fee setting. Margaret Randall's other books include:

Women in Cuba, twenty years later. NY: Smyrna Press, 1981. With photographs by Judy Janda.

Risking a somersault in the air: conversations with Nicaraguan writers. San Francisco: Solidarity Publications, 1984.

Sandino's daughters: testimonies of Nicaraguan women in struggle. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981; revised edition, Rutgers University Press, 1995.

The shape of red: insider/outsider reflections with Ruth Hubbard. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1988.

Coming home: peace without complacency. Albuquerque: West End Press, 1990.

Gathering rage: the failure of twentieth century revolutions to develop a feminist agenda. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1992.

Sandino's daughters revisited: feminism in Nicaragua. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994.

—T. Tobin

✦ Deming, Barbara; McDaniel, Judith, ed. *I change, I change: poems by Barbara Deming.* Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 0-934678-72-3, \$12.95.

The poems here follow a chronology that mirrors Barbara Deming's relationships; each chapter is named for a woman the author loved. The early poems are full of freedom and passion and, as Grace Paley notes in the preface, bear a resemblance to the work of e.e.cummings. The later works become more modulated, reserved, and polished, an indication of the author's maturation and her response to pain and trouble with discipline and vision. The change reflects a turn from inward to outward concerns, as Deming grew more active in various civil rights movements.

Deming, like Marie Claire Blais, Kate Millet, and others who grew up and eventually came out in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, continued to strive for a supportive community in a desire to combine the strength of the group with the strength of the individual in a way that would allow freedom and responsibility to coexist. She sought to reconcile the need to make art and to make a living, and to make a "right living." She became an activist and worked to make the world recognize the needs of women, the underprivileged, minorities, and eventually the gay and lesbian community. Most of the poems in this volume deal with love, with self-criticism, with passion and with nature, and with personal rather than political issues. Only some of the later poems comment on the political struggle, ridiculing the church for acting as if God the Father could suckle babies, for example, as if the traditionally patriarchal structure would nourish those outside the political pale.

As a poet and as the granddaughter of an Armenian immigrant who buried himself in assimilation to try to save his children and himself the pain of racism, I identify with and respect Deming. Her struggle for acceptance, for love, for the chance to do her work, and for spiritual strength in a world that would sometimes imply that she was not worthy of any of these things, and her persistence in spite of the difficulties, is exemplary. The introduction, preface, and epilogue add a great deal to the book as literary biography, although most of the poetry would stand alone. Deming wrote, after her last operation for cancer:

"AND NOW MY SPIRIT GUIDES HAIL ME AND
SMILE I'VE SUNG MYSELF BEYOND THIS
LIFE'S PALE."

I would recommend this volume of poems for libraries with poetry collections, collections that lack women or lesbian authors, and as counterpoint to *Prison Notes* or some of her other political or autobiographical titles.

—N. Parker-Gibson

Review section continued on page 7

Women in Libraries

Meeting Schedule: Confirm all dates and times and check locations in the ALA Midwinter Meeting Program.

Saturday, February 15

- 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m., SRRT Action Council, Renaissance Washington, Grand Ballroom S
 - **All Task Force, 9:30—11 a.m., including Feminist Task Force**
 - Action Council I, 11 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

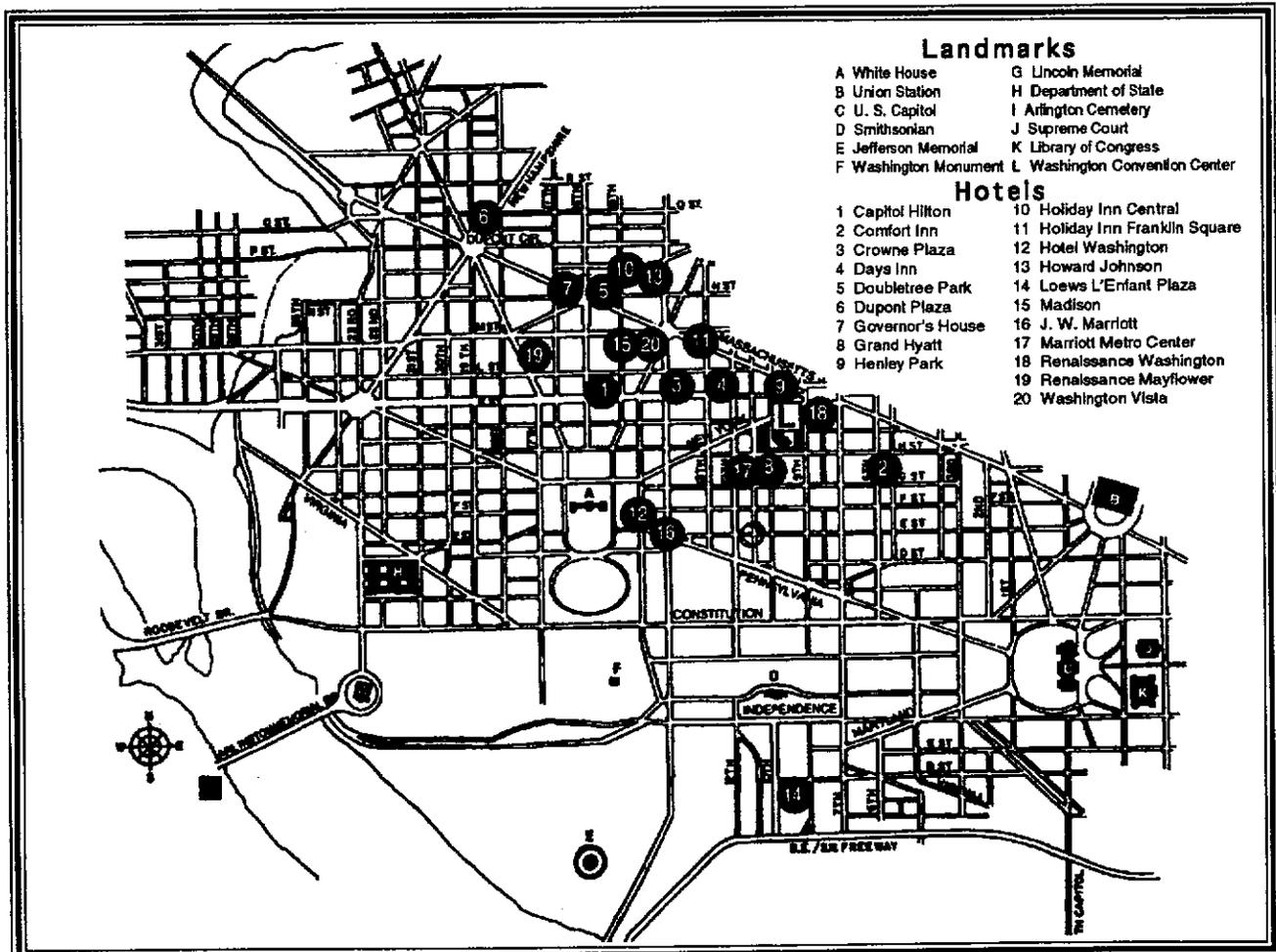
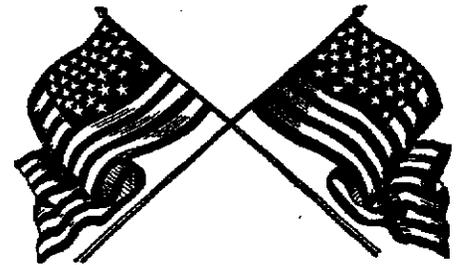
The following Task Forces have scheduled one of their meetings during this slot: Poverty Task Force; International Relations Task Force; **Feminist Task Force**; Alternatives in Print Task Force Business Meeting; Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Task Force Steering Committee, (Room 17, adjacent to Grand Ballroom); and the Task Force on the Environment.
- 2:00—4:00 p.m., Progressive Librarians Guild, Renaissance Washington, Grand Ballroom C
- 2:00—5:30 p.m., GLBTF Book Award Committee, Washington Convention Center, Table 8
- 4:30—5:30 p.m., GLBTF Program Planning Committee, Capitol Hilton, Michigan

Sunday, February 16

- 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m., WSS, All Committee
- 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m., GLBTF Book Award Committee, Washington Convention Center, Table 19
- 4:30—5:30 p.m., WSS, General Membership

Monday, February 17

- **8:00—9:00 a.m., Feminist Task Force**, Washington Convention Center, Room 28
- 9:00—10:15 a.m., ALA Council
- 9:30—11:00 a.m., WSS, Discussion
- 9:30—11:00 a.m., GLBTF Program Planning Committee, Washington Convention Center, Room 18
- 2:00—4:00 p.m., Monday, SRRT Action Council II, Renaissance Washington, Congres. Hall A
- 2:00—4:00 p.m., WSS, Executive Committee





ALA Council Meetings

- Monday, February 17
 • 9:00—10:15 a.m.
- Tuesday, February 18
 • 9:00—11:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, February 19
 • 9:00 am—12:00 p.m.

SRRT has moved the Tuesday morning meeting so that we can attend Council and support those Council members who support us. Make it a point to be there, if you can.



Capitol places: basic guide

The Washington Monument. Map Letter F. Surely this famous monument takes the prize for Most Phallic National Building. You may take an elevator to 500 feet from 9 to 5 daily. To walk (it's 898 steps), call and make arrangements: 202-426-6841.

Capitol Building. Map Letter C. Here's the famous place where they didn't pass the ERA. Open 9 to 4:30; tours from 9 to 3:45. Get visitor passes to the House or Senate galleries from a legislator in your state and see if you can get a look at Newt.

Library of Congress. Map Letter K. A must for all us librarians, filled with treasures in print. Exhibit Halls open weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., weekends to 6 p.m.

Supreme Court. Map Letter J. Open 9 to 4:30 weekdays; lectures on the half hour to 3:30 when court is not in session. Come early to get a seat for oral arguments; seating is first come, first served. Don't throw oranges, tempting as it may be.

Smithsonian Institution. Map Letter D. A collection of museums open 10 to 5:30 daily, with some exceptions. The National Gallery is open 10 to 5 Monday through Saturday and noon to 9 on Sunday. Call 202-357-2700 for other exceptions. Admission is free, one of the truly great values left.

The White House. Map Letter A. A bastion of the patriarchy, but Hillary lives there, too. Open 10 to noon, Tuesday through Saturday, with some exceptions. Get there early. For information, call 202-456-7041 or 202-472-3669.

Book Review Section

✦ Brownworth, Victoria A. *Too queer: essays from a radical life*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1996. Cloth, ISBN 1-56341-075-3, \$26.95; paper, ISBN 1-56341-074-5, \$13.95.

Victoria Brownworth, a lesbian journalist and Pulitzer Prize nominee, is anti-assimilationist in her view of the homosexual community, a view that undergirds this collection of essays ranging in topics from outing public figures as a political tool, through female genital mutilation and her fight against breast cancer to her love of gardens.

In her essay, "Lesbians, outing, and the politics of the closet," she describes the determination of certain journalists to expose famous gay men and women who have not announced their sexual orientation to the public, particularly those individuals who have been in a position to achieve political and cultural gains for the homosexual community. Women, Brownworth admits, have rarely been targeted by this radical method of activism, mostly because lesbians do not have the financial and political power of their gay counterparts. As for her own actions, she explains, "I have personally only outed two living people. One case was inadvertent. . . The other woman I outed was working for the FBI and turning in women and men who were queer; those people would then be fired for violating FBI security rules." She recounts the history of outing

black cultural thing," as one of her professors named it. Continued research demonstrated that this procedure is not unknown in the United States. "According to the Centers for Disease Control, there have been 'random' cases of botched excisions reported in New York, New Jersey, and California . . ." This practice is not against the law in the United States despite the efforts of Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder to pass legislation against it. The legislation never made it into committee. Brownworth succinctly portrays the world's indifference to the plight of the 3-4 million girls mutilated each year, "the sexual mutilation of one man (John Bobbitt) generated more publicity than the sexual mutilation of a hundred million women."

These essays cover a range of subjects about which Brownworth is passionate and outspoken. The issues are global, not primarily lesbian, though her analysis of the subjects are from a lesbian viewpoint. This volume is a wonderful educational tool for all thinking, concerned people.

—P. Crossland

✦ Yalfani, Mehri. *Parastoo: stories and poems*. Women's Press, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-889612-11-0, \$10.95.

In this collection of poems and short stories we encounter women who live in oppression in Iran and

"the sexual mutilation of one man . . . generated more publicity than the sexual mutilation of a hundred million women."

both in the tabloid and legitimate press, concluding that this political tool will have lost its leverage when society does not regard lesbianism as aberrant. The weakness in this essay is her failure to record the consequences to the individuals who have been outed; in an increasingly violent society, individuals who do not share her view are targets for homophobics, perhaps the most famous posing the largest marks.

Brownworth's personal ethics do not permit her to out individuals she feels are not actively harming the lesbian/gay community; others in her profession do not necessarily adhere to that standard. Few people would care to be politically martyred to a cause they do not believe in; in fact, the mainstream homosexual community has been outspoken in its opposition to outing.

In her exceptional essay, "A hundred million women," Brownworth paints a graphic mural of the precise horror of female genital mutilation. Her shock, as she watches a news report in London where she realizes young girls are being castrated a few blocks from her apartment, is transformed into twenty years of education on this issue. For a time she regarded this practice as a foreign problem, "a

women who have emigrated from oppression in Iran to despair and helplessness in North America. These are tales of loss of culture, homeland, friends and family. The sentences are terse to the point of being monosyllabic, and the characters' names are symbolic in a manner that seems awkward in English. The writing lacks color in the same way the lives of the women do, both in their present surroundings and, one suspects, in the past environment they unanimously yearn for. They all seem to sense a perpetual threat, either concrete from the government or more intangible in the form of cultural solitude and lack of companionship, but either threat seems beyond their capacity to deal with. In order to cope with the hopelessness of their lives the women in the stories fall back on helplessness, surrendering to dependency on the men they are attached to, or to self-destruction or self-obliteration.

This is the author's first foray into English language publication. She composed in English, although the short biography indicates she normally writes in Farsi.

Parastoo continued on page 2; further reviews next page

Book Review Section

✦ Armstrong, Luanne. *Bordering*. Charlottetown, PEI, Canada: Gynergy-Ragweed, 1995. Paper, ISBN 0-921881-35-5, \$10.95.

Luanne Armstrong's second novel, *Bordering*, is about Louise McDonald, who lives outside of a small town near the US border in Canada. Literally she is "bordering." She is also bordering on life, which is quickly passing her by. When we meet her, Louise is out of work, out of money, and nearing desperation. Her lover has left, and Louise feels she is unable to follow her. She is immobilized, mired in self-pity and a sense of failure.

When her best friend's daughter is accused of smuggling drugs across the border, Louise takes action. In doing so she uncovers a town secret and learns some surprising things about her ex-husband.

Armstrong's characters are well-developed and original. In fact, more interesting than the plot is getting to know Louise and the inner process she goes through during the course of the story. She realizes that she can indeed make responsible, independent choices, and in the end makes such a decision. *Bordering* is a quick and enjoyable read.

—B. Jedlicka

✦ Fein, Judith, Ph. D. *Exploding the myth of self-defense: a survival guide for every woman*. Sebastopol, CA: Torrance, 1993. Paper, ISBN 0-929523-01-6, \$15.95.

Writing from her own experience with the patriarchal hierarchy of the military, Fein takes the position that women can be educated to protect themselves. She points out how societal controls, particularly the fear of rape, control women and condition them to view themselves as potential victims. Fein uses the techniques she's developed in her own self-defense class and starts the book with an examination of the myths of self defense (women cannot defend themselves), the common enemy all women face (their social conditioning), and moves on to the psychology of empowerment: "Self-defense begins with self empowerment, i.e., the belief in one's self. You must believe you are worth fighting for." Fein points out the anatomy of assault and how to break each point in that pattern. One chapter documents success stories submitted by women using her techniques and escaping harm.

Moving along to sexual harassment, Dr. Fein theorizes this is a tool of patriarchal oppression designed to keep women in the base of a pyramidal model (away from the finite number of power positions located in the apex of her model). She presents practical advice on dealing with sexual harassment, including well-thought-out scenarios of the consequences of filing a complaint.

The chapter on physical self defense is based on the theory that it is not the size of the cat in the fight that matters; it is the size of the fight in the cat. Fein

offers five examples of her own pets to back up this premise; one would have been more than enough to make a point that most readers would have grasped without further illustration. Describing physical interventions provides the reader with a limited amount of value if she is not involved with a defense course while reading the book. The book concludes with a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of stun guns, alarms, and pepper sprays.

—P. Crossland

✦ Fein, Judith, Ph. D. *How to fight back and win: the joy of self-defense*. Sebastopol, CA: Torrance, 1996. Paper, ISBN 0-929523-28-8, \$16.95.

Judith Fein presents her self-defense techniques as an adjunct aid for someone "actually taking a course in self-defense or studying at home—almost as if being present as one of my students." Basic skills such as stance and punch are described, then illustrated by black and white photographs of Fein modelling positions. Practice skills are outlined at the end of each chapter along with key points to remember.

In Lesson Ten, Fein stumbles over the problem of domestic violence. She dutifully lists statistics on assault, murder, weapons used, and so forth, and offers a list of characteristics to look for in a significant other that might signal abuse potential. Two short paragraphs are devoted to why women stay in abusive situations; Fein concludes that low self esteem is the problem that most often keeps women in this situation. To overcome low self esteem, she "strongly recommend[s] reading my book, *Exploding the myth of self-defense: a survival guide for every woman*. This book is a primer in the development of personal power." Fein's treatment of domestic violence is simplistic and does not address many of the realities women in these situations face—availability of spaces in shelters for themselves and their children, a legal system that does not always take abuse seriously, financial considerations, etc. As proud as she is of her previous work, it is debatable whether one can gain the self esteem necessary to escape a violent home situation merely from reading her book. It should be noted that Fein's advanced degree is in exercise physiology and physical education.

Later chapters explore home security devices and travel safety, as well as techniques to use when attacked by weapons. She does caution more rigorous practice before using these techniques.

As a supplement to her course in self defense, this book would probably have merit; as a self-help course it leaves much to be desired.

—P. Crossland

Book Review Section

✦ Rizzo, Cindy, Jo Schneiderman, Lisa Schweig, Jan Shafer, Judith Stein, eds. *All the ways home. Parenting and children in the lesbian and gay communities: a collection of short fiction.* Norwich, VT: New Victoria, 1995. Cloth, ISBN 0-934678-68-5, \$19.95; paper, ISBN 0-934678-65-0, \$10.95.

All the ways home is a collection of stories about the trials and joys of being a part of lesbian and gay families. These narratives not only bring us home to the familiarities of family relationships, but also build a home unique to the homosexual community. Whether it's the lesbian couple wanting a baby, the daughter with two mothers, the father struggling to accept his gay son's new child, or the child dealing with a parent's "coming out," each author's story adds a new room of distinctive incidents, courage, fears, and perceptions. The editors have done an outstanding job in combining these stories to create a household of family experiences, allowing the reader to realize the challenges that face members of homosexual families. Although representing the "coming out" society, the stories in this book are really inviting the reader to "come in" to their homes and find that we are truly a world village. *All the ways home* would be essential to collections on family relationships, lesbi-gay communities, and short stories. —L. Duda

✦ Kivi, Linda K. *If home is a place.* Vancouver, B.C.: Polestar Book Publishers, 1995. Paper, ISBN 1-896095-02-X, \$16.95 Canada, \$12.95 USA.

This heartfelt first novel traces one family's experience as World War II refugees from Estonia who ultimately settle in Canada. Author Kivi, a Canadian of Estonian heritage herself, focuses on three generations of women, attempting to show through them how our identity is shaped by the idea of home, and how the experience of exile, with its lack of homeplace, twists and disorients. The novel is structured as a multiple narrative, moving back and forth between past and present, intertwining the stories of matriarch Maria, daughters Sofi and Helgi, and Sofi's daughter Esther.

The historical sections, told by the three elder women, are wonderfully vivid, giving a fine impression of wartime hardships and uncertainties, and of the heroism of daily life. For them, home is a place left behind (sometimes more than once), and life literally a journey. For Esther, coming of age in Winnipeg's Estonian community as the dissolution of the Soviet Union redefines home once, the journey is more spiritual, a search for the homeplace within herself. Just as stories of the past sometimes seem more vibrant than the present, however, Esther's narrative is never so compelling as those of her mother, aunt, and grandmother. Her life seems

Winter 1997

smaller than theirs, less interesting and somehow less important. Even the older women become less interesting as they put the war and flight behind them. Though it might have been better, this is a worthwhile book. At its best, when recounting the past, the reader has the sense of sitting on a neighbor's porch listening to family stories, and that's a good feeling. —H. Borck

✦ Carol, Ruth, ed. *Alternatives for women with endometriosis: a guide for women by women.* Chicago: Third Side Press, 1994. Cloth, ISBN 1-879427-15-X, \$30.95; paper, ISBN 1-879427-12-5, \$12.95.

Carol begins her book with a definition of endometriosis, details forms of alternative treatment, and continues with autobiographical studies of women who pursued these alternatives instead of or along with standard medical treatments like surgery and hormone therapy. She concludes with a list of references, a bibliography, and a list of referring agencies.

The most effective treatments involved diet, some physical treatment, i.e., acupuncture, acupressure, chiropractic, etc., and medicinal herb treatment, particularly Chinese herbal medicines. Some women also had surgery, before or concurrently with the other treatments, to remove adhesions or endometrial material. There is a noticeable tendency for alternative practitioners to suggest an association of the disease with past or present mental or psychological traumas and suggest counseling or relaxation and visualization techniques. The most successful treatments in the studies were of the "whole woman," at all levels—physical, mental and emotional. Carol mentions repeatedly that alternative therapies that work are adapted for the individual, in concert with her practitioners, and not adopted wholesale from any book. Certainly, patients should be aware of the fact that some herbs and other alternative medicines, if taken in the wrong concentrations or by some sensitive individuals, may be poisonous rather than beneficial. Acupuncture has just been approved for use by the FDA, but many insurance companies will not yet pay for alternative therapies.

The editor is past president of the Chicago chapter of the Endometriosis Association and writes professionally on health issues. Her book's accessible approach, illustrating the variety of treatments available for this chronic and painful condition, is heartening. It is pleasantly formatted, legible, using a larger than average font, and especially useful to those who might be put off by more difficult language or who wish to focus their reading on this specific condition. Purchase, if appropriate; also consider *Women's bodies, women's wisdom* (Bantam, 1994), an overview of many women's health issues, for its broader coverage. —N. Parker-Gibson

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