



Without Child: Challenging the Stigma of Childlessness

Laurie Lisle

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Without Child challenges the stigma of childlessness by offering childless women the lifeaffirming story of themselves. Beginning with the difficult inner journey a woman faces before finally deciding or realizing she will not bear children, *Without Child* explores the myth of the childless woman's rejection of the maternal instinct. It also examines the childless woman's relationship to mothers and mothering, to her femininity, to men, to achievement, to her body, and to old age.

Laurie Lisle contends that childless women are part of an ancient and respectable cultural tradition that includes biblical matriarchs, celibate saints, and nineteenth-century social reformers. However, like other aspects of women's history, this tradition has been forgotten and, in the process, maligned. *Without Child* bring childless women out of obscurity and places them back in women's history.

Without Child brings scope and depth to a subject that has long been misunderstood. Weaving rich materials from history, literature, religion, and sociology with the author's own and other stories, this groundbreaking book does what no other has done before—presents childlessness in a multifaceted and positive light.

Most women grow up thinking they will become mothers, and many do follow that path. But for those women who are willingly or unwillingly without children, childlessness is a way of life that many of them must constantly defend. *Without Child* explores the facts and fallacies behind childlessness, what it means for women and society, and reminds us of how women can and do embrace this choice.

In the shadow of a culture that claims to adore the child, *Without Child* bring a long forbidden topic into the light. Wide-ranging, yet intimate, philosophical, yet clear-sighted, this important book will reassure millions of women that they are not alone, not unusual, and, in fact, are part of a long and honorable tradition.

Laurie Lisle is the author of four other books besides *Without Child*: two biographies of women artists, a history of a girls' school, and a memoir from the point-of-view as a gardener. Raised in Rhode Island, she lives with her husband in Litchfield County, Connecticut and in Westchester County, New York. For more information, please see her website at www.laurielisle.com.

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