

The Feminist Library Newsletter

International Women's Day Edition

March 2005

Crisis Update

WELCOME to the first edition of the Feminist Library's Newsletter of 2005. When we left you in Spring last year, the library had reached a crisis point, as funding problems threatened our existence. The prospect of closing the library and distributing the collection to other libraries around the country was mooted, but, thanks to the commitment and hard graft of our volunteers, we were able to stay open.

In recent months, an active group made up of familiar faces and new volunteers has come together to ensure that the library has a future as a viable, valuable resource for women. Generous donations from members and others have helped, but the future of the library is still at stake. We still need all kinds of help from volunteers to funding, from donated stock to contacts. There is a regular donation form in the pages of this Newsletter and for any other offers of help please do not hesitate to ring us or email thefeministlibrary@beeb.net.

We are currently closed for stocktaking, but we will re-open with an event to mark International Women's Day, on 19 March. There will be a book sale and wine.

This revamped newsletter is part of our efforts to revive the library's fortunes. Regular readers will notice some new features.

A new, regular profile will tell you what "We Get Behind", turning the spotlight on some of the good work being done by organizations in London. This month we spoke to the Poppy Project, the only shelter in the UK for women who have been trafficked.

We also have our regular selection of reviews, with a new focus on books that have recently been donated to the library. If you haven't dropped by in a while, maybe this will provide you with the inspiration to make use of that membership card!

You can also read about the recent creative writing workshop led by Zoe Fairbairns, a long-standing supporter and friend of the library. And check out our highlights of the events going on in the capital, on and around International Women's Day.

In the meantime we look forward to hearing from you with ideas for the future of the library and content for future editions of the newsletter.

Jess McCabe

We get behind: The Poppy Project

Kofi Annan, secretary-general of the UN, has termed human trafficking a form of modern day slavery. Speaking on the 2nd of December 2004, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, he warned that millions of men, women and children were being "bought and sold as chattel", and that many of them would be trafficked across borders, often being sold into prostitution.

It is not known how many women are trafficked into the UK, because the nature of the problem makes such figures hard to quantify. But, as Annan ominously indicated, we know what happens when they get here. This sometimes takes the form of domestic labour, but many end up in forced prostitution. The women are kept in line with threats, often directed towards their families in their country of origin.

So when these women escape or are released from the traffickers, some may think that the Government would step in to help them. In fact, the Government has no statutory duty to trafficked persons (although a draft European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings is in development, which, if ratified, would grant trafficked people more rights).

According to Amnesty International UK, they are often categorized as "illegal entrants" or "prostitutes" by Government agencies, immigration officials and the police.

So it is the Poppy Project which takes on the role of supporting women trafficked into sexual exploitation.

Part of the Eaves Housing group, which has provided housing in London for women with support needs for 30 years, the Poppy project combines accommodation and support services for trafficked women and prostitutes. It is the sole support service for women who have been trafficked to the UK, housing only 25 women at any one time.

The Poppy Project is the front line – the only line – of support for these women. When all of the Project's beds are full, any trafficked women found by the Government are deported back to their country of origin, where some face being trafficked a second time.

The Poppy Project houses trafficked women

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We get behind: The Poppy Project (continued)

alongside other Eaves tenants. Women are supported holistically by their allocated support worker, and offered a range of services by Poppy and partner organisations including counseling, legal advice, medical treatment for physical, sexual and mental health problems, access to education/English language classes and support through asylum, immigration and police interviews and processes.

The women come from around the world. The most common countries of origin are Lithuania, Albania, Moldova, Thailand and Nigeria, but the shelter has received referrals concerning women from China, Egypt, Ecuador, Israel, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Ghana and Colombia, demonstrating that trafficking is a truly global phenomenon.

However, the project also plays a valuable role researching trafficking and raising awareness of the problem in the public arena. Recent research includes 'Sex in the City: Mapping Commercial Sex Across London', an investigative report on the scale of off-street prostitution in London and 'Paying the Price' a response to the Government's prostitution paper.

Current pieces of work are a mapping report which will detail off-street prostitution in Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen and will include outdoor prostitution in Glasgow and a study of NGO services in Europe.

The Poppy Project is also in the process of setting up a resource library to include literature around prostitution and trafficking. This will not be a loans library, but can be used for reference on request. (If you are interested, contact poppy@eaveshousing.co.uk). Poppy also produces a quarterly Poppy Project Newsletter.

Poppy's webpage can be found at www.poppy.ik.com, if you wish to refer a woman to the project Poppy's 24 hour trafficking hotline number is 0207 840 7129.

Jess McCabe and Louise Hinchliffe

Major Women's Film Festival Hits London

Here at the Feminist Library, we are very excited by the news that, for the first time ever, London will play host to a film festival dedicated to films made solely by women. The Bird's Eye View festival runs from 8-13 March.

We are looking forward to seeing Tracey Emin's controversial, autobiographical film 'Top Spot', about growing up in Margate.

'Top Spot' was never given a national release, after Emin refused to cut graphic scenes showing a teenage girl trying to commit suicide. The BBFC gave the film an 18 certificate, but Emin refused to release it, because it was about, and for teenage girls, and so they should be able to see it.

The film festival organisers have been given a special license to show 'Top Spot' to 16 year olds, and the screening will be followed by a debate chaired by Miranda Sawyer.



(Still from Top Spot)

'Electric Shadows' also caught our eye. Director Xiao Jiang, part of the increasingly exciting 'new wave' of Chinese film-making, examines the lives of unwanted children, and their desire to escape reality through 'electric shadows', or the cinema.

There is also an exciting programme of shorts, illustrating the breadth of talent out there, including the Oscar-nominated 'Wasp', by Andrea Arnold.

Festival director, Rachel Millward explained to us that the festival was necessary and timely. Only 7% of all filmmakers are women. She said: "When it is that severe, you have to be proactive".

She explained that the festival was important for both producers to understand that there was talent out there, and for audiences to pose the question, does it matter who makes the films we see?

The roadblocks preventing women film makers from making it were "many and very complicated", she said. However, much could be put down to historical precedent.

The industry is dominated by men, with some crews and even actors resistant to working for female directors. Film stars of the calibre of Mel Gibson and Jack Nicholson have expressed doubts about working with female directors.

But audiences too are used to watching the kind of stories told by men. Millward said, "we all have set ideas about what we expect to see".

She also put the dearth of women film makers down to commissioners who "patronize" audiences, assuming they won't want to see anything that does not conform to the formula of what makes a good film.

When posed the question of whether she was worried about a women's film festival further ghettoising women film makers, Millward insisted that she was not.

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Major Women's Film Festival Hits London (cont.)

She said: "We're trying to be as mainstream as possible". The festival has been marketed and promoted to appeal to a wider audience, so it was not 'just a zone for feminist discourse'.



(still from Electric Shadows)

If all this inspires you, why not attend one of the master classes running as part of the festival.

For more information, check out the website at www.birds-eye-view.co.uk, or call 020 7288 7444.

Jess McCabe

Equality Now opens London office

Equality Now has opened a new office in London. The office will be the organisation's European hub, co-ordinating campaigns on human rights violations perpetrated against women around the world.

Making use of a worldwide network of women, the group highlights human rights abuses and mobilises its membership in letter writing campaigns.

The London office opened with a meeting of prominent women in the media from Algeria, Guatemala, India, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Palestine, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

Jacqui Hunt, director of Equality Now's London office, explained: "The media plays a crucial role in breaking the silence around women's rights violations. We hope this meeting will give journalists and activists both a better sense of how the media can be effectively mobilised to help end violence and discrimination against women."

Jess McCabe

First Women Bishops One Step Closer

The Church of England has taken the first tentative steps towards appointing the first ever female bishops.

It is 11 years since the first women priests were appointed, and even if the Church decides to accept women bishops, it will be 2011 at the earliest before the first bishop is appointed.

Jess McCabe

Review of Zoe Fairbairns' Creative Writing Workshop

As the first paid worker at the Feminist Library, it seems fitting that Zoe Fairbairns would return to the place to share her expertise as a successful writer.

It was also a great opportunity for a less experienced writer like me to haul herself out of the rut that her obsession with truthfulness has created and concentrate on actually making up some stories for a change!

These days, most of my inspiration leads me to write reviews, essays or -to put it another way- indulgent opinion pieces. The closest I usually get to creative writing is hastily scribbling an isolated passage on the back of an envelope when I realise the situation I have been thinking about is actually a work of fiction (courtesy of my very over-active imagination). I also have a habit of hoarding all my best lines for myself. This was a much-needed excursion for me.

After a brief round of introductions, we got started on our first exercise. This was focused on the linear narrative and we all wrote stories following the recognised pattern of somebody (i.e the first person in the story) wanting something, attempting to satisfy their desire, meeting an obstacle, trying to surmount it and then either succeeding or failing.

My own story was a little stilted. However, being in a small group meant we all had the benefit of full feedback and it was suggested to me that the ideas I expressed after reading out my story should have actually been part of the writing itself! Perhaps this kind of writers block particularly affects those of us who usually write about subjects directly rather than addressing them through fiction. Perhaps being aware of this tendency sometimes lead a writer to over-compensate and get weighed down with the more banal details of her plot.

Despite the lack of spark to my story, I found this exercise to be very effective because it got us all thinking about our processes.

Our second exercise was to write a story that revolved around dialogue and began with "You don't know me but..." In the third and final exercise, we wrote letters. These letters were structured around the rough formula of starting the first two sentences with a particular word and the final one with a question before passing the letter on to our neighbour for a reply.

I'd say this is a good exercise to try if you find your writing tends to get stuck when you are setting a scene, as it encourages you to weave this information into the text in imaginative and satisfying ways. The exercise was also interesting in that it demonstrated the intervention of another voice within a plot and this complemented our earlier look at dialogue very well.

Holly Combe

BOOK REVIEWS

***Gates of Freedom: Voltairine de Cleyre & the Revolution of the Mind* by Eugenia C. Delamotte**

Voltairine de Cleyre was one of the foremost anarchist thinkers, and one of the foremost feminists of her time and place: that is the late 19th century (she was born in 1866 and died in 1912), and the United States.

Delamotte brings to life an extraordinary woman who has largely been forgotten by history. She charts de Cleyre's progression from the free-thinking daughter of radical parents (she was named after Voltaire) to committed anarchist and atheist, who earned the disapproval of her mother for living out her ideals.

Delamotte fills in the details of the debates going on in American anarchist circles at the time, providing the reader with the grounding necessary to fully appreciate this remarkable woman, and understand her writings.

These writings, many of which are collected at the end of the book, range from soaring oratory (she was a masterful rhetorician), to allegorical fiction and poetry. But we are also given an insight into de Cleyre's personal life, through a selection of letters to her family and comrades.

These are perhaps the most interesting literary artefacts presented by Delamotte, revealing her struggles with her mother, who relied on her for financial support, her sister and her comrades.

De Cleyre's life story is fascinating. A contemporary (and rival) of Emma Goldman, she lived out her own ideas about gender and anarchy. She refused to marry, and continuously opposed marriage (which she equated with "sex slavery"). When she gave birth to a son by her lover, James Elliot, she left him in the care of his father.

Most dramatically, when a former pupil of hers attempted to assassinate her in 1902, shooting her three times point blank, she refused to identify him or testify against him, even raising money for his defence.

Delamotte terms her "a major – perhaps the major – theorist of anarchist feminism", "more radical" in some respects than the more famous Emma Goldman.

De Cleyre was staunchly opposed to marriage, and wrote a number of tracts on the subject, the titles of which (such as 'Those Who Marry Do Ill' and 'Sex Slavery') indicate something of the strength of her feeling.

Even a happy marriage was not acceptable to de Cleyre, who took the view that individual development, not happiness, was the ultimate goal of life, so even the happily married "have lived less successfully than many who have not lived so happily".

These views were informed by horrific, but true, stories, such as the woman who, recovering from a botched operation during childbirth, was raped by her husband and subsequently died. In her fiction and lectures, de Cleyre reveals how contemporary views on rape and marriage, and the role of the married women were ingrained even in supposedly radical, anarchist men.

But it was her lecture to the Liberal Convention in 1891, the 'Gates of Freedom', in which de Cleyre cut to the root of her analysis of gender in her time. Extending Prouden's famous proclamation that "property is theft", de Cleyre asked, and answered: "What then is woman? Property!"

Times have changed. Now, American activists are more likely to protest for marriage to be extended to

same-sex couples than to call for the institution to be rejected outright. And we might prefer a more reasoned, less impassioned mode of expression. None the less, this is a fascinating historical portrait.

Jess McCabe

***Lesbian Lives: Identity and Auto/Biography in the Twentieth Century* by Nicky Hallett**

Nicky Hallett's *Lesbian Lives* examines the subject of lesbian representation by comparing lesbian visibility in the 1920s and 1930s with that of the later twentieth century. Hallett explores the construction of lesbian identity in diaries, letters (particularly those of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville West), reviews, autobiographies and biographies, autobiographical and biographical fiction, portraits and films, investigating the numerous ways in which different lesbians construct their own identities, as well as representations of lesbians by others within the spheres of art and media. The rhetorical questions posed by Hallett is of whether there can be an individual, identifiable "genre" of lesbian autobiography.

According to Hallett, the male heterosexual "gaze" has traditionally constructed lesbianism not as an alternative sexual expression but as a parody; an approximation of heterosexuality. In patriarchal society lesbianism is inexplicable without being seen in a binaristic way, in terms of male and female roles. Lesbian lovemaking has been depicted as role-playing, as something that is acted out. Lesbian women have therefore often created their identities around ideas of subverting such phallogocentric constructs.

There was a lot of debate about the term "identity" in the twentieth century. Just as lesbian women were beginning to articulate their senses of personal and political identity, academic and postmodernist theorists such as Barthes and Foucault heralded "the death of the author", denying authorial supremacy within the text. This complicated academic ideologies about biography and autobiography, and led many writers to turn to other genres.

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Lesbians were able to claim the genre for themselves, subverting the male tradition of biography and autobiography as absolute truth by proposing fragmentation of ideas of "the self", as in Vita Sackville-West's writings, or by empowering lesbian women through breaking a media silence about lesbianism. Throughout the twentieth century lesbianism was ignored, refuted or glossed over by the media. Or when it was highlighted, it was regularly presented as dishonest or deceitful. Hallett refers to obituaries for lesbian women such as actress Cicely Hamilton, Octavia Hall, and Radclyffe Hall's partner Mabel Batten to illustrate these points. Lesbian ex-MP Maureen Colquhoun subverted the media-created notion of having to "confess" to – and to be oblique about – lesbianism by authoring a frank and open autobiography, normalising lesbian life.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Some commentators argue that calling lesbian biography and autobiography a “genre” is problematic because it makes lesbianism the centre of one’s life. On the other hand it is an opportunity for lesbian women to assert and celebrate the identities they have created for themselves, as the phallocentrism of culture and language forced generations of pre-1990s women to conceal theirs.

Hallett explores not only lesbian images in writing but also visual conceptualisations of lesbian lives through the iconography of archetypal “married couple” Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas and late twentieth-century parodies of the portrait genre and lesbian images in films such as the dramatisation of Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*. The visual *is* reality in patriarchal culture, she argues, therefore if lesbianism is visualisable, it gains authenticity in the public eye. Thus, to be visible is empowering. This could partially explain why the stereotypical image of “the lesbian” emerged, but the book implicitly acknowledges that the question “what does a lesbian look like?” is on a par with “how long is a piece of string?”

The same can be said of the question “what is lesbian identity”, which is further problematised by debates about essentialism (innate sexuality) versus constructionism (learned or developed sexuality). Hallett investigates 1920s and 1930s “sexologists” who defined lesbianism as “inversion” (*essentialist*), yet became the classifiers, the labellers who *constructed* the category of lesbianism. Sexuality was conflated with gender by the sexologists, and the more lesbian women were labelled as “masculine”, the more they were inclined to define themselves according to such roles. Lesbian women have consistently developed their own ideas of identity, sometimes subverting heterocentric ideologies, sometimes seeing a certain advantage in being beyond thought – beyond the constraints of a conceptual system. “Lesbian identity” is subjective – it has a multitude of meanings, inscribed not only by the author but also by the reader.

Rachel Haynes

The Global Women's Movement: Origins, issues and strategies by Peggy Antrobus

This is a very slim book. At little over 200 pages, the first question that springs to mind is how it is possible to chart something as hard to define, as long-lived, as complex, as amorphous as the global women's movement in such a short volume.

The answer is that this book is not a potted history. Instead, Antrobus has documented the “top” layer of the movement – the world of UN conferences and international NGOs. Documented, but also provided us with her own, firmly put, personal and theoretical take on it.

And she approaches this take with a marked, political stance: that the goals of the women's movement are fundamentally in tune with those of the anti-globalisation movement. This poses obvious problems for Antrobus, not least in the shape of the women's movement itself.

As she points out herself, it encompasses a vast swathe of differing political viewpoints, from the Nigerian women's movement, which construes its goals in different

terms to, say, feminists in Western Europe. She quotes from an interview with Obiageli Nwankwo, the project co-ordinator of the International Federation of Women Lawyers: “We are not asking for equality with our husbands. We accept them as our bosses and heads of the family.”

Unlike the international trade union movement, the women's movement cannot claim a single, unifying approach, she says.

After deconstructing the problems of describing the movement, Antrobus understandably has problems convincing us that it has tended to veer towards a synonymous understanding of global politics as something as specific as the anti-globalisation movement.

However, once you accept Antrobus' analysis for what it is, this book has valuable and interesting insights to offer, not least in terms of dispelling the false dichotomy that is applied to growing demands for trade justice and the politics of identity – namely, feminism.

Antrobus writes us an alternative history, plotting the involvement of many in the global women's movement with the developing critique of “free” trade, the IMF and the World Bank, long before these issues came to the forefront of the news agenda in the form of anti-capitalist demonstrations on the streets of Seattle in 1999.

And the book also exposes another, more important, preconception, by bearing witness to women's activism outside of the relatively protective walls of Europe and North America.

Equally importantly, it is an enjoyable read, although it often gives only a tantalising glimpse into stories that bare further illustration and exploration. The book is studded with personal reflections on Antrobus' own involvement. She is not afraid to point out where she has made a mistake in the past, drawing our attention to the process by which she came to her current political stance.

The book's flaws all come down to efforts to jam such a complex collection of issues and history into a small book. Antrobus often asks us to make a leap of faith with her, simply stating something is so, rather than explaining it or justifying it. And it walks a fine line between too passing a reference to events and issues – meaning that those without a prior grounding may be unconvinced, and too shallow an investigation – meaning that those with that prior knowledge may be disappointed.

Jess McCabe

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LISTINGS

The Pick of International Women's Day

The March section of the Feminist Library's diary is bursting with exciting events, as women across the capital pull out all the stops for International Women's Day. We can't list everything (we suggest you pop over to Women In London's exhaustive website for that), but here are some suggestions to whet your appetite.

4-12 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

Alternative Arts are running a series of readings, talks, discussions, performances and workshops celebrating women's writing. A full listing can be found at www.alternativearts.co.uk Call 020 7247 2584 for tickets. Our pick of this year's offerings can be found below. All events take place at the oh! art centre, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2, or at the Women's Library, Old Castle Street, E1. Advance bookings are necessary for all workshops.

7 March – Take our Daughters to Work Day

For more information see www.girlguiding.org.uk/daughters

8 March 12:30-2:00pm – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

Egyptian presidential candidate, novelist, writer and activist Nawal El Saadawi is to speak at a buffet lunch organised by the literary festival. Tickets £12

8 March 12:00-2:30pm – International Women's Day Luncheon

Aurora, the international organisation working for women's economic advancement, holds Europe's largest IWD event. Guests will be addressed by the chief executive of The Executive Group, Helen Alexander. Takes place at the Savoy Hotel. Tickets cost £80.

8 March 1:00pm – British Association of Women Entrepreneurs concert and lunch

Takes place at the Bishopsgate Foundation & Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2. Tickets cost £35, email bawe.uk@btconnect.com for more info.

8 March 5:30pm – Protest against sexist advertising

International Socialist Resistance are staging a Women's Day protest over at IPC Media, the magazine publisher behind Nuts. This is one of the new men's magazines at the centre of a storm of controversy over their retrograde advertising campaigns. Amass outside the IPC Media building at 5:30pm, at Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Road, London SE1 9LS (nearest station Waterloo).

8 March 6:30-11:00pm – Chicks With Bricks

A high-profile, formal event at the Royal College of Art, bringing together women who work with the built environment, from architects, surveyors and engineers to academics, media representatives and policymakers. Tickets cost £40 and a table for eight people costs £320. Email Holly at surfacetoairltd@yahoo.co.uk to book.

8 March 7:00pm – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

Genderquake and hagsharlotsheroines.com present a discussion panel debate on heroines and anti-

heroines. Titled 'From Hag to Heroine – Her Story', the debate promises to examine the prevalence of vulnerable, weak and shadowy female characters in contemporary culture. The panel will ask whether this is a necessary stage to go through before it is possible to create strong female characters and heroines. BBC Woman's Hour presenter Jenni Murray will introduce readings by Laura Wilkinson, founder of literary website hagsharlotsheroines.com. She will then chair a debate with feminist writer Yvonne Roberts; author and academic Maureen Freely; and the director of Genderquake Helen Wilkinson.

8 March 8:00pm – Funny Women Stand Up

A night of stand-up, with box office profits going to a campaign to raise awareness about domestic violence. Tickets £16:30. To book tickets, call 0870 534 4444 or visit www.funnywomen.com. Takes place at Cafe de Paris, 3 Coventry Street, London W1.

8 March – Wild Women 2005

A "cabaret-flavoured" night of live music, aerial performance, poetry, comedy and dance at the Albany in Deptford. Tickets £9, £6 concessions. Box office: 020 8692 4446.

9 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

Two workshops at the Women's Library on getting published. The first, running from 10:30am-1:00pm examines submitting work to anthologies, journals and competition, while the second, running from 2:00-4:30pm explores how to increase your chances of getting published, presenting your manuscript in the right way and writing the right letters.

9 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

SABLE LitMag, a publication of new writing by people of colour, hosts an evening of readings by some of its contributors from Colombia, Palestine, Iran and the UK. Nathalie Handel, a Palestinian poet and the editor of the bestselling collection *The Poetry of Arab Women*, promises to be a highlight. Takes place at 7:00pm. Tickets £6, £4 concessions.

9 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

An evening of storytelling, presented by acclaimed storyteller Sally Pomme Clayton. Jaqui Chan tells stories based on myths, legends and folktales from around the world, but particularly from her own Chinese and Caribbean cultural heritage. Chirine El Ansary tells stories from 'One Thousand and One Nights' Debbie Guneratne travels the world gathering and telling stories. She founded the Small Tales Storytelling Clubs, which train children in the art of storytelling. Takes place at 8:00pm at the oh! art centre, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2. Tickets £7, £5 concessions.

10 March – Stop the Beatings: Suffering in Silence

A conference on tackling domestic violence in Asian communities, organised by the Asian Health Agency (TAHA). For more information email azad@taha.org.uk

10 March – SPIT LIT Festival

Workshop on writing a short play, with Nina Rapi.

LISTINGS

Takes place at the Women's Library, 10:30am-1:00pm. Tickets £5, £3 concessions.

10 March – SPIT LIT Festival

Poetry workshop with Palestinian poet Natalie Handal at the Women's Library, 10:30am-1:00pm. Tickets £5, £3 concessions

10 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

A panel discussion on freedom of expression, titled 'The Right to Write'. The discussion will be chaired by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a regular columnist at The Independent. Panellists will include the editor and chief executive of Index on Censorship, Ursula Owen; director of Liberty, Shami Chakrabarti; Lisa Appignanesi; and Janet Steel, the director of Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti's controversial play *Behzti* (Dishonour) at Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Takes place at 8:30pm. Tickets £7, £5 concessions.

11 March - SPIT LIT Festival 2005

Workshop on travel writing with Ola Fagbohun at the Women's Library. Tickets £5, £3 concessions.

11 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

Workshop on writing for magazines with Andrea Enisuh at the Women's Library. Takes place 2:00-4:30pm. Tickets £5, £3 concessions.

12 March – Working Women

A chance to explore the London Metropolitan Archives and learn about women at work through the ages, from medieval silk workers to the sewing machinists at Ford from 1968-1984 that participated in strikes for equal pay. Tickets £15, email ask.lma@corpoflondon.gov.uk for more information.

12 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

'Four Ways Forward'. Four South Asian women discuss their books and their backgrounds. Speakers: Debjani Chatterjee; Shanta Acharya; Rehana Ahmed, the editor of an anthology of stories for teenagers, *Walking a Tightrope: New Writing from Asian Britain*; and novelist Qaisra Shaiharaz.

12 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

Readings, followed by a discussion on the role of gender in poetry. Hosted by Pandora Press, a chance to listen to readings by poets Moniza Alvi and Helen Farish, and hear from literary critics Jan Montifiore and Viki Bertram. Takes place at 6.30pm. Tickets £7, £5 concessions.

12 March – SPIT LIT Festival 2005

The festival closes with a comedy night. On the line up are: Lucy Porter; Sarah Kendall; Shazi Mirza; Ayesha Hazarika; Zoe Lyons; and Danielle Ward. Takes place at 8:30pm. Tickets £7, £5 concessions.

23 March – Refugee and asylum-seeking women: challenges, changes, choices

A one day conference set up to highlight the issues that face women fleeing from torture and persecution. We

19 March – Grand Library reopening

The Feminist Library has been closed for stocktaking for some weeks now, but we will be holding a grand re-opening event on 19 March. Call the Library on 020 7928 7789 for more information.

think this is a timely conference, as the Labour Government and the Conservatives join a race to the bottom on asylum. Confirmed speakers include Harriet Harman, the Solicitor-General, and Maeve Sherlock, the chief executive of the Refugee Council.

26 March – In Celebration of My Sisters

Stage show featuring Carleen Anderson, Voices with Soul, Gina Yashere, Shola Ama, Felicity Ethnic, Kingdom Choir, Donna Spence, Siani, Llewella Gideon and more. Tickets £19.50, £23.50, £25.00 and £28.00 Boxes: £31.50 per person, takes place at the Royal Festival Hall from 7:30-10:30pm.

Women's Talk by Astra Blaug

what men dub tattle gossip women's talk
is really revolutionary activity
and should be taken seriously by men
(and many women too)
if men were doing the talking

women's talk is women together
probing the privatised
pain isolation exclusion trivialisation
in their everyday lives
if the situation were reversed
men would react with identical symptoms
to what women feel in their gut –
worthlessness self deprecation depression.

what men call prattle babble chatter jabber
blather
gabbing hot air small talk rubbish gibberish
verbosity
clearly shows how language reflects
the deep misogyny that's penetrated our lives
and become common sport
but form this day forward spare me

I'm sick

of being bait

men denigrate our talk at their peril
but that's because they're in ignorance
of its power
our power
those precious few of us who see ourselves
as powerful

serious

and deadly.

Who We Are

The Feminist Library is the largest lending and reference library of contemporary feminist material in the UK. Established in 1975, the collection includes approximately 10,000 books, 1500 journals, 1200 articles, 1750 pamphlets and ephemera.

The library specialises in literature about the women's movement and holds archives from the Women's Liberation Movement. It houses both fiction and non-fiction books as well as a selection of journals from all over the world.

Much of this material is not available in other libraries. The collection includes books on/by working class women, black women, women of colour, Irish women, Jewish women, lesbians, older women and women with disabilities.

The Feminist Library provides information about women's studies courses, services and current events.

Make a Donation to the Feminist Library

If you would like to support the continued existence of the library, why not become a friend, donate, or join?

If you think you can afford to make a regular, monthly contribution, why not consider becoming a Friend?

For more information, please call us on 020 7928 7789, or email thefeministlibrary@beeb.net

You can also donate your time and expertise. We are actively looking for volunteers to get involved at the library, with anything from stocktaking and helping out during opening hours, to taking part in the management group. People with library skills are particularly welcome.

To join the library simply fill in the form below, cut out this box and send it with a cheque for the annual membership fee. This is:

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