

BOOK REVIEWS



Book Reviews should be forwarded

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Superwoman. By Shirley Conran. 206 pages. Published by Penguin. Australian Edition 1978. Price \$2.50 (recommended).

Shirley Conran in *Superwoman* has attempted a mammoth task hardly undertaken since Mrs. Beeton. This book is a manual of housewifery, in which all the household chores from cleaning to pets are covered. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, which is pleasant reading but practical and humorous in places. Having read it and put it on the shelf, it is also easy to use and refer to. It should be helpful to those women who become overwhelmed by the domestic scene and in my experience as a social worker, there are many who are overconcerned by the high polish, whiter than white propaganda. It may also assist those who are pressurized by work, large families or a handicap, to organise themselves into smoother running of their homes and lives.

The title "*Superwoman*" (and the sub-title, "now a specially prepared Australian edition of the best selling guide to household management for today's woman") implies that the running of homes is the exclusive business or right of women. One realizes that nearly all women in our society are involved in this for themselves and for the men and children in their lives, but surely some **men** are also involved, whether by accident or choice? These men would enjoy this book and benefit from it and perhaps those men who are not involved in household chores (and there are many in this country, who feel that it is beneath them) should also have access to this, to increase their understanding and tolerance of housewifery. However the title is a

bar to a wider readership and perhaps unfortunate.

Many readers too of this journal will consider the subject matter of this book quite unimportant but I would maintain that housewifery/home management has a bearing on all our daily routines. The way the home is run or is not run influences relationships; de facto, marital, platonic, child/adult and sibling relationships. It also affects male and female roles and sets patterns and expectations. Every chapter of "*Superwoman*" is packed with practical information, advice and suggestions. Some advice and suggestions may irritate because they are all too obvious or petty but this is more than compensated for by the rest. There are comments about gadgets and equipment in the home biased as the author admits but nevertheless useful and thought provoking.

One wonders why the chapter on "sex maniacs" was included in a book of this kind. It seems out of place. However I would thoroughly recommend "*Superwoman*" to busy people, male or female to become organised or more organised — and to bored people to become organised, so that they can start thinking about doing some more exciting and stimulating occupations other than just the housework.

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