



# Feminist Library Newsletter

## No. 18 Summer 2014

**Welcome to the Summer edition of the Feminist Library Newsletter. We will be closing in August for our Summer Vacation, however volunteers will be available to open by appointment only, so please email or ring if you would like to visit during this time.**

### **Salon at the Feminist Library: A Forum for Feminist Ideas**

In **April** we launched our 'Salon at the Feminist Library' series. For each salon event we have chosen a different theme. We have invited feminists who have special experience or expertise and who have often (but not always!) created books on the subject, to start off our discussions.

For our first event, 'Sex Workers and the Sex Industry', members of Sex Worker Open University introduced the work the project does to support those involved in the sex industry. Conversation touched upon how different legal models (Nordic, German, New Zealand) directly affect the lives of sex workers. We thank all who came for their sensitive contributions to a great discussion on such a compelling and difficult subject.

**Later in April**, the creators of new book, *Let's Start a Pussy Riot*, joined us to discuss their incredible international project to support jailed feminist activists in Russia. We also had the pleasure of a talk and screening from 'Speaking of I.M.E.L.D.A.', a direct action feminist group who use performance to challenge I.M.E.L.D.A – Ireland Making England the Legal Destination for Abortion.

In **May**, author and Virginia Woolf expert, Susan Sellers, joined us to discuss Woolf's life and writings, as well as reading from her own works. Actor Sara Sassanelli created a performance work inspired by Sellers' first novel, *Vanessa and Virginia*, performed to one audience member at a time between the library's shelves. This unique work, along with Sellers' creative and knowledgeable presentation, created a magical atmosphere.

In **June** we held 'Not Just Tea and Sandwiches: Women of the 1984 Miners' Strike', when we hosted a varied programme of events celebrating the role of women in the 1984 miner's strike. We started the day with a screening of *Here We Go: Women Living in the Strike* (Maggie Wright) while Laura Wilkinson, author of a novel set in the strike, led a workshop on creating fiction from historical events. Artists Megan Pickering and Jessica Scott created an exhibition in the library encompassing artefacts of women's activism in the strike and contemporary textile works. Later, Laura Wilkinson read from her novel *Public Battles, Private Wars* in an 'In Conversation' with Dr Katy Shaw, an expert on women's writing of the period. This was followed by a presentation from Rachel Kirk from 'One For All Productions' who shared extracts from their oral history and theatre project *Holes in Tights*. We closed with a reading from *Until Our Blood is Dry* from author Kit Habianic, as well as an account from Jill Mountford of her personal involvement with North Staffordshire Miners' Wives Group.

The overwhelming feeling from all the guest speakers was of the positive empowerment that the women felt by being part of this vital socio-political movement. It brought working class women together and gave them a reason to become political activists: it encouraged public speaking, organising rallies, community support and togetherness. All who attended the day feel their understanding of the events of the eighties strikes have changed substantially as the women's story is generally unknown. The Feminist Library wants to thank all those who came and contributed to the day, and helped to make it into another piece of contemporary herstory, while giving us inspiration for our work today.

Finally, in early **July**, we were delighted to host Laura Bates, friend of the library, originator of the 'Everyday Sexism' project and author of a new book of the same name. Participants in this incredibly moving session shared their own experiences in our packed meeting room, and, even more importantly, ideas on how we can all fight together against the everyday culture of misogyny.

**Huge thanks to everyone who has joined us for our Salon events so far – and look out for details of upcoming Salons on our website!**

## Feminist and Women's Libraries and Archives Network (FLA) Gathering – 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September at Nottingham Women's Centre

In February 2014, Nottingham Women's Centre hosted the first Feminist Libraries and Archives Gathering in partnership with Feminist Library London. After a fruitful weekend of discussion, knowledge sharing and a whole lot of feminist solidarity, and as a response to the lack of networks between feminist and women-centric libraries and archives, we decided to form FLA: Feminist and Women's Libraries and Archives Network. Our manifesto:

- To improve communication between our libraries and archives and to develop and strengthen connections and networks.
- To provide a platform for feminist and women's libraries and archives and to highlight their importance.
- To promote feminist and women's libraries and archives to a wider audience.
- To support each other in various aspects of running feminist and women's libraries and archives, and to share knowledge and expertise.
- To ensure the continuity of feminist and women's libraries and archives.
- To create and maintain links between feminist and women's libraries and archives and the wider feminist activist community.

To assist our network's development, we are creating a directory of feminist and women's libraries and archives, and hold regular events for networking and knowledge sharing. We will be hosting a workshop at the Feminism in London conference in October. We are starting to look at creating a more uniform system of cataloguing our material. This will take time, research and effort, so we are starting gently. Please contact us if you are interested in joining the network; if you're not an actual library or archive, please still get in touch - you are more than welcome to attend the FLA Gathering. For further information email [Zaimal@nottinghamwomenscentre.com](mailto:Zaimal@nottinghamwomenscentre.com).

**WHY BE A FEMINIST? is a 10 week participatory course, beginning on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September at 7pm. It is being led by Women's Studies Without Walls at the Feminist Library and is open to all women. We will be exploring feminism and its relevance to our lives today, starting with examining some of the many strands within feminism, such as radical feminism, black feminism, socialist feminism and anarchafeminism. Later sessions will explore topics chosen by participants that relate to our everyday lives. Possible topics could include: mental health, abortion rights, class, ethnicity, sexual identity, education and work. Each session will begin with a short introduction and will be followed by group discussion. Cost will be £5 or £10 per session. Please register your interest in advance, as we expect demand to be heavy. Contact us at [wsww@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:wsww@feministlibrary.co.uk).**

### Veronica Planton

All of us at the Feminist Library were very sad to hear of the death of Veronica Planton on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Veronica was an artist, a feminist and social justice activist, and was a member of the Feminist Library management group in 2007 and 2008. Veronica designed the Feminist Library dragon logo and also handcrafted our beautiful Feminist Library banner.

In our October 2007 Newsletter, Veronica wrote about how she came up with the Feminist Library logo: "The Dragon is a symbol associated with the Great Mother Goddess (via the snake) and hence represents the female principle and matriarchy. St George is usually seen plunging his sword into her, which is a visual metaphor for the triumph and hegemony of patriarchal principles over the matriarchy. Originally designed as a card to cheer up the locked-out sisters of the Feminist Library, the message was that the dragon couldn't be arsed to enact her part again this St George's Day, because she was curled up at the Feminist Library with a book."

In March 2008 Veronica described how she made the banner: "Being a hoarder, I had the materials to hand. The purple cloth comes from a sari under-skirt I bought in India; the green is an offcut I saved while working in a bed and futon factory; the white from the end of a bale of sheeting. Quite a bit of the banner is hand-stitched because the tension on my sewing machine has gone wrong. I projected

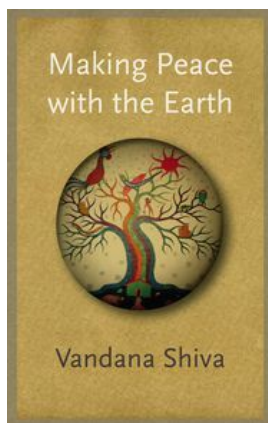
the design on paper, drew the outlines, cut it out and drew round the shapes on to the coloured cloth. Then sewed the coloured shapes to the front of the banner. Part of the way through, I realised it would have been so much simpler to project and trace the design on to the back of the banner! With the clarity of hindsight and an efficient sewing machine it would have taken half the time."

The Feminist Library management group offer our sincere condolences to the friends and family of Veronica Planton. Every time we raise our banner we will remember her.



*Veronica and the banner that she designed and made, at the first Million Women Rise March in 2008*

## REVIEW



*Making Peace with the Earth*, by Vandana Shiva (Pluto Press/Fernwood Publishing, 2013)

Vandana Shiva will be known by many people as an environmentalist, anti-globalisation campaigner, and a founder of eco-feminism. This book isn't explicitly eco-feminist in content, although it's clear that this is not a perspective she's

abandoned, with references to 'capitalist patriarchy' in the introduction and conclusion. Instead, it's a survey of the impact of corporate expansion on the environment, agriculture and human beings.

The book is split into two parts: 'Wars against the Earth', and 'Food Crises, Food Justice, Food Peace'.

'Wars against the Earth' details the corporate snatching of resources such as land, water and forests. It is full of case studies, from the displacement of 2,400 families in Jaitapur to make space for nuclear power to the Indian water crisis fuelled by World Bank loans. There are also stories of resistance and community organising. There's a danger that some campaigns around globalisation or poverty portray people in the global south as passive victims, but Shiva shows that what's needed is solidarity rather than pity. 'Food Crises, Food Justice, Food Peace' starts with a set of questions: "Why is every fourth Indian hungry? Why is every third woman in India anaemic and malnourished? Why is every second child underweight, stunted and wasted? Why has the hunger and malnutrition crisis deepened, even as India has seen nine per cent growth? Why is "shiny India" a starving India?" Her answers point again to corporate control, through the 'green revolution', the intellectual property rights and patents on seeds resulting from genetic engineering, and the impact of 'free trade'.

*Making Peace with the Earth* is well-written, urgent and impassioned, although not without its faults. Shiva's use of the phrase 'eco-apartheid' is emotive but not descriptive. I'm uncomfortable with the co-option of specific historic crimes in such a way. Whatever the linguistic origins of words such as apartheid and holocaust, they now have a very clear context and meaning. The philosophical and physical rupture between humans and nature is a vital

issue – it doesn't need to be likened to racial division and domination.

The book doesn't really explain why this ecological and human exploitation is happening. Corporations are the clear enemy, but bar a few references to the free market and commodification there is no real description or analysis of capitalism. For a more rounded picture, it would be helpful to read *Making Peace with the Earth* alongside authors such as Maria Mies or Silvia Federici.

It's hard to get a real understanding of Shiva's alternative to the devastation she describes, as it's only briefly set out over a couple of pages. It seems to be a localised capitalism in conjunction with a spiritual shift in our relationship to the Earth, and raises more questions than it answers.

These criticisms shouldn't put anyone off reading the book. It manages to be clear and readable yet detailed and well-researched. It is not an argument about abstract concepts. The impact of these issues on people's lives is never far away.

Reviewed by Mark Restall

## Recent Acquisitions

*Until Our Blood is Dry*, Kit Habianic (Parthian Books, 2014)

*Girlfriends and Postfeminist Sisterhood*, Alison Winch (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

*Tender Delirium*, Tania De Rozario (Math Paper Press, 2013)

*Body Boundaries: The EtiquetteSG Anthologies Volume 1*, De Rozario, Muhammad and Udayasankar (eds) (The Literary Centre, 2014)

*Teaching Gender with Libraries and Archives*, Jong and Koevoets (eds) (Atgender, 2013)

*A Grrrl Guide to Smashing Sexism @ Work*, (ULU Women's Campaign, 2014)

*Infidel feminism: Secularism, religion and women's emancipation, England 1830–1914*, Laura Schwartz (Manchester University Press, 2013)

*Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work*, Melissa Gira Grant (Verso Books, 2014)

*Let's Start a Pussy Riot*, Neu and French (eds) (Rough Trade, 2013)

*Unspeakable things: Sex, Lies and Revolution*, Laurie Penny (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014)

*Rain and Thunder: A Radical Feminist Journal of Discussion and Activism*, Open Issue #59, Summer 2014

*Amazing Babes: A Picture Book for Kids and Adults*, Eliza Sarlos and Grace Lee (Scribe, 2014)

*Organise! Magazine #82* (Anarchist Federation, Summer 2014)



**The Feminist Library will be 40 in 2015 and we are intending to ensure it is a truly celebratory and momentous year at the Feminist Library.**

**To help us secure the future of the library for another 40 years at least, we are looking for feminist fundraisers. If you have experience of writing funding applications, contacting targeted possible donors and organising fundraising events, or are interested in helping, please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you. Email [fundraising@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:fundraising@feministlibrary.co.uk) for more information.**

## LISTINGS

### EVERY SATURDAY 10am-6pm, The Feminist Library Bookshop.

We sell new and secondhand books, periodicals and zines – with vintage editions of Spare Rib at £2 and fantastic zines from 50p, as well as beautiful cards, tote bags and badges by feminist designers. We also sell home made cake (usually vegan and gluten free) for £1.50, Zapatista filter coffee for £1, and tea for 80p. We have an ever growing stock of pamphlets and books, and can try to source things for you from publishers, so if there's something you are looking for, please email [bookshop@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:bookshop@feministlibrary.co.uk). The bookshop will not be open on Saturday 23 August.

**Saturday, 12 July 2014, 7 – 10pm, Polka Theatre, 240 The Broadway, London SW19 1SB. The Oneness Sistarhood Presents: "STRENGTH".** A variety show fundraiser in aid of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust organised by the Oneness Sistarhood. Tickets £10.

[www.facebook.com/OnenessSiSTARhood](http://www.facebook.com/OnenessSiSTARhood)

**Saturday 26th July 2014, 12pm to 5:00pm at The Finsbury Library, 245 Saint John Street, London EC1V 4NB [NB Not at the Feminist Library] London 70s Sisters gathering for feminists active in the 60s, 70s & 80s.**

Come to an afternoon of connecting with other feminists and joining in discussion around themes of ageing, ageism, and activism. There will be an opportunity to form new ongoing groups if you would like to.

This is a follow up meeting to the gathering held at the Feminist Library on January 25th, but will also be an open meeting for anyone who was not at the January meeting.

Women from outside London welcome. The building is wheelchair accessible. Bring your own lunch. The Feminist Library will be running a bookstall with hot drinks, cakes and savoury snacks.

For further information contact Kate Hancock at Opening Doors 020 7239 0447 or

[kate.hancock@ageukcamden.org.uk](mailto:kate.hancock@ageukcamden.org.uk). Please also contact Kate if you would be willing to help with organising beforehand or on the day.

**Friday 1 August, 4 – 8pm. St. George the Martyr Church in Borough, South London. Queer Religious Youth Event.**

Launch of exhibition and panel on the relationship between faith, Christianity, gender, and sexuality over the life-course. The Feminist Library will have a stall at the event. [queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com](http://queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com)

**13 – 17 August 2014, Lampeter, Wales. Women In Tune Festival.** Women-only festival celebrating women in music. [www.womenintune.co.uk](http://www.womenintune.co.uk)

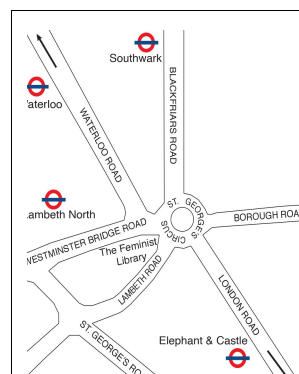
**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2014, Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Road, London. AFem2014.**

Anarcha-feminist Conference. [Afem2014.wordpress.com](http://Afem2014.wordpress.com)

Jacky Logan is a FitSteps instructor, DJ & librarian whose great music you heard at our 80s Homespun disco! Join her dance fitness classes in venues around NE London - you don't need a partner or any prior dance skills to enjoy them! Contact Jacky to book a place: 07715 421 349, [jacjoke@aol.com](mailto:jacjoke@aol.com). Jacky also hosts Pink Jukebox, a Latin American & Ballroom Dance Club for Lesbians, Gay Men and their Friends, at 4, Wild Court, London WC2B 4AU every 2nd & 4th Sunday of the month. Includes classes, as well as general dancing. Entry is £10 for members, £12 for non-members. Membership is £10 a year. See Jacky's website: [www.jackysjukebox.co.uk](http://www.jackysjukebox.co.uk)

**Saturday November 8th 2nd Feminist Graphic Arts event at the Feminist Library** – for everyone who likes feminist zines, comics, graffiti, and graphics of all sorts.

Come along to learn more, share skills and develop new ones. We are looking for people to give a talk or presentation on graphic arts, favourite artists, inspirations, theory, technique, etc. There will be an exhibition in the library with an accompanying zine, for which we invite feminist-identified artists to submit artwork on the theme of 'A feminist space is...' Please email your artwork as an A4 black and white high resolution image to [eva@laneutral.com](mailto:eva@laneutral.com) by **September 20th** and include a short description about yourself/your work. Contact us at the same email address if you'd like to help before and during the event.



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

Phone 020 7261 0879 or 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

**Opening hours:** The Feminist Library is open Mondays 5-8pm, Tuesdays 11am-6pm, Wednesdays 3-9pm, Thursdays 6-9pm and Saturdays 10am-6pm for the Feminist Library Bookshop. We are also open outside of these hours by appointment only. Please email [admin@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:admin@feministlibrary.co.uk) or phone 0207 261 0879 if you would like to make an appointment. 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. \*\*\*We close in August for our Summer Vacation.

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