

Celebrating 35 years of archiving and activism

It has been 35 years since the Feminist Library was founded as a humble shelf of books seeking to preserve the (often ephemeral) literature of the women's liberation movement.

We're having a massive birthday benefit to celebrate this landmark anniversary on 19th February at the Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, London E5 0PU at 7pm.

It will be a fun and eclectic evening with entertainment from Trash Kit, Martha & Eve, Viv Albertine, Women Sing East, Julie McNamara, Lorraine Jordan, DJ, as well as a dramatised excerpt from *A Fine Undertaking: A Lesbian Relationship Farce* by Berta Friestadt by some friends of Berta.

We still need help on the night – please check our website for details of how you can help or email volunteer@feministlibrary.co.uk for more information.

The venue is fully accessible. There will be a licensed bar, with cakes too.

Friendly feminist people of all ages and genders welcome.

Tickets are available on the night and in advance from our website, and can be reserved by calling 020 7261 0879. Tickets will be £5 /£10/£15 depending on income.

For more information visit www.feministlibrary.co.uk or check us out on facebook.

Feminist Library stall at [ladyfest@10](#)



2010 saw lots of new women getting involved in the library, bringing much needed energy, ideas and time. The Feminist Library stall and volunteers were at Feminism in London, Reclaim the Night and Ladyfest@10, we had open days and a bring and buy sale, with more and more people and groups visiting and using the library.

Women and the Kettle

On 9 December 2010 MPs controversially voted to increase university fees to an unacceptable £9,000. Around the country people took to the streets to protest. In London on that very cold day several thousand people were detained for hours by the police in Parliament Square, Trafalgar Square and Westminster Bridge Road, just yards from the library. This process of detainment is called Kettling and is increasingly being used by police against demonstrators. Here are some reflections from that day by Feminist Library volunteers and activists.

Hot chocolate and pot noodles...

Substantial quantities of these items were consumed at the Feminist Library (in the kitchen, of course!) when we collaborated with

Woodcraft Folk to provide a safe space for young people and their friends recovering from the demo on 9th December. We were glad to help, as we have been shocked by the disproportionate violence used by the police against defenceless young people, especially charging them with police horses. Feminist Library supporters include students, women who work in universities and colleges, and parents, while all of us, and the library itself, are at great risk because of the government cuts.

To find out more about how Woodcraft Folk is supporting the Kettled Generation, please see <http://www.woodcraft.org.uk/young-people-protest-watch>

Women and the Kettle continues p2

Opening Hours

The Feminist Library is now open more often and for longer.

Our opening hours for January, February and March are:

- Tuesday 11am - 4pm
- Wednesday 5:30pm – 9:30pm
- Friday 10:30am – 6pm
- Saturdays – we are open the first and last Saturdays of the month from 1:30pm – 5:30pm.

The full timetable for opening can be found on our website at www.feministlibrary.co.uk

To book a visit to the library outside of opening times:

Email

admin@feministlibrary.co.uk

or ring 020 7261 0879

Being a woman in a kettle

by Rosa Martyn, (mylittlestitches.wordpress.com).

Firstly, let's get the obvious gender difference out the way - over the course of 9 hours (which was the time I was detained) one is probably going to want to urinate. Doing this discretely 'out in the open' is a much easier job for men and they can aim it at a political target: a door of HM Revenue & Customs was a popular destination. Another 'toilet' was the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and three fences had been arranged into a make-shift 'hut' with 'PISS HERE' spray painted onto the side.

None of these were female friendly. The hut was perhaps the most dignified, but unless you were wearing waterproof shoes, it was hardly an option. Boggy doesn't quite describe it. Instead, I chose not to drink any water while detained. At no point did I know how long that would be, so even a sip seemed like to big a risk. My thirst became difficult to manage - but still preferable to finding a place to urinate. I am now the proud owner of a 'she-wee' (a thoughtful Christmas present) so I will never be in this situation again.

But I also wanted to talk about the fear which we felt for the police - probably shared between the sexes. We had police on horseback charging at us, police with shields and helmets and batons running at us. Hands held up in surrender were hit with batons, we could see demonstrators with bloodied heads being carried off. We were also being lied to - we were told we'd experience freedom shortly, and then were lead onto another kettle on Westminster Bridge for a further three hours. For the entire time we were being detained, we were being taught to fear the police.

These protests are attended by a lot of young people - the youngest I met that day were sixteen, but even younger must have been there too. For many, this was their first experience of a protest. They have been taught, through police brutality, that protesting leads to bruises, to vandalism, that it descends into what seems very much like chaos. They have also been taught to hate, distrust and fear police. An entire generation has now been bred to not trust the very people that have been appointed and employed to protect us.

There's a reason for their disgusting tactics: It's to stop us wanting to protest, to put us off making our voices heard. It is our right, and it is often the only thing left to do. I certainly will not stop. In the words of Malvina Reynolds, **"It isn't nice to block the doorway, it isn't nice to go to jail, there are nicer ways to do it, but the nice ways always fail. It isn't nice, it isn't nice, you told us once, you told us twice, but if that is Freedom's price, we don't mind."**

Rosa will be presenting a session on embroidery at a forthcoming Upstairs at the Feminist Library event. See our website for further details.

Complicity and the Kettle

by Sophie Jones.

Standing at the centre of the Parliament Square kettle, I realised the crowd had split in half. To my right was a mass of people watching the attempt to break into the Treasury. To my left was a static queue of protesters. My eyes followed the fatigued snake of demonstrators to its grim origin: several rows of police officers with truncheons and shields doing nothing to let the docile queue-identified persons out of the freezing square. The ill-fated queue eventually dispersed. But I was reminded of it later as I attempted to avoid a panic attack at another of the police's faux-exits. This wasn't a queue, but a crush. The time was 9pm. We had been incarcerated in the square since 3.30pm. We had to believe this exit was for real. Even if I had received some premonition that the police were planning to filter us on to Westminster Bridge and detain us there for a further two hours, there was no escape route - we were too tightly packed. I tried to stay calm.

"We'll be back!" someone shouted.

"Don't say that - they won't let us go!" somebody else screamed angrily.

Here it was again - the ostensible split between the radical hardcore and the pragmatic moderates. References to a 'hardcore of anarchists' have been used in the mainstream media to belittle the size and passion of the larger movement. When this is no longer possible, the entire demonstration is branded a mob or riot. If a division exists, between the guilty and the not-guilty, between those who deserve to be kettled and those who do not, why don't the police let people they know to be innocent leave the kettle? Why do the police turn a blind eye to situations such as the attack on the Treasury until it has escalated to a degree that might appear to justify state violence more than a peaceful, lawful demonstration? Indeed, why does kettling happen before, not after, the behaviour that deems it necessary in the eyes of the Met?

Kettling performs a number of functions. The tactic incites riotous behaviour, making it easier for the authorities and the media to conflate the meanings of 'protest' and 'riot'. It discourages protesters from taking to the streets by dangling the threat of an 8-hour stint in the cold over any planned demonstration. Kettling is also, it seems, working to split the anti-cuts movement by encouraging protesters to blame 'a violent minority' of their fellow demonstrators for their predicament.

This is a mistake. If you are inside the kettle without a press pass or a freshly-pressed business suit, your behaviour is irrelevant. You are fair game for being treated like shit, whether you're queuing quietly or yelling "Tory scum!" If you are inside the kettle, you become a puppet, your movements controlled to suggest the appearance of destructive agency. If you are inside the kettle, you have a choice: you can play along with the performance, or you can turn your anger towards the people pulling the strings.



Listings

October 2010-April 2011, Free *Hand Made Tales: Women and Domestic Crafts*

Exhibition focusing on the role domestic crafts play in many women's experiences,, the current revival of domestic crafts such as sewing, gardening, and cooking, and historical roots of the domestic arts.

The Women's Library **25 Old Castle Street** **London E1 7NT**

For more information visit londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary or ring 020 73202222

Saturday 12th February 2011, 11-4pm ***Women's Institute Crafts Day***

Fun family day to celebrate the crafts activities of The Women's Institute, bringing together members of the WI from different federations to provide a historical context to WI crafts programmes, its role in saving traditional crafts, the contemporary work of the WI and an opportunity to learn more with stalls, displays and demonstrations of patchwork quilting, knitting, lacework, rug ragging and more. Free.

Also at The Women's Library, London (details above).

27th January 2010 7pm

Women Against the Cuts meeting.

London – venue to be confirmed
A group for women to come together to fight the government cuts from a feminist perspective.

Womenagainstthecuts.wordpress.com

31 January 6pm

Interrogating Queer Modes of Belonging

A Manchester Queer Reading Group Series in collaboration with Race Revolt. Part of a reading series of texts that address the ways in which gay rights are being used in nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric by racist organisations such as the English Defence League, politicians like Geert Wilders, and even by gay activists.

LGBT Community Centre, 49-51 Sidney Street, Manchester.

Further events are planned around the UK, see racerevolt.org.uk/events

Upstairs at the Feminist Library

A brand new series of events starting on 20 January at the Feminist Library - they will be fun, informative, activist, musical, poetic, creative (including embroidery!), and much more.

Starts off with an evening of feminist music curated by Acton Bell with music from Helen McCookerybook (Artist, blogger, book author and musician, she's been defined a posh female Chuck Berry), Portia Winters, Josh Geffin (Experimental songs with voice, guitar and electrics) and Acton Bell (Singer and guitarist playing Mersey beat songs & '60s hits).

There will be food.

Entry by donation (suggested £3 upwards) – 19:30 – 23:00.

Invite all your friends!

Dates of further events

17 March, 14 April, 9 June, 14 July.

For more information email us events@feministlibrary.co.uk or visit feministlibrary.co.uk

20 January 6 – 9pm

Women's History Month Pre-launch

Women's History Month will be an annual event running throughout March and will comprise events, educational resources, links and ideas for inspiring learning about women's history. This pre-launch event will introduce Women's History Month and will include short speeches and performances from inspirational women from a range of backgrounds.

Further information at www.womenshistorymonth.org.uk

Portcullis House, London SW1A2LW.

International Women's Day 2011 Events

Saturday 5th March 2011

Million Women Rise

Annual women and children only march against male violence against women.

For more information visit www.millionwomenrise.com or ring 07727 419634

05 March - 02 April 2011

WOMEN OF FAITH

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

Images of women of faith from the culturally diverse area of the borough of Trafford, Greater Manchester by photographer Rachel Adams.

St. John's Church, Ayres Rd, Old Trafford, Manchester, M16 7GX.

For more information visit www.curatedplace.com.

5 March 2011 7pm - 3am

RUBYFRUIT CLUB IWD EVENT

Taking place in Glasgow and raising money for women's charity.

Showcasing local talent, comedians, musicians, etc. and culminating in Club Night event by Rubyfruit women only Club.

Winchester Club, Glasgow G1 1NX.

For info email ruby.fruit@ymail.com

8 March 2011 10.00 to 16.00

IWD CELEBRATION

Walthamstow Library will be celebrating International Women's Day with an open public event with various organisations attending.

Walthamstow Library, High Street, London, E17 7JN

For further information visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/index/leisure/libraries

March 1-31

WISEWORDS

Celebrates women writers, performers and artists with a diverse line-up of events and exhibitions in selected East End venues during Women's History Month. For more information visit www.alternativearts.co.uk, email info@alternativearts.co.uk or ring 020 73750441

12 March 2011 10am to 5pm.

International Women's Day Fair

Artists, Book Publishers, Craftswomen, Designers, Women's Groups & Organisations. Free.
Spitalfields Traders Market, Brushfield Street, London, E1 6AA
Also organised by Alternative Arts (see above for contact details).

Diana Leonard, academic and activist – a tribute

Diana, who died in November 2010, was a founder of the Feminist Library (then known as the WRRRC -- Women's Research and Resources Centre) in 1975. She taught sociology at the Institute of Education, where she did extensive research on gender and education. She was also an active radical feminist, helping to found the radical feminist journal, *Trouble and Strife*, and co-organising the radical feminist conference which led to the publication of the infamous *Feminist Practice* pamphlet. One of Diana's major achievements was to marry the activists to the analysts. She made a space in women's studies for the political insights of radical feminism, which had been strangely missing in British academia (by contrast with movements in France, Italy and the rest of the English-speaking world).

The Feminist Library will be hosting a page in commemoration of Diana on its website. If you would like to contribute any memories or thoughts about her, or relevant images, please send them to dianaleonard@feministlibrary.co.uk

Book Review

The Female Man by Joanna Russ (Beacon Press, 1975)

The science fiction genre readily maintains its appeal to geeks. Though unfortunately science fiction books by female authors are not received with wider interest. Thankfully, the Feminist Library preserves bookshelves of women's sci-fi literature which shatters the stereotype that this genre is only the product of male fantasy. The use of science fiction allows the writer to explore alternative social norms - in the case of 'The Female Man' the author, Joanna Russ takes the reader on a journey viewing life from a woman's perspective.

First published in 1975, the book is a fantastical story of four women living in different worlds, who travel into each other's world to face dilemmas about women's role in society. The main characters leading this adventure are Janet Evason 'the female man' from Whileaway (world without men), Joanna (world similar to Earth), Jael (world of terror with men and women in conflict with each other) and Jeannine (world in continued Great Depression). Russ uses familiar everyday incidents to question the general social norms on Earth. For example, Janet enters Joanna's world, and in a bar Janet physically assaults a man, who fails to realise his earlier advances were not welcomed. Janet, coming from Whileaway, challenges the man for making rash judgements, which often leads to misunderstanding between both genders. Both Joanna and Janet feel uncomfortable with this incident and the writer questions the reasons why.

The book allows readers to follow the crossover from one world to another. Russ warns the readers when a chapter is a complete rant, which I find hysterically funny to read, because people's ignorance about female sexuality is prevalent today. However I found Janet's character occasionally irksome because she's continually unable to sympathise with the three other main characters even though she possesses human emotions and feelings. Sci-fi allows Joanna Russ to discuss gender divisions in flux through the characters' predicaments, and it proves survival of humankind is dependent on equality. Since the publication of 'The Female Man' there have been few heroine figures in popular cultures, especially sci-fi fantasy films and books. Often the fixation of a modern heroine is far more on sexuality than on being intellectually powerful.

Russ wrote the book at the height of the feminist movement in the 1970s, and the novel addresses the struggle of women's identity outside the marital norms. Sadly 'The Female Man', apart from a historical account of female liberation, proves relevant as recurring inequalities are faced by women today. Therefore, there is much need for the resurgence of female science fictions writers and it makes a refreshing contrast to ordinary sci-fi books.

Suhkinder Dhaliwal

If you are interested in reviewing books for the newsletter do please email us admin@feministlibrary.co.uk.

New acquisitions - The library is grateful to receive new publications – please keep sending them in. Future issues of the newsletter will contain listings and more reviews.

The Feminist Library Newsletter

ISSN: 0951-2837

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