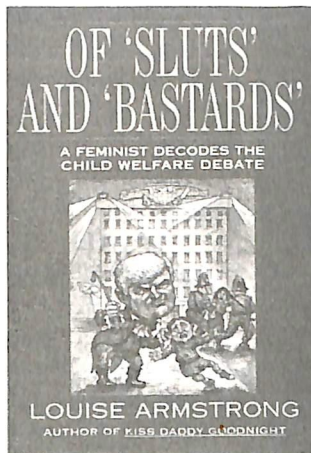


books



**Of 'Sluts' and 'Bastards':
A Feminist Decodes the
Child Welfare Debate**
By Louise Armstrong

This book is a feminist response to the welfare issue, revealing the link between the issue of welfare, the will to punish "sluts" and that of child welfare intervention to remove their "bastards." It explores the roots of reactionary attitudes on welfare, and gives voice to women on welfare, children in foster care, foster parents, and caseworkers.

Louise Armstrong has exposed the dark underside of child welfare in the U.S. According to the author, it was an "evil conspiracy" between the Federal government's mechanisms for

funding, the courts and the state bureaucrats to make the public believe that the nation's most tragic victims—abused children—are in good hands. The three branches of government then play the parts of those legendary monkeys—see no evil, speak no evil and hear no evil.

Here is a system where no one keeps account of the most basic data—how many children, how many placements made, etc.—where secrets are everywhere and those in charge seem somehow unwilling or unable to make the changes necessary. Here the poorest women have their children taken away by a system seemingly without either a heart or a mind. For there is no caring and no logic to the punishment of both mother and child whose crimes are simply being born poor in the world's richest nation.

The book includes heartbreaking stories that ring all too true for people who have worked or volunteered in the child welfare field. It's essential reading for anyone who cares about children.

1995, 336 pp. Maine: Common Courage Press (P.O. Box 702 Monroe ME 04951 207-525-0900). Paperback ISBN: 1567510663

**Good Enough
Mothering?: Feminist
Perspectives on Lone
Motherhood**

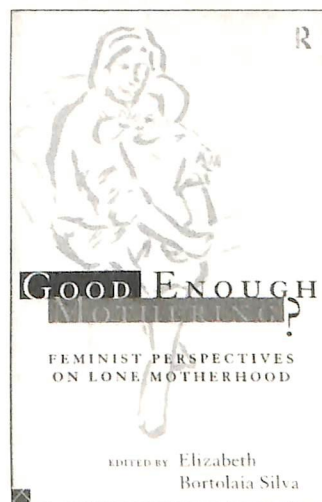
Edited by Elizabeth Silva

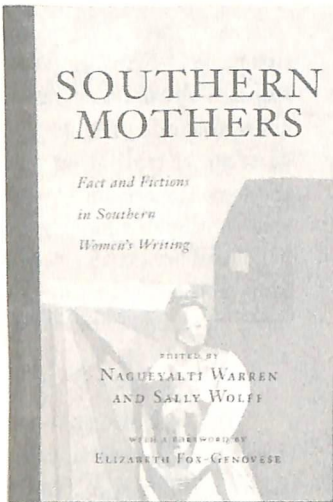
Currently, lone mothers and their children make up almost 20 percent of families with dependent children in the United Kingdom, a threefold increase since 1970. Yet, while they are often cited by politicians as both a symptom and cause of social breakdown, relatively little is known of the causes, consequences and conditions of lone motherhood in Britain and

throughout Europe. *Good Enough Mothering?* provides accounts of historical patterns of mothering and ideologies of the family with cross-national comparisons of policies and experience of lone motherhood in developed and developing countries.

The book also analyses recent social policies and legislative changes in family law, the Child Support Act and discourses about the creation of an underclass in Britain and the U.S. This edited collection, with contributions from leading academics in their fields, builds on feminist scholarship on motherhood and "the family" and contributes significantly to the feminist and social policy literature on lone mothers. *Good Enough Mothering?* will be essential reading for all students of social policy, women's studies and sociology

1996, 256 pp. London: Routledge (11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE U.K.). Paperback ISBN: 0415128900





Southern Mothers: Fact and Fictions in Southern Women's Writing
 Edited by Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff

Southern Mothers, a collection of critical essays by prominent literary scholars, examines the significance of motherhood in the fiction of the North American South. The belle, the mammy, religion, and racism are several of the distinctive threads with which women writers in the region have woven the fabric of their stories. Focusing on the motherhood theme—with all its peculiarities of attitude and tradition—the essays speak both to the established and the unconventional modes of motherhood that are typical in the region's writing. They

probe the extent to which women writers of the U.S. South have rejected or embraced, supported or challenged the individual, social and cultural understanding and institution of motherhood.

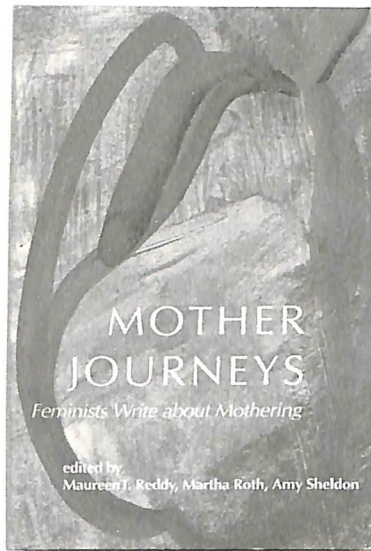
The book is a colourful tapestry of interpretations of the relations between mothers and daughters. As these women writers depict it, the experience of motherhood is often problematic, but joy, commitment, and love are the sentiments that burst through even in the midst of pain and struggle. The book is valuable reading to anyone interested in women's studies of Southern United States.

2000, 232 pp. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press (USA). Paperback ISBN: 0807125083

Mother Journeys: Feminists Write about Mothering

by Maureen T. Reddy, Martha Roth, and Amy Sheldon

The book is a collection of over 40 essays, stories, poems, cartoons, and drawings, focusing on the motherhood experiences of femi-



nists in the late 20th century.

As varied as the backgrounds of the feminist mothers, these pieces reveal the exhilarating, excruciating, liberating, and restrictive experiences of biological, adoptive, lesbian, heterosexual, privileged, and poor mothers, some of whom are well known, such as Alicia Ostriker, Judith Arcana, Rita Dove, and Maxine Kumin. It also includes Nicole Hollander's cartoon portrait of a harried mom who yearns not for romance with Mel Gibson but for some bathroom privacy. This nicely counterpoints Sarah Bruckner's reflections on lesbian mothering and her struggles to educate institutions and sandbox play-

mates. Also noteworthy are Shirley Nelson Garner's ponderings on her physical person, regarded by her children as their property to be fought over fiercely, and Sherry Lee's eloquent discourse on the politics of motherhood and poverty, which captures the stress and powerlessness of single parents caught in a never-ending financial bind.

The pieces are grouped into sections that reflect a sense of generational continuity: "Discovering Ourselves," "Discoveries through Our Children," "The Politics of Mothering," and "Continuity with Our Own Mothers." Each section opens with one of Nancy Spero's drawings. Certain themes run through and across these sections: violence, conflict with majority values, especially as represented by children's schools; sadness at children's inevitable contact with racist, misogynist culture; and pride in self and family for doing things in feminist ways.

Moreover, as Library Journal notes, rather than a prescription for feminist

mothering, this collection offers to a wide audience of readers a variety of experiences, values, and views on motherhood and issues such as personal and political identity, abortion, fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, raising biracial and foreign-born children, and homosexual parenting.

1994, 352 pp. Minnesota: Spinsters Ink Books (32 E. First St. #330 Duluth, MN 55802-2002, USA). Paperback ISBN: 1883523036

Everyday Acts and Small Subversions: Women Reinventing Family, Community, and Home
By Anndee Hochman

The book is full of delightful tidbits about women who live their lives as they

WOMEN REINVENTING FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND HOME
**everyday acts
& small subversions**



Anndee Hochman

choose and find fulfillment in beautiful ways. It celebrates women who defy conventional norms in attempts to live more freely and attain their dreams. It also explores the rich variety of ways women have found to create and celebrate important relationships, bring up children, mark the cycles of the year, and cope with illness and death as well as day-to-day living.

Hochman gives us the joys and sorrows of lesbian relationships both with and without commitment ceremonies, artificially inseminated babies, and adopted infants. She portrays heterosexual couples who fall in and out of living together, their love spanning decades without benefit of the formal institution of marriage. She presents a single mother helped in parenting by a *tia*, a close friend who is more than an aunt or a godmother. She shows us lovers growing old, children growing tall, and communal living arrangements continuing for years.

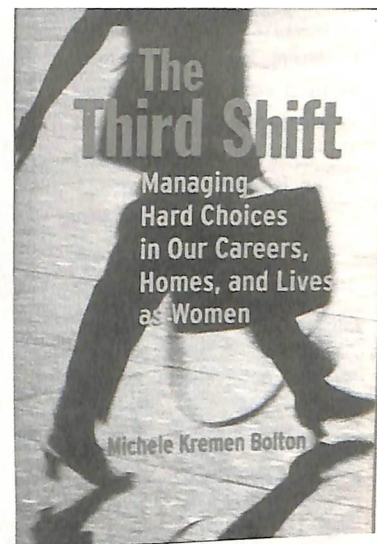
As she does so, Hochman also discloses a continuum of women who have

reinvented caring, bonding, and commitment both to others and to self: people who choose to live without partners but with their art, women who consciously wrestle with choosing childlessness, Hochman herself making *challah* weekly in "a ritual that now brings wholeness to my weeks." In short, in this book Hochman redefines family in ways that are always refreshing and sometimes breathtaking.

1994, 288 pp. Oregon: Eight Mountain Press (624 Southeast 29th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97214, USA). Paperback ISBN: 0933377258

The Third Shift: Managing Hard Choices in Our Careers, Homes, and Lives as Women
By Michele Kremen Bolton

By identifying and analyzing the unique challenges women face in the workforce, Bolton provides cogent strategies for not only coping with the "third shift"—a woman's inner dialogue that often second-guesses her decisions and actions—but embracing it as a means of empowerment. Gender roles for women are



in enormous flux, with societal expectations running along two parallel tracks: build an impressive career, but retain a nurturing role in the family and community. As a result, today's professional women work three gruelling shifts: a first in the office, a second at home, and a psychologically relentless third: the inner dialogue that continually questions the choices a woman makes on the homefront and at the office.

Based on a three-year study of Silicon Valley working women, Michele Bolton identifies three challenges women face: self-expressing vs. conforming to expectations; getting the job done vs. worrying about other's feelings; and, spending time

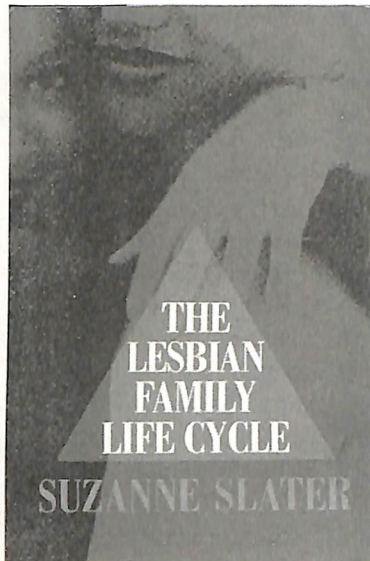
on achievements vs. service to others. Bolton shows how women can manage these challenges, turning the third shift's self-doubt into an oasis of self-awareness.

In each chapter, Bolton provides handy summaries of these strategies. She also captures the actual thoughts women have about each issue in a dialogue that contrasts self-awareness with self-doubt, so that women can begin to change their own internal dialogue into one of self-guidance, self-acceptance, and inner harmony. By identifying and analysing the unique challenges women face, Bolton helps them make more effective decisions about their lives and attain personal satisfaction no matter which path they choose.

2000, 352 pp. New York: John Wiley & Sons (605 3rd Avenue, New York, USA). Hardcover ISBN: 0787948543. Jossey-Bass - Tel.: (1-888) 378-2537, Fax: (1-800) 605-2665, website: <<http://www.josseybass.com>>

Lesbian Family Life Cycle
By Suzanne Slater

Until now, lesbian families have had little help in identifying the stages of



their couple relationships or recognising the often stressful periods of relational transition. In this first-of-its-kind book, psychotherapist Suzanne Slater describes the joys and stresses common to lesbian families and provides a five-stage model of the development of lesbian-couple relationships, from formation through old age and death.

Drawing on 16 years of clinical experience and research, Slater shows that lesbian families with and without children have created their own richly diverse family patterns, extending both the parameters of coupled life and the very definition of what constitutes "family." She describes the tasks, challenges, and ac-

complishments particular to each stage of the family life cycle, and helps couples distinguish between normal developmental stresses and the unique difficulties of particular couples. She closely considers the interaction of lesbian couples with their original families, with the straight world, and with the lesbian communities of which they are a part.

Through a range of examples and cases, Slater addresses how lesbian families are affected by their position in a homophobic culture and details the unique coping mechanisms that different lesbian couples have created. Most important, she emphasises the sources of fulfilment common to many lesbian families.

This scholarly yet accessible study sets forth a five-stage "life cycle model" of family experience for cohabiting lesbians, whether or not they have children. Stages 1 to 3 involve becoming a couple, solidifying the partnership through ongoing relational work, and the trials and deepening intimacy of the middle years. In

stage 4, generativity, each partner achieves links to the future, whether through parenting, social activism or other pursuits. The final stage, the over-65 years, encompasses challenges such as retirement, increased togetherness, lack of income, health emergencies and "widowhood." Slater also discusses coping mechanisms by which lesbian couples deal with social rejection, homophobia, and isolation.

In addition to educating lesbian couples and those close to them, this book will prepare psychotherapists to design more effective and informed therapeutic strategies. Instead of relying on theory based on heterosexual experience, clinicians can now base their interventions on what is normal for lesbian family life. *The Lesbian Family Life Cycle* will be invaluable reading for lesbian family members, their friends and relatives, and clinicians in a variety of helping professions.

1997, 265 pp. New York: The Free Press, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. (1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020, USA). Hardcover ISBN: 0029208955