Democracy in the making
Lynne Segal talks to Jo Littler

‘The audacity is to dare to hope when there seems so little reason to hope.’

Why did you write Radical Happiness*?*

Good question, I’ve wondered myself! Speaking about my last book, *Out of Time: The Pleasures & Perils of Ageing*, I was often asked what I’d write about next. Death? one person grinned. No, I said, perhaps the opposite. That’s when I started thinking that what I’m always trying to address, for myself as much as anyone else, are our *attachments to life*. What promotes this and creates our well-being, I thought, is not really individual pursuits, such as pumping muscles at the gym, it’s having friends and contacts; it’s making life meaningful, together with others. Confronting the ubiquitous neoliberal rationality, endorsing only endless competitiveness - individual or corporate - we need to hold on to alternative ways of connecting with each other. Surely it is mainly our ties to others that make life worth living. This makes the work some people are doing around the notion of ‘the commons’ so important - the idea that we need shared spaces, quite outside the commercial arena, for us to *be together*, if only to ponder what life is about.

Radical Happiness was written against what is known as ‘the happiness industry’. It connects with what became the interest of our national governments in measuring ‘happiness’: an interest which in my view stemmed from and served to obscure their covert worry about the high, and increasing, levels of personal stress, anxiety and depression. All the statistics indicate that it is actually misery that’s really on the rise. Our government’s solution to this has been to put money into CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) in order to get people back to work as fast as possible. But what is this thing called happiness anyway? We’d hardly agree on its definition. I suggest, like all emotions, happiness is not best seen as an individual, quantifiable trait, but has a social or public dimension as well. Personal happiness is not separable from our relations with others, which is why I am interested in exploring those obviously shared moments of pleasure or delight, occasions of collective joy.

The dominant idea of happiness today rotates around an idea of the individualised self: that we are responsible for our own happiness, and for our own care, or ‘self-care’. Which brings us to your next book, which is on care; and to how, there, you’re continuing to write against neoliberal individualism.

I usually say that all my books have a common thread: I just get a new peg to weave them around! The mantra promoting notions of the autonomous, individualised self is indeed so strong today, although it has little connection to what it is to be human. This is especially pernicious when we enter the world of care, one where public support is crucial for so many. For instance, spaces for mothers with young children are being demolished before our eyes. According to the Sutton trust, there was a 50 per cent cut in early years day care provision between 2010 and 2017, and at the very same time there was almost the exact same rise in referrals for children in crisis, creating an explosion in demand for child protection services; it’s all so short sighted. State endorsed neoliberal market fetishism has involved the commercial outsourcing of welfare and public resources, but this goes along with an underlying contempt for

dependency, indeed for anything that is not about 'productivity' in terms of money-making.

The extraordinary crisis of care we're now facing is one of the most important issues at the moment. The North American feminist historian Laura Briggs argues that today all politics would be better seen as reproductive politics; [i] we can't get our basic needs for survival met properly, and that's just not factored into what we are talking about when we reduce politics to economics and GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Even those of us who have young children or other dependents in need of our care are so often not in the position to provide it. Instead, we must often rely upon what is called 'the global care chain'. This involves women travelling from the 'third' world to care for those in the 'first' world who don't have the time to do our own caring work, even when wanting to. This includes both women and men, but of course it is women who are still deemed mainly responsible for either providing or arranging for the care of children and other dependents. Moreover, the appalling combinations of enduring sexism and racism mean care work remains, for the most part, extremely poorly paid and precarious. We can observe people, mostly women, having to abandon those who need them in their own communities to traverse the globe to meet caring needs elsewhere. It is surely a crazy situation.

Your book Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men *has been through three editions since it was first published in 1990. How would you update it today?*

There's one question I was always asked about that book: have men changed? And of course men are changing all the time, along with the very different situations men face. I wrote *Slow Motion* as part of my attempt to hold onto a socialist feminist agenda, as distinct from an increasingly popular radical feminist one, which endorsed the Manichean view of women as the 'solution' for everything, and men as always the 'problem'. In our socialist-feminist vision, we began by thinking that gender issues would recede more into the background as we struggled to create a more egalitarian world for all. We hoped that men and women together would be sharing both the world of caring and commitment in domestic intimacies, at the same time as women would be out there with men in the workforce and the cultural and political arena. We started from wanting shorter working hours in paid employment, hence making caring work and intimacies more compatible with the workplace. This was the feminist agenda that faced most defeat, being completely at odds with the ongoing rise of a neoliberal agenda exclusively focused on productivity and profit.

Second-wave feminism was interested not just in changing the world to facilitate women's entry into the workforce and public life, with some having equal power alongside men; we wanted more fundamental social change, rethinking how we conceive of life itself, placing economic production and social reproduction on an equal footing. In the harsher economic and ideological climate from the 1980s, this more utopian thinking was side-lined. A greater feminist focus on shifting subjectivities and men's violence overshadowed the question of how we transform domestic, social and working lives to enable men and women to be equally engaged in them all. My concern with masculinity came from that project of transforming family and working lives: suggesting that there was intrinsically no reason why we had the public/private split lined up with gendered or sexual difference.

So I was concerned with the construction and maintenance of gender hierarchy. Masculinities and femininities are performative categories in which differences become socially embodied. But when the book was published some feminists criticised me for not beginning, and more or less ending, with the issue of men's violence against women. These critics suggested that the relationship between men and violence parallels the correlation between smoking and lung cancer. I rejected this for ignoring both the huge diversity within genders, as well the complex dynamics underlying existing gender contrasts. Only later, post-queer, would I also be criticised for ignoring female 'masculinity', and later again, trans issues.

The main thing that has changed since I completed that book at the close of the 1980s is women's ever more entrenched role in the labour market. More women, including mothers of young children, are working very long hours, with some professional women acquiring significant managerial authority alongside men. Indeed, women's lives have been transformed more than men's, although men's lives have often become more precarious, their position in the workforce more vulnerable. This can at times increase the pathological manifestations of manhood, at least for those men trying to cling to the *difference* manhood supposedly promised, with violence against women used to shore up a fragile sense of masculinity, or assuage personal failure.

Do you still would push for a four-day week, and shorter working day?

Definitely! Don't we need it?! It's almost ninety years since John Maynard Keynes predicted that technological advances would enable us to work a fifteen-hour week. Yet, we have all been pushed in the opposite direction, and are now working longer hours than ever, if often in pointless pursuits. As Keynes forecast, we probably do now only need the equivalent of two or three days in paid work from each of us - or else four-hour days - especially once we have automatons doing even more of the work that they could be doing! Instead, paid work is absurdly unevenly distributed, as working days lengthen. The question should be, what work is *significant*, consequential and useful? As David Graeber writes, so many jobs are 'bullshit jobs' - they are not producing anything of any worth, and the world might be a better place without them.[ii]

There was a real groundswell of interest in studying masculinity in the 1990s, which perhaps isn't being quite as vigorously pursued by academics at the moment, even though we have so many regressive masculinities occurring in public life. I'm thinking about Trump, Breitbart, Top Gear*, Jordan Peterson ...*

Yes. Going back to the 1970s: with the emergence of women's liberation, you did find a significant minority of men wanting to support women and be involved in caring. There were Men Against Sexism groups which produced magazines such as *Achilles Heel* and organised creches at conferences. There's a lovely photo of Stuart Hall doing the creche at the very first Women's Liberation conference in Ruskin College in February 1970. Then, when gay liberation blooms alongside feminism, you have a lot of gay men re-thinking and theorising 'masculinity'. They reveal that there have always been hierarchical groupings amongst men themselves, which are usually racialised and sexualised. Men falling in love with other men, or enjoying gazing at men's bodies as well as women's bodies, was seen as a terrible threat to hegemonic masculinity. This is something Alan Sinfield wrote about in *The Wilde Century*,

where he noted that ‘the feminine boy’ was deemed ‘despicable’ simply because he was ‘girlish’ rather than because he was homosexual.[iii] We see this particularly at the close of the nineteenth century, when gender contrasts are seen as bedrock - and imperial Britain is trying to maintain the imperial status it’s about to lose in the world - that the archetype of the tough, manly man is being vigorously policed. Sinfield’s work was part of the broader flourishing of queer scholarship, which often had a particular interest in hegemonic masculinity, alongside the growth of men’s studies, with writers such as R.W. Connell and Michael Kimmel key figures, both of whom supported feminist goals.

However, masculinity is still policed today, as you say, despite being so visibly more diverse. I think it is very much in keeping with these harsh economic times that we have the return of the most absurdly domineering representatives of the supposedly tough, independent, autonomous man - recalling the idiocy of George Bush junior in flak jacket, launching the second tragic invasion of Iraq - despite all the ways in which this sham phallic persona has been critiqued by feminism and by gay men. So in terms of transforming society, we still have far to go in undoing the gender binary -- tough man/gentle woman. Most women aren’t gentle, most men aren’t tough: they are not so very different from each other. But somehow the binary lives on, in almost every Hollywood movie, in cartoons, in magazines, in children’s games. Insofar as it’s challenged, it is usually by creating the tough girl rather than the gentle man, which is rather sad.

How do those gender dynamics relate to contemporary feminism?

I think we are now in a strange place in relation to feminism. Whilst some people say there hasn’t been any change in men’s violence against women, there *has* been an enormous change insofar as women everywhere are talking about it. When women’s liberation was still brand new in the 1970s we had to think up new words for sexual harassment, rape in marriage, and so on, because they didn’t exist. Now sexism, and violence against women, and the demeaning of women’s bodies, is on the tip of everyone’s tongue. That’s a huge difference. I absolutely welcome all these campaigns, whether it’s #MeToo or global marches against rape and violence against women. I especially welcome women’s slightly more playful and provocative engagement with sexism - such as the SlutWalks, which became a very big movement only a few years ago, and which said ‘we will present ourselves however we want in the world and we are still in charge of our own bodies’. I noticed that a lot of gay men and trans folk, together with women, were very much involved with dancing and singing in the streets in SlutWalks, all around the globe. I would also stress that violence against women needs also to be seen in relation to underlying structural inequalities, in the home and workplace, *enabling* gender violence, and impeding women’s escape from it.

As I’ve said, I came into British politics at the start of second-wave feminism, when we were going to transform the world so that both men and women could together find our place in the sun. Third-wave feminism was more focused on the differences *between* women; the voices of black women, lesbians and disabled women came more to the fore, and difference of all kinds became a more important issue. And it is very important that it did - though, for me, a problem with thinking about subjectivities and distinct belongings is that we always *also* need some broader transformative politics

to unite us in solidarity to improve the lives of all. This means that building coalitions across all our differences will always be central.

In the 1990s we didn't just hear about the proliferation of differences; there was also a questioning of whether there is *anything* fixed at all underpinning those differences. In the footsteps of Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, and all, the whole point of queer was to challenge the idea of there being any serious underpinning unity between women, or within gender, that wasn't performative, imposed through diverse linguistic reiterations. That led to a plethora of symbolic and performative subversions suggesting 'we can display ourselves however we like'. Important as that is, there is the slight problem of too neat a fit with neoliberal seductions promising (though never delivering) choice for everybody. We do want people to have some sense of autonomy and choice in their lives; but this is problematic if we don't begin from noting how appallingly uneven and unequal are the choices people can make. Nowadays most people have less, not more, choice over their lives. There was also a slight tension over how to keep queer theory really radical. As soon as you have the category, queer, it tends (like any label) to become an identification in itself, and we surely know how quickly anti-normative identities can themselves become normative …

Another debate surrounding gender that's dividing feminists now is all the discussions and arguments about transgender politics. Trans people are absolutely right to say that they have been amongst the most ignored, as well as some of the main targets of violence (sometimes deadly), for not slotting into the normative gender binary. And it's only been in the last ten years that trans issues and the assertion of *their* rights have to come to the fore. But here we immediately face a problem over what we are talking about when we talk about trans. For some people, trans is a gender category: individuals can see themselves as being born into 'the wrong gender' ('I am really a woman - or a man - so I need to trans sex in order to become my true self'). Indeed, trans people used to have to assert, almost rigidly, a distinct, even exaggerated, gender identity in order to be allowed the hormones or surgical interventions they desired to change gender from the one they found it too painful to inhabit. But other trans identifications vigorously reject gender binarism, taking us back to the ebullient transsexual lesbian, Kate Bornstein, who wrote *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, later saying that 'I'm *probably* the only lesbian to have successfully castrated a man and gone on to laugh about it on stage, in print and on national television'.[iv] So these issues are immensely complex.

Those who are focused on rejecting what they see as transphobic discourses within feminism – at its worst describing militant trans activists as conducting a 'war on women' – are in conflict with other feminists who oppose legislation allowing people, in this case men, simply to 'choose' to change genders and thereby enter 'women-only' spaces or shortlists reserved for women. Given the history of trans oppression, I support, though not without hesitations, the diversity of trans rights. After all, Norway has had gender choice legislation for years, without any subsequent serious problems. Moreover, feminism has always been full of paradoxes. These connect with Joan Scott's classic description of gender as at once 'empty and overflowing'. There is nothing that ultimately defines all women or all men, without stifling 'alternative, denied or suppressed definitions'.[v] But at the same time, gender categories remain invested with deep psychic and erotic meanings, alongside

enduring, if nowadays somewhat more open, social structures shaping our sense of what men and women ought to be doing - especially in relation to reproduction and childcare. Symbolically, power remains aligned with men, on the side of the phallus, that *thing* men are supposed to possess, which forever escapes them.

Thus feminism remains a contested domain. The socialist feminist wish that gender might in itself become a less significant issue has yet to happen. But it is why I feel sympathetic to a trans politics wanting to transcend gender binarism. I doubt we will ever completely obliterate sexual difference, as some hope. I think we are always likely to create stories about our embodied selves that elaborate upon anatomical contrasts, however loosely. These are always, as Butler would say, regulatory fictions. But we *need* social fictions, however diverse, for identifying ourselves and acquiring some sense of belonging. At birth it is hard to distinguish between infants when all they are doing is wailing and feeding, but it is usually possible to observe genital difference. So I suspect some acknowledgement of that difference will remain, though its elaborations will hopefully become ever more fluid.

In Why Feminism? *you discuss the necessity of not reducing biology to culture or culture to biology. How do you think gender studies is progressing in that regard?*

It's interesting how the trans debates highlight that strange paradox. Biology and culture, biology and environment, are never in any way separable. Donna Haraway has so much to say about how *complicated* this relationship is, seeing biology as an 'endless resource' of 'multiple possibilities'. Similarly, the neuroscientist Steven Rose points out how even the environment of chromosomes is unstable, making patterns of genetic transmission entirely unpredictable. Genetic outcomes not only depend upon endless external physical, social and cultural factors, but also on unstable internal cellular features. So when we are trying to explain something as complex as how we become women, or men - if indeed we do identify with these gender positions we're seen as born into - the complexity is quite phenomenal! The idea that we could separate out the intricacies of the biological from the convolutions of culture is foolish. And yet we have evolutionary speculators, such as Richard Dworkin, providing 'biological' explanations for why women wear high heels and tight dresses. However laughable, the media presents these biological musings as the gold standard of science. Thus popularisers of scientific folk tales come to be *seen* as leading scientists.

There have been more serious attempts by artists and scientists to work together, engaging with the nuance and richness each can offer the other in their tales of life, today with added input from cybertechnology - and the Welcome Institute in London encourages such initiatives. They have done some interesting work around gender. On the one hand, we exist within mortal, material bodies, and in that sense are never outside of the biological. That was one of the criticisms some theorists, such as R.W. Connell, made of what they saw as some of the excesses of social constructionism, or of Foucauldian thinking and the theoretical turn to language. The corporeality of the body disappeared into discussion about the metaphors and language through which it is mapped and spoken. On the other hand, it's also true that the body *is* only mapped and spoken through language, so there's no teasing the two apart: there's only possible exploration of the very interesting ways in which body and language fit together, or remain, perhaps, unmarked or repudiated in discourse.

Jeremy Corbyn is your MP in Islington. What is your relationship to the Labour Party?

In the 1970s I was not in the Labour Party, but attached to community activists who saw ourselves, rightly, as far more radical than reformist social democracy! For a while I joined Big Flame, which described itself as a revolutionary socialist feminist movement, trying to unite grass-roots community and industrial struggles. But then when Margaret Thatcher loomed on the parliamentary horizon, with her brand of right-wing populism, the political landscape looked more ominous. The first book I was involved in writing was *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, in which Sheila Rowbotham (the lead author), Hilary Wainwright and I argued that the organised left overall needed to abandon its sectarian vanguardism or bureaucratic complacencies, and start listening to and learning from the diversity of feminist, anti-racist and other forms of movement politics. We had achieved a lot through local movement coalitions, extending community resources and working against the cuts (already beginning under Callaghan). Now was the time for broader left coalitions across all our differences in order to defeat Thatcher and the march of corporate capital. We needed the most progressive government in power if we were not to lose the ground we had gained.

So I joined the Labour Party. That was the end of Big Flame, because half of us went off and joined the Labour Party and the others didn't. The Labour Party in the early 1980s was an exciting place to be, at least in Islington. Jeremy Corbyn was put forward and elected to stand as Labour's candidate, and my house served as the ward committee room for the general election in 1983. Many non-party activists came along to help us get Jeremy elected. Suddenly, as today, there were complaints about radicals coming into the Labour Party and 'taking over'! I so vividly recall the night and day of that election, when we just worked, literally non-stop, from 10am to 10pm, racing around the streets, in the end pulling people out of bed to get them to vote … (I remember an old Irish neighbour putting his hands up just before 10pm: 'I give up! I give up! I'm going!'). Jeremy was duly elected and we were so excited. Yet I also recall him warning us, 'You know there is not going to be a lot I can do!' He was right, when of course Thatcher was re-elected, so the night was somewhat catastrophic, despite our cheering that we had got Jeremy elected. It had all been quite a struggle, because the SDP/Liberal Alliance was strong in Islington, which had previously been represented by a right-wing Labour candidate, Michael O'Halloran. He had been working hand-in-glove with the rather notorious Murphy Construction Firm, which refused to allow workers to unionise, and I don't think O'Halloran had ever opened his mouth in parliament. So from the beginning it was a huge battle to get a left Labour person elected; quite how this Labour outsider got into the position he's in now is one of the amazing stories of our time.

How has your relationship to the Labour Party changed over the years?

We stayed in the Labour Party - me and my left friends, feminists and socialists alike - until the end of the 1980s. We started leaving under Kinnock. This was not so much because of his attack on Militant (we shared little with that form of sectarian Trotskyist entryism), but simply because not much seemed possible in relation to advancing a progressive agenda. Of course it got worse under Blair. I would not say

that I was right to leave, for just as I think everyone should be in a trade union, however limited their vision of change, it also makes sense to join whatever we see as the most progressive party of the moment - although one can of course always try and influence party politics from the outside.

I've never been a member of the Green Party, although I support much of their agenda, and have sometimes voted for them. In fact I've swapped votes tactically, so I've sometimes had a Green *and* a Labour poster up - knowing that nowadays Corbyn would get elected here. I've voted Green as a swap, to get someone in Hampstead or somewhere else to vote Labour, where Labour is more marginal. Since we don't have proportional representation, it's an attempt to try and create it. My politics has not shifted far from my outlook at the close of the 1970s: I still see it as very important for movement politics to flourish, which of course has become ever more difficult with everybody working longer hours and there being so few public spaces to congregate. This is such a contrast with the era of Livingstone's GLC, when Ken was determined to open the council grounds as a sort of commons. There were open air concerts and endless other projects sponsored by the GLC during that period, which, while it lasted, were all so significant in supporting trade union resistance as well as a rainbow of creative, political aspirations.

Thus, despite leaving the Labour Party, I remained committed to ideas of movement solidarity and coalition building, as well as the formation of regional and global alliances of the left, all working to oppose much of what has happened over the last thirty years: the deregulation of finance, the privatisation of state resources and the outsourcing of care, largely to the same few corporate companies. Almost all relevant research has highlighted the wretched misery created by these policies. Studies commissioned by trade unions and charities have for years been highlighting the drastic deterioration of service provision, which has not only led to greater job insecurity and worsening conditions for workers, but has inevitably resulted in an altogether more fragmented and poorer quality of care at almost every level for those in most need. All this Alan White, among others, covers in book, *Shadow State*.[vi] So for me an anti-state position remains extremely problematic, despite the enduring need to democratise state resources.

For a long time you've been, simultaneously, an activist and an academic. How have these different roles worked together for you?

I've often joked that throughout the 1970s I was an underground academic, and an out revolutionary! Many people I knew thought I worked at the Islington Community Press, which operated from a squatted building and produced an alternative community paper, the *Islington Gutter Press*. As a radical resource centre, it facilitated the campaigns of progressive groups working around almost anything at all, globally, nationally and locally. It was a hub of activity: there were people active in support of Eritrean liberation, the anti-apartheid movement, peace in Cyprus, as well as all the diverse feminist and anti-racist work of the 1970s. I was also active in Essex Road Women's Centre, and a local socialist centre which we began at the close of the 1970s in the upstairs of a pub, the Hemingford Arms. There were also festivals on Highbury Fields organised for community activists, all contributing to a collective spirit that continued from the 1970s into the 1980s. We had a vague sense of ourselves as revolutionaries; although as feminists we always had a more complex

relation to the state, calling for increased resources, and the democratic sharing of its resources.

At the same time I was also teaching in the Psychology department at Enfield College of Technology, later Middlesex Polytechnic and finally Middlesex University. It's where I got my first job, and where I stayed for thirty years, until I was asked to apply for a position at Birkbeck, University of London, in 1999. They were at the time appointing a few 'anniversary' professors to celebrate Birkbeck College having existed for 175 years, originally having been founded to give working men - and quite early on also working women - access to higher education. I was lucky enough to be chosen as a cross-disciplinary scholar because I had started writing about contemporary feminist and left politics at the close of the 1980s, when political activism was dying down. I was influenced by and remained very close to Sheila Rowbotham, who had worked at the GLC, producing the magazine *Jobs for a Change* in the first half of the 1980s.

However, by the second half of the 1980s, without a doubt, much that we had been fighting for was facing defeat, and the GLC itself had been abolished. Community resource centres could hardly survive. The 1990s loomed as, and became, a decade of mourning for many former radicals. The only exciting politics was queer activism - with the challenges of HIV and Aids generating a culture of resistance and politics of care to deal with the disease - and the fight back against rising homophobic abuse or neglect. Certainly, Thatcher's anti-union legislation meant that trade unions were declining rapidly; they had lost nearly half their membership by the close of the 1990s. Meanwhile, deep divisions had arisen in movement politics, with socialist feminism, for instance, practically disappearing, as the emphasis shifted to the protection of women from men's violence. So I began writing more, and completed *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism* in the late 1980s, as a defence of socialist feminism. I think all my books practically end with the very same sentence, whether it is that first one, *Why Feminism*?, my political memoir, *Making Trouble*, *Out of Time*, on ageing, or the most recent, *Radical Happiness*; they all reflect upon my generation, with its high hopes for a transformative politics, and end up wondering what hopes remain today. Each book is about that question really - *how we keep hope alive*.

By the late 1990s I had managed to become a senior academic, because I had been writing these political books. And by then I had also come to see higher education itself - now under significant attack, especially in my own field of the humanities - as a significant political terrain in a way I didn't fully appreciate in my younger academic life. I saw that we teachers had the enormous privilege of being able to be pedagogic activists. This was definitely the case with my very dear friend Alan Sinfield - mentioned earlier - who died recently and whose obituary I have just written for *History Workshop*. A charismatic gay theorist and literary scholar, Alan was always concerned with pedagogy: how to prevent the cultural clout of the elite from undermining the educational possibilities of those who don't possess similar cultural authority. He addressed, for instance, how you could teach Shakespeare, overturning patrician readings that had served to justify colonialism and imperialism, racism and sexism. And I also realised that I had always had mentors - Stuart Hall was another - for whom radical teaching, radical pedagogy, was so very important. That became clear to me eventually in my middle age.

Your work is marked by interdisciplinarity. How do you work through and around different academic disciplines? What have been some of the challenges of transdisciplinarity, and why do we need it?

My work always *had* to be interdisciplinary, because I was trained as a psychologist at Sydney University in the 1960s. The main thing psychologists did then was to run rats through mazes and imagine that they were learning something about universal learning patterns, via their observations of rodents in restricted, artificial situations. It had next to nothing to do with human behaviour, which is meaningful and rule-bound (or rule resistant!). When I did my PhD in the 1960s, *Conceptual confusions in experimental psychology*, that's what I pointed out: it was written as a critique of behavouristic psychology. Pure psychology was then, and often remains, a science of experimental methods and conceptual confusion, because the descriptive categories it uses to encompass human behaviour are inadequate for the task - lacking any historical, cultural or political focus on the accounts we give of human behaviour, with their distinct specificity at any moment in time. Is that man expressing his great love for woman, or harassing her? Pointing that out in my PhD meant that I was not going to get a job in Australia, especially as there were only a few universities in Sydney back then. So I slunk off to London (bringing along my baby son, born soon after I completed my doctorate) - where R.D. Laing was popular at the time, with his views about the madness underlying our perceptions of sanity, and vice versa - not knowing quite who I was, or what I would be able to do. However, this was exactly when universities were expanding in the UK, so I snuck into Enfield College of Technology by the back door (someone was on maternity leave), and stayed there for thirty years, since that job gave me time and space as a feminist and community activist.

I was in the psychology department as a licensed educator, although I certainly wasn't going to teach any mainstream psychology, except to critique it. But again, fortunately for me, under the shelter of 'social psychology', I could address gender, class and race. I was often in slight trouble because external examiners would say 'this is not social psychology! this is all about political issues!'. So I changed the title to 'Psychology and Social Issues'. Then there would be one or two progressive psychologists, alongside the young women who were now entering the discipline as feminists. Michael Billig was the external examiner one year, and he said: 'The only course where student responses were really interesting was Lynne Segal's. I want everybody who did her exam paper to be raised up a degree mark!'. (I believe this happened, though it seems rather like a dream.) So my teaching had to be interdisciplinary because otherwise I could not have incorporated the social issues my courses covered, relating them to the politics of the day. That type of interdisciplinarity became easier as feminist scholarship was gradually more accepted in the academy.

In Radical Happiness *you say that 'even trying to envisage how we might help create a more equitable, peaceful and fairer world brings a certain audacity and energy to life, at least in the process of sharing such imaginings'. 'Audacity and energy' seem like appropriate keywords for you and your work …*

It's so easy to feel to bored and enervated today. One just has to have mentors, friends and other people who can help to guide you, even if you feel you are living in the ruin of past hopes, or with the rubble of words, when surveying the devastation of neoliberal 'reforms' or national disdain for the plight of the vulnerable and displaced. For instance, as a person of Jewish descent, I've been involved in ongoing peace work in relation to justice for Palestinians. There we have only seen conditions deteriorate for the Palestinians - I mean we have *really* got nowhere, as yet - but at the same time, one keeps going, one has to keep going, in solidarity with all those other people still involved in that struggle, saying 'we are just not going to accept this'. It is always possible to envisage something different, and to be supportive of each other in a range of ways. The audacity is to dare to hope when there seems so little reason to hope.

That's also why green politics is so important now. To talk about genuine sustainability and to think about a feminist, green economics, for instance, is where we have to begin nowadays. It is the absolute *opposite* of neoliberal rationality, concerned only with the production of profit. How do we create a better, more sustainable lives for all? How do we stop devastating the environment? We have to begin from those questions. This involves rethinking the state, locally and nationally; building coalitions and global ties that have to be continuously knitted together anew. We begin in different places, whilst working for greater equality, peace, care and environmental sustainability.

So if 'the one long book' you are writing, which you mentioned earlier, is about hope, then it is also about how the personal is political and the political is personal?

Yes, yes, it is about how to keep hope alive, dare I say, how to keep affirming love and solidarity. How do we relate to the world? How and where can we find the most imaginative, interesting and progressive thought and action? There are identifications that we make quite early on, and the identifications that I made, where I belong, is with the radical egalitarianism of 1960s politics, as it morphed into 1970s socialist-feminism. Of course, we will stay blind to so many issues, and fail to hear the most fragile of collective voices - we know some people will remain excluded, smeared, or mocked, as the diversity of trans people were until very recently. Yet there is as well always the potential for greater openness, for *democracy in the making*. This is what I am hoping for. A type of political uncertainty is inevitable, even necessary, yet at the same time we can keep arguing, as passionately as we can, for politics to remain as inclusive as possible: knowing that we could, together, achieve something far better than the world as it is. We have to.

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