Clarion Review

Self-Help

Being Female: The Art of Female Masturbation
Arlene & Bernard S. Clendenin
Xlibris
978-1-4535-0978-4
Three Stars (out of Five)

Being Female is a gentle primer on the multifaceted world of female masturbation. A modern and well-informed audience, however, is likely to find the content elementary and patronizing.

Bernard Clendenin is a nationally recognized artist. His tasteful line drawings of the female figure appear on nearly every page of this oversized book. Arlene Clendenin, a writer and promoter of her husband's art, endeavored to make *Being Female* accessible to women of all ages in a comfortable and non-threatening manner. Their goal was to create a book that mothers and wives could share with daughters and husbands respectively; in this they succeeded.

There is an extensive amount of crossover and redundancy in the seven chapters. The first chapter explores the question of why women would want to masturbate, and the answers provided are straightforward and patently obvious. Stating the obvious is a recurring and off-putting weakness of *Being Female*, as is the overstated emphasis on safety.

The authors provide a general overview of medical, familial, and societal views on masturbation and offer some excellent suggestions about the value of a healthy fantasy life. They discuss anatomy and methods of masturbation—although the techniques suggested are rather archaic and limited. In fact, much of the book's content feels old-fashioned.

Chapter five is an informative glimpse into the orgasmic response, while the following chapter focuses on the act itself and covers such issues as preparations, foreplay, positions, and how to use one's hands for maximizing pleasure. This chapter is heavily illustrated with beautiful, gold-hued drawings of women pleasuring themselves. The artwork is within the bounds of propriety and would be appropriate for most bookshelves and libraries.

The final chapter encourages women to take their time coming down from an orgasm, and then moves onto variations such as duos, trios, and taking responsibility for oneself. The chapter concludes, oddly, with a two-page spread on Bernard Clendenin's professional

background and accolades, and the couple's meeting and marriage.

Beyond the above-mentioned weaknesses, *Being Female* also suffers from an abundance of saccharine self-help platitudes and typographical and grammatical errors that detract from its readability. On page twenty, four words run together without spaces in between. The copy on the back cover is missing three commas and is about the authors rather than the content.

Being Female could be appropriate for the library of an all-girls middle or high school, on the bookshelf of a therapist, or as a gift for women of any age seeking to explore their sexuality alone.

Patty Sutherland