



# NEWSLETTER

No. 10 October 2011

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## Do you love going to feminist events? We do!

It's been (yet another) busy few months for the Feminist Library, as we have had bookstalls at a number of events and participated in several workshops. Just last week, we had a stall at the Rebellious Media conference, where we contributed to two workshops, one on feminist media and another on radical print magazines. Earlier in the summer we attended the Community Archives conference at University College London, and were pleased to meet people who are gathering the histories of their communities, those based both in a locality and on shared interests or identities. We were particularly pleased to meet Feministwebs, a Manchester-based archive which uses second wave feminist material with groups of girls and young women. We have taken part in several events concerned with cuts in library provision in all sectors, in venues as diverse as Kensington's Serpentine Gallery and a meeting organised by Hackney Anarchist Group.

The library also ventured out of London this summer, attending the weekend-long event organised in Birmingham by UK Feminista. We participated in workshops on how to run effective campaigns and new social media, and met inspiring feminist activists from all over the UK, involved with campaigns on domestic violence, street harassment, and many other issues. Then we exercised our vocal chords, were entertained by fantastic feminist musicians, and sold lots of Feminist Library tote bags at the Women in Tune Festival in West Wales.

Back in London (almost) we ran a very enjoyable and successful stall at the Feminist and Women's Studies Association annual conference at Brunel University. The FWSA was celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so there was a fascinating panel with some of the original editors reflecting on the publication of *Half the Sky*, the first British collection of materials for teaching and learning about Women's Studies, published by Virago in 1979. This led on to discussions with FWSA members about the possibility of the Feminist Library collaborating with them (and hopefully other relevant organisations) to set up a database of feminist research and researchers. This is a much-needed resource across all areas of feminist enquiry, and would take us back to an activity that was very significant for the Feminist Library (WRRC, as it was then) in its early days. Another initiative that came to mind at that panel, and which is sorely needed in this era of disintegrating universities, is setting up Women's Studies courses in informal venues such as the Feminist Library, local women's and community centres, or even the back room of a pub. In the 1970s and 80s, such courses were an important way of politicising women about their oppression, and we feel their time has come again. If you would like to get involved with this initiative, please get in touch.

On July 9th, we had a highly successful bring and buy booksale, with many visitors throughout the day. This was because of the helpful coincidence of people coming to the Pro-Choice demo which was held in Downing Street that afternoon. So we are planning to hold another booksale on Saturday 26th November, before the Reclaim the Night march. Come and visit us to stock up on out of print feminist classics, other good quality books, and seasonal gifts, such as our lovely tote bags -- now available in four glorious colours!

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**To make sure that the Feminist Library can continue being present at these important events (which are vital to us, for raising both our profile and some much-needed cash), we are looking for a STALL CO-ORDINATOR to help organise and co-ordinate having our stall at feminist and radical political events.**

**This is a volunteer position, but reasonable travel and food expenses will be paid. Drop us a line if you're interested or would like further information, at [admin@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:admin@feministlibrary.co.uk) and remember: a couple of hours on the stall means a lot to the library and a free ticket to great feminist events for you!!!**

Upcoming events where we will have a stall include:

22 October - Anarchist bookfair - [anarchistbookfair.org.uk](http://anarchistbookfair.org.uk)

5 November - Conversatorio with IRMO (at the library) - [www.irmo.org.uk/main](http://www.irmo.org.uk/main)

12 November - Fem11 - [ukfeminista.org.uk/events/event/fem-11](http://ukfeminista.org.uk/events/event/fem-11)

26 November - Reclaim the night - [www.reclaimthenight.org](http://www.reclaimthenight.org)

4 February 2012- Go Feminist! - [www.gofeminist.org.uk](http://www.gofeminist.org.uk)

# Greenham Remembered



"I remember it feeling quite special that Greenham was a Women's protest. There was some criticism in the press (Daily Mail etc!) at the time that this was sexist but it didn't feel like that. It was a peaceful women's protest to try to get a world free of nuclear weapons for future generations. And many men supported us as partners and friends - doing the childcare at home so women could go and stay at camp or by bringing food to the gates for the women. I remember being touched by local people - one older lady in particular - who would regularly bring supplies to the women camping there. There was also a real mix of ages. On the days we all linked hands around the base it was incredible and a real sense of the power of women and peaceful protest. The different gates around the military base were named after the colours of the rainbow and there were women camping at each gate! It was successful but the struggle for a nuclear weapon free world must continue!"

-Letter from Jacquie Jones (Leicester) to Meri Everitt, read at the Feminist Library event "Greenham Remembered", 11/9/11.

One of the greatest strengths of the Feminist Library is her capacity to act as both an archive of the past and a site of living, breathing feminist activity. On Sunday September 11<sup>th</sup> 2011, these two strands were brought together in an event that honoured a significant part of our national feminist history, while promoting a still necessary activism, when multiple generations of women came together to remember Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. The day-to-day trials of the women of the camp, which was established in 1981 to protest nuclear weapons being sited at Greenham Common, came to life in an entertaining talk by Lynette Edwell who showed us the beautifully evocative Boise quilt and a variety of camp newsletters and posters, in addition to some not-very-complimentary media articles of the period. This was followed by a songwriting workshop by Meri Everitt, who led a singalong of songs from the Greenham songbook and then encouraged us to write a protest song of our own, which 25 of us managed in half an hour! (See below). Continuing the theme of creativity was a sewing workshop – run by the very talented Stitch Therapy – to encourage self-expression and activism, its participants creating some truly inspiring works of art. This was followed by a fascinating discussion by Anna Feigenbaum, who situated Greenham in a broader history of protest camps and paid tribute to the considerable impact Greenham had on the protest movement. (More on Anna's talk can be found at <http://protestcamps.org/2011/09/12/152/>) A screening of three short films by Shelley Davis, which explored the feelings of women returning to Greenham, entertained those who remained for the post-dinner session (thanks Yula for the yummy curry!). Sasha Roseneil, author of *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham Common*, then shared her memories of the camp as a queer disruptive space that challenged the heteronormativity of the time. A screening of Beeban Kidron's *Carry Greenham Home*, a wonderful documentary made in 1983 and featuring interviews with women about daily life in the camp, was a fitting final tribute to a remarkable day. Special thanks to Emma Thatcher, whose fantastic organising helped us all celebrate and remember Greenham. We plan to have the talks from the day available on our website soon.



## Greenham-inspired Protest Song To be sung to the tune of *We Are Family*

**Verse 1:** Yes, we still have our causes to fight, And we won't walk on by,  
Patriarchy, violence and greed of the right, Greenham lessons burn bright.

**Chorus:** We are family, At least that's what we want to be, We are family, Because we want to be free! (sing between verses)

**Verse 2:** Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, Violence everywhere,  
Soft we may look, but we're powerful, And we can say NO-O-O-O

**Verse 3:** We think back to Greenham, As we come back to read 'em,  
We have faith in our Feminist Library, Let's go forward and we won't go wrong.

**Verse 4:** We don't go along with the divisions, Imposed on you and on me,  
We are practising unity, We are fighting for peace and for harmony.



## Book Reviews

### Meat Market: Female Flesh Under Capitalism by Laurie Penny (Zero Books, 2011)

Reviewed by Sophie Jones



The focus of Laurie Penny's *Meat Market* will be familiar to readers of her blog and columns, with chapters on sex and sex work, eating disorders,

transphobia and domestic labour. *Meat Market* is at its best when challenging media orthodoxies on these issues, and particularly when unpicking the disturbing collusion of conservative moralism and anti-porn feminism on the issue of 'raunch culture'. The problem, Penny points out, isn't that women are having sex - it's that a lot of the time they aren't really enjoying it, trapped in what she calls the 'ruthless logic of performative irony'. Penny's holistic, socialist-feminist perspective is a welcome challenge to the voices most often offered a platform in tabloid and broadsheet alike, typified either by Julie Bindel-esque transphobia or single-issue myopia, neither of which reflect the vitality and self-critique of much grassroots feminist activism.

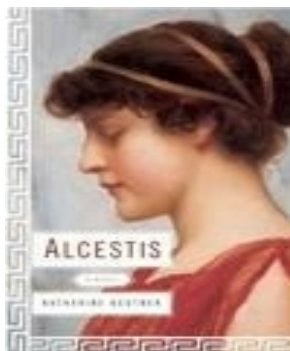
A few things don't quite add up. Penny joins fellow Zero author Nina Power in arguing for the relevance of Shulamith Firestone. Yet, despite Penny's frequent recourse to Firestone and other second-wave thinkers like Juliet Mitchell, she refers to 'second-wave feminism' as if it were a monolithic chorus singing the praises of essentialism, rather than the flawed but discordant rumble of emerging consciousness to which a thoughtful review of the period attests. *Meat Market* is a bit too derivative of Power's excellent *One-Dimensional Woman* at times. I wish Penny had queried some of that book's arguments, particularly Power's

tendency to conflate liberal feminism and *Sex and the City* (a problematic interpretation of feminism is not the same as a wholesale capitalist co-option of feminism). Penny has been criticised for embellishing her eyewitness accounts. Certainly, she's a lone radical voice charged with representing an impossibly complex constituency. But while holding journalists like Penny to account, we should be attacking the culture that only gives one feminist the mic at a time. And do books about gender *always* have to be pink?

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### Alcestis by Katherine Beutner (Soho Press, 2010)

Reviewed by Harriet Brown



Alcestis is known from Greek mythology as the archetypal good wife; she loved her husband Admetus so

much that she offered herself as a sacrifice to die in his place. Katherine Beutner's bittersweet retelling puts a feminist spin on the tale, finally giving a voice to one of mythology's more overlooked characters.

Alcestis tells the story of her life in a society where women's liberties are strictly curtailed and their destinies decided by the men to whom they are little more than property. The princess Alcestis is just as much a prisoner as the slave girls who tend to her; confined to her rooms and embroidery, her sexuality and virginity are closely guarded. When she comes of age and is put up for marriage to the highest bidder, Alcestis is won by Admetus, King of Pherae, but his love for Apollo casts a shadow over their marriage; disillusioned, she offers herself as a sacrifice out of duty rather than love.

But with this death comes a reawakening, as she loses her heart to Persephone, Queen of the Underworld.

Beutner's ancient Greece is deftly depicted as a place where the divine is normal, where immortals shaped like animals lie in wait to seize unwary maidens, and a refusal to placate the gods can lead to snakes in one's marriage bed. Lautner's language is sensual and poetic, and although her unhurried pace starts to drag towards the second half of the book, the ending, whilst somewhat melancholy, still offers some hope in the evidence of Alcestis's increased autonomy. Beutner has written a subtle and subversive book which gives us some insight into a woman whose voice has been silent too long.

### Recently received titles

Helma Lutz, *The New Maids. Transnational Women and the Care Economy*. Zed Books: 2011

Olnkemi Amala, *Under an Emerald Sky*. Linen Press, Edinburgh.

Julia Bates, *The Missing*. Linen Press, Edinburgh: 2009

Hema Macherla, *Blue Eyes*. Linen Press, Edinburgh: 2011

Hema Macherla, *Breeze from the River Manjela*. Linen Press, Edinburgh: 2008

Kerry McPhail, *James with a Silent C*. Linen Press, Edinburgh: 2011

Lynn Michell, *White Lies*. Linen Press, Edinburgh: 2011

Stephanie Taylor, *The Devil & Me*. Linen Press, Edinburgh: 2009

If you're interested in reviewing these or other titles, please get in touch. We will be putting all our book reviews on the Feminist Library website shortly.

## Get involved and support the library!

You might have heard it all before, as we like to repeat it often, that the library relies entirely on the generosity of its donors and volunteers to continue its mission. We like to repeat this often, not only because we think it's an amazing example of community spirit and living proof that the need for a radical autonomous space is still there. But also because we need to spread the message, loud and clear: we need generous donors to set up regular standing orders to make it easier for the collective to budget ahead and to concentrate on furthering the library's mission and extend the current programme. If you would like to make a one off or regular donation please visit [www.feministlibrary.co.uk/donate](http://www.feministlibrary.co.uk/donate) or if you would like to know more about donating to the library, email us on [fundraising@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:fundraising@feministlibrary.co.uk). Please get in touch if fundraising is something you may be able to help us with, or come to our next fundraising group meeting on Weds 26th October at 7pm at the library.

If you are not able to support the library financially, or if you think money is not enough, you can join the growing number of volunteers – again: the library is run entirely by volunteers (hence the odd opening hours!) that donate their time and energy to the library – mainly because it's a great place and it's important to keep it alive, but also because it's a good way to improve your skills and acquire experience while meeting friendly like-minded people. If you are interested in volunteering or would like to know more, please come to the library on Wednesdays between 7 and 9pm or email us on [volunteer@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:volunteer@feministlibrary.co.uk)

## Listings

**Saturday, 22 October 2011, Black, British, Feminist Then and Now - Black Feminist workshop.** Goldsmiths University of London. The event will be free of charge, but places will be limited. For further information and to book a place, please contact: [Caribbean@gold.ac.uk](mailto:Caribbean@gold.ac.uk)

**Wednesday 26th October 2011, 6.30 – 9.30pm, Black Feminist Learning Event "Learning from the journey to here, for the journeys to come".** Development House, 56 - 64 Leonard St, London, EC2A 4LT. For women descended from Africa, Asia (including Pacific nations), Latin America, the original inhabitants of Australasia, North America, and the islands of the Atlantic, Caribbean and Indian Oceans. For more information email [blackfeministsuk@gmail.com](mailto:blackfeministsuk@gmail.com). Free event, children welcome.

**Wednesday 26th October 2011, 7pm – 11pm. WANC CAFE** (Women's autonomous nuisance café) 26th October. The Boys Club, 68 Boleyn Road, Dalston N16 8JG. PLUS a wonderful TANGO lesson before the café starts (6til 7pm.) [wanc-cafe.org.uk](http://wanc-cafe.org.uk).

**Saturday, 5th November, 5pm - 8pm El Costurero ~ 1ª sesión Conversatorios liderados por Mujeres Latinas,** at the Feminist Library. Organised by Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO). For more information telephone: 08717 001 310 or email: [mail@irmo.org.uk](mailto:mail@irmo.org.uk) (meeting is in Spanish).

**12th November 2011, 10am – 5:30pm. FEM 11.** (£5/£8) Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London. UK Feminista national conference. For more information visit [ukfeminista.org.uk](http://ukfeminista.org.uk)

**Wednesday 16th November, 6.30pm. Politics and parliament -** by Jessica Metheringham Owlett, at the Feminist Library. Workshop on everything from lobbying MPs to working with local councils. For more information visit [feministlibrary.co.uk](http://feministlibrary.co.uk)

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November, 3 – 5pm. Feminist Library booksale.**

**Saturday 26th November, 6pm. London Reclaim the Night.** Annual women-only march against violence against women. For more information visit [www.reclaimthenight.org](http://www.reclaimthenight.org)

**Thurs 8th December – Linen Press Book Launch** at the Feminist Library - details to follow, see our website.

**The Feminist Library ,  
5a Westminster Bridge Rd,  
London SE1 7XW.**

**Phone 020 7261 0879**

**Email [admin@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:admin@feministlibrary.co.uk)**

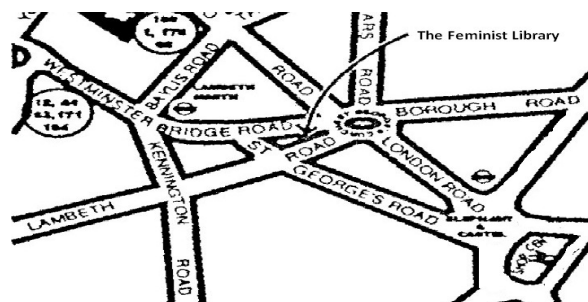
**Visit [www.feministlibrary.co.uk](http://www.feministlibrary.co.uk).**

**Follow us on twitter @feministlibrary**

**Visit the Feminist Library**

**Opening hours: The Feminist Library is open every Tuesday 2-6pm, Wednesday 6-9pm and every Friday 2-6pm. Additionally, we are open on alternate Thursdays 6-9pm (2nd and 4th of the month) and the 1st Saturday of the month 1.30-5pm.**

**Please check [www.feministlibrary.co.uk/hours](http://www.feministlibrary.co.uk/hours) for the most up-to-date information, including changes to opening hours. To arrange a visit outside opening hours, please email us at [admin@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:admin@feministlibrary.co.uk).**



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