



Feminist Library Newsletter

No. 19 Autumn 2014

Who Was Ethel Buddle?

By Zoe Fairbairns

Imagine the scene.

You're a volunteer worker at the Feminist Library. You arrive for your shift with a heavy heart. You're wondering how much longer the Library will survive: money is running out, and the rent is due.

To make matters worse, the morning mail has brought an envelope from a bank. This, you feel sure, can only be bad news: a bounced cheque? A request that you take your loss-making business elsewhere? A summons for non-payment of something-or-other?

Nervously you open the envelope.

The letter informs you that the Feminist Library has been included in the will of a woman who died recently aged 84. The woman's name – Ethel Buddle – is unfamiliar. There's no trace of her being an FL member or even a visitor. But she has left the Library nearly £15,000 – more than enough to avert the immediate financial crisis.

This happened in 2008. The worker who opened the envelope, Una Byrne, recalls the huge psychological boost that came with the money. "Ethel's legacy validated the work we were doing at the Library and encouraged us to continue," she recalls. "It allowed us to focus on outreach and promoting the Library. It is a direct consequence of Ethel's gift to us that the Library is in the great condition it is today."

Another FL worker recently visited some of Ethel Buddle's relatives to try and find out more about her. Born in Northumberland in 1924, Ethel was the youngest of five children of a coal-miner father and a full-time mother. Ethel attended Duchess Grammar School in Alnwick, and, during World War Two, worked in the Food Ration Office in Amble. After the war, she trained as a teacher, and became a lecturer in business studies at Newcastle Commercial College. A trade unionist and Labour Party member, Ethel always saw women's issues as a priority. She urged women to get the best possible education, to be ambitious and to apply for so-called men's jobs.

Her relatives aren't able to say whether she had any specific connection with the Feminist Library, or why she chose it for her bequest, but they are sure she would have been aware of it from the many women's movement newsletters and magazines to which she subscribed. The relatives recalled how Ethel's house was full of books on women's issues, and she was in frequent correspondence with newspapers and politicians on subjects to do with women's education and employment.

When the time came for Ethel Buddle to make her will, she was determined that no man would get his hands on her money: she left it all to female relatives and feminist charities, including us.

So what about you?

Will you follow Ethel Buddle's example and remember the Feminist Library in your will?

Perhaps you haven't made a will, and have no plans to do so. Why? Are you OK with the idea that, when you die, all your property (everything from private papers and personal treasures, to money in the bank and your home if you own it) will be distributed in accordance with the laws of intestacy, rather than in accordance with your wishes? (Some of your stuff might even end up being handed over to the government.)

So please take legal advice and make a will. Tell the solicitor that you want to leave some of your money to

The Feminist Library, 5 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7XW.

Phone: 0207 261 0879 Email: admin@feministlibrary.co.uk Website: www.feministlibrary.co.uk

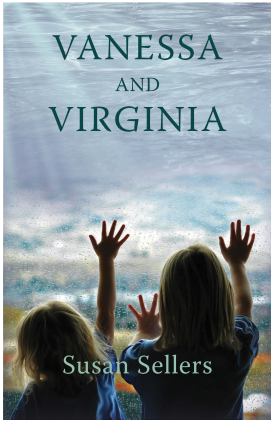
Registered charity number: 272410

You can leave either a specific sum, or a percentage of what you have. That's up to you. But please, take inspiration from Ethel Buddle, and do it.

If you have already made a will, you probably know that it's a good idea to keep it under review as your circumstances change. Next time you review your will, please ask your solicitor to include something for the Feminist Library.

We hope that it will be many years before the Feminist Library will actually benefit from your bequest. Some of us who are discussing it now, may not even be around. But someone will be – a future feminist who will be as grateful to you as we are to Ethel Buddle.

Reviews



***Vanessa and Virginia*, Susan Sellers (Two Ravens and Harcourt, 2008)**

A fictionalized portrait of writer Virginia Woolf's intimate yet fraught relationship with her sister Vanessa Bell, *Vanessa and Virginia* centres around themes of artistic creation and female experience, familial ties, mental illness and loss. Susan Sellers creates a portrait of two phenomenally

gifted artists at the vanguard of the Modernist movement, at the same time exploring the nature of female relationships: motherhood, daughterhood and sisterhood. Vanessa Bell becomes the central subject, rather than a side-character to her more famous sister, and the novel takes the form of an epistle written by Bell to Woolf, remembering and reflecting on their history of love and rivalry. This narrative technique underscores the theme explored in the book of the cathartic power of writing. Inhabiting Bell's perspective allows Sellers to detail her fascinating life as a Modernist artist, imagining how she might have willed her sister's success, contributed to it, yet envied and even feared it.

When I picked up the novel it was not without reservations. Woolf is something of a heroine of mine – I recall encountering her breathtaking stream-of-consciousness prose in my teens, one of those moments of sheer awe at the alchemic possibilities of the written word. To add to this, fictionalized accounts of real historical figures had never been a genre I had gone in for, preferring instead to go for either a biography or a novel – could the two be successfully blended? Thankfully Sellers has pulled it off with panache in *Vanessa and Virginia*. This is owed in large part to the fact that the book is quite obviously meticulously researched.

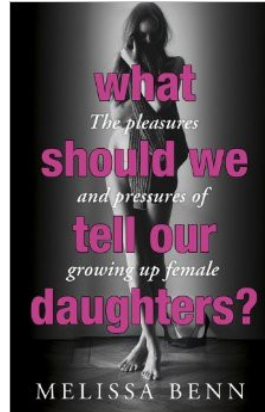
Sellers feeds this biographical information into the narrative in an imaginative, pictorial style, rather than simply regurgitating it - information and anecdotes are scattered through Vanessa's imagined monologue. While Sellers does not precisely recreate Woolf's own flitting, meandering stream-of-consciousness, her more simple prose style is both fresh and engaging, deploying scenes from both sisters' works. The sensual descriptions of Bell's paintings had me itching to rush off to a gallery to see the originals. Delightful, too are the depictions of the intellectual and social milieu of the Bloomsbury Group, which sees Woolf depicted in a carefree and almost wanton light – appearing in a risqué South Sea-Islander costume, or engaging in open bisexual flirtations – this is a far cry from the drawn, pensive and distressed figure we may imagine the writer always to have been.

Reading Sellers' book could not be considered a substitute for reading Woolf – and neither would I imagine its author would want it to be. This is a work created by a scholar who passionately loves Woolf's work, written for those who

love it equally passionately. Through both imagination and careful research, Sellers finds a way to highlight the artistic achievements of Woolf's beloved, yet sadly less well-known sister, and vibrantly brings a segment of Woolf's biography to life.

Reviewed by Anna Piggott. Edited for space. Full review available at feministlibrary.co.uk/reviews.

Vanessa and Virginia is available from the Feminist Library Bookshop at a special price of £8.00 (RRP £8.99)



***What Should We Tell Our Daughters? The Pleasures and Pressures of Growing Up Female*, Melissa Benn (Hodder Paperbacks, 2014)**

I've always been slightly worried (terrified) about the thought of bringing daughters into this world. I found it hard enough growing up as a teenage girl and I thankfully missed out on bullying/porn/social media/sexual relationships until I

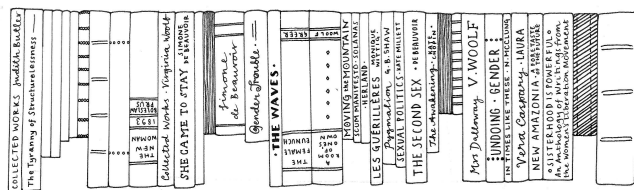
was well over 18. My mother, having had a mother from hell (told her there was nothing worth looking at when stood in front of a mirror), did a grand job of helping me to grow up. She was always extremely careful not to criticise herself in front of us and always encouraged us towards happiness (which unfortunately backfired on her when me and my sister realised happiness = tattoos). Melissa Benn's book, despite being aimed at women on the verge/in the middle of motherhood, is extremely relevant for today's early – mid twenties woman. We twenty-somethings, who may be finally accepting that we no longer fall into the 'girl' category and have uncomfortably moved into the realms of being a 'woman' potentially gain some insight into just how hard every other female finds growing up and finding herself.

Highlighting the issues that plague women throughout childhood and into adulthood, the book presents facts, figures and most interestingly, first hand interviews with mothers and daughters on such subjects as pornography, career, motherhood and the sexualisation of the female body. Unfortunately there was a slight lack of young women's perspectives, which Benn has been criticised for in the past, however, I couldn't help but feel when reading the book that part of Benn's *raison d'être* was to give us younger women a supportive hand into adulthood and therefore, in turn helping our future daughters.

I am still yet to decide whether the thought of having kids terrifies me enough to become celibate since I can no longer hide behind the 'I'm too young to have a kid' card, but whether I do become a mother or not, I think I may give Benn's book one more read just to remind myself that one of the truest ways to be a girl, woman, mother or daughter in today's society is to look to each other for support in just being ourselves.

Reviewed by Gemma Aston.

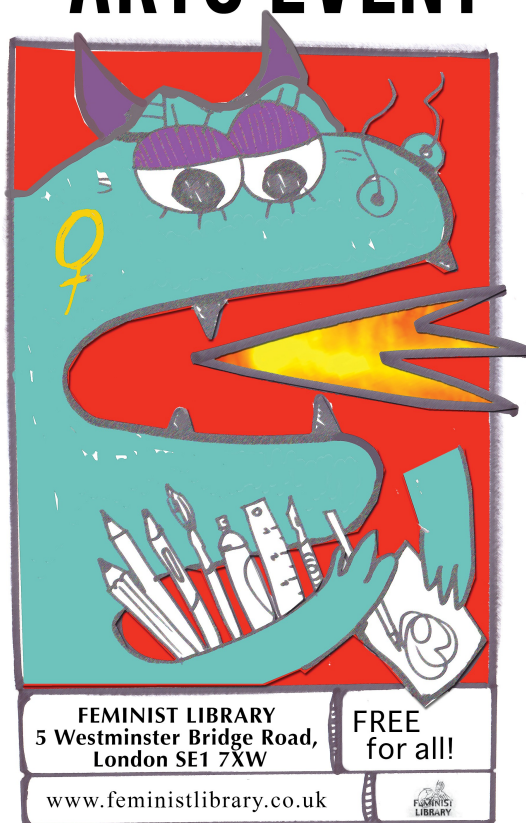
Dossier 28 and 29. Collections of Articles (Women Living Under Muslim Laws, 2009)

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Please note that the Feminist Library opening hours have changed. Our opening hours are Tuesdays 6-9pm, Wednesday 5-9pm, Thursdays 6-9pm and Saturdays 12-5pm for the Feminist Library Bookshop.

A glorious opportunity for you to buy all your seasonal gifts, while supporting us. We invite people who would like to sell their feminist wares to email us at stalls@feministlibrary.co.uk to book their space.

FEMINIST GRAPHIC ARTS EVENT



**8TH
NOV
2014**

**2PM-9PM
AT THE
FEMINIST
LIBRARY**

**EXHIBITION,
TALKS,
WORKSHOPS,
ZINES,
STALLS,
FOOD,
FUN
& NEW FRIENDS!**

 FeministLibrary
 @feministlibrary

comedy and spoken word performance. Featuring the Stepney Sisters. Tickets £10 for conference attendees, £15 for party only.

1-3pm, 29 October 2014, Glasgow Women's Library, 23 Landressy Street, Glasgow G40 1BP.

Celebrating Feminist Heroines

Black History Month celebration and discussion of acclaimed feminists texts and showcasing the work of leading authors, poets and academics, including Toni Morrison, Audre Lourde, Maya Angelou and bell hooks. Free but advanced booking necessary.

Womenslibrary.org.uk/events

12-6pm, 1 November 2014, Montague Arms, 289 Queens Rd, SE15 2PA. South East London Zine Fair. Free entry selondonzines.wordpress.com

1-2 November 2014, Bristol (Venues: Hydra Bookshop, 34 Old Market St, Bristol, BS2 0EZ and Friends Meeting House, Champion Square, Bristol BS2 9DB).

History From Below Network Conference 2014.

The international radical history network, History From Below, was founded in Barcelona in 2012 and now comprises 24 groups and individuals in 13 countries. Bristol Radical History Group are hosting the 2014 meeting of the international History From Below (HFB) network and would like to invite you to attend. Any queries should be addressed to BRHG at brh@brh.org.uk

Listings

18 October 2014, Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Rd, E1 4NS. London Anarchist Bookfair. anarchistbookfair.org.uk

19 October 2014, Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Rd, E1 4NS. Afem 2014. International Anarchafeminist Conference. Afem2014.wordpress.com

25 October 2014, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL. Feminism in London Conference. feminisminlondon.co.uk

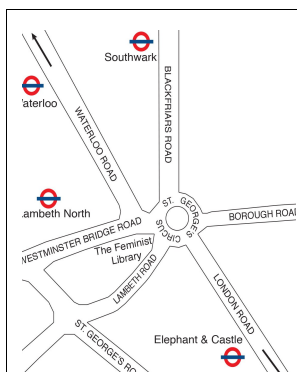
7pm-2am 25 October 2014, Downstairs at the Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL. Feminism in London After Party. An evening of music,

Wednesday 12 November 2014, JW3, The Jewish Community Centre, 341-351 Finchley Road, London NW3 6ET. Communities of Experience? A Symposium on Autobiographical Comics by Jewish Women.

Chaired by Sarah Lightman and Dr Heike Bauer and including Prof. David Brauner, Dr Ariela Freedman, Dr Ariel Kahn, Dr Pnina Rosenberg and Graphic Details Artists Corinne Pearlman, Miriam Katin, Diane Noomin, Ariel Schrag and Ilana Zeffren. The day will conclude with a cartoonist roundtable open to the public.

Ongoing until 13 December 2014, Space Station Sixty-Five, 373 Kennington Road, London, SE11 4PS. Graphic Details.

A groundbreaking touring exhibition providing the first in-depth look at a unique and prolific niche of graphic storytelling – Jewish women's autobiographical comics.



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

Phone 020 7261 0879 or email admin@feministlibrary.co.uk

Visit www.feministlibrary.co.uk.

Follow us on twitter @feministlibrary

Opening hours: The Feminist Library is open Tuesdays 6-9pm, Wednesday 5-9pm, Thursdays 6-9pm and Saturdays 12-5pm for the Feminist Library Bookshop. We are also open outside of these hours by appointment only. Please email admin@feministlibrary.co.uk or phone 0207 261 0879 if you would like to make an appointment. Please check www.feministlibrary.co.uk/hours for the most up-to-date information, including changes to opening hours.

The Feminist Library Newsletter, Autumn 2014 - ISSN 0951-2837. Contributors: Una Byrne, Gail Chester, Zoe Fairbairns, Anna Piggott, Gemma Aston.