



## Newsletter No.3

November 2008

**Completely run by volunteers and containing over 10,000 books, 700 complete and partial sets of periodicals, 1,200 articles, over 2,000 pamphlets and ephemera, including many original posters, 600 unpublished papers and a small but important collection of archives from the Women's Liberation Movement, the Feminist Library is recognised as one of the most significant collections of second wave feminist material in England.**

**We are open every Saturday from 11 til 4:45 and are also open at other times by appointment so please do contact us if you would like to visit the library.**

**It's been a busy few months for the Feminist Library**, with lots achieved since our last newsletter in March.

International Women's Day on March the 8<sup>th</sup> saw the first outing of our new banner when we marched with over 4,000 women and children at Million Women Rise. The march and rally afterwards was fantastic, inspirational and empowering and we look forward to next year's event. (Planning for Million Women Rise 2009 is underway, if you would like to get involved or would like more information please visit [www.millionwomenrise.com](http://www.millionwomenrise.com), email [info@millionwomenrise.com](mailto:info@millionwomenrise.com) or telephone 07862 113308. The Million Women Rise collective is also petitioning the Prime Minister to develop a fully resourced national strategy which enables women and children to live lives free from the threat of all forms of violence and to declare International Women's Day a public holiday in recognition of the achievements and contributions of women world-wide. As many signatures as possible are needed, so please sign the online petition at <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/IWDpublicholiday>).

The evening before, March 7<sup>th</sup>, the Feminist Library took part in a International Women's Day special on the internet radio station Dissident Island, along with members of Feminist Activist Forum, London Pro-Feminist Men's Group, Feminist Fightback and the Wominspace collective. We would like to thank Dissident Island for the opportunity to publicise the library, and for a great evening. The programme can be downloaded and listened to at [www.dissidentisland.org](http://www.dissidentisland.org) (click on previous shows).

On the 16<sup>th</sup> March we held an open day at the Library and although the numbers that came to visit were small, it was an enjoyable day for all.

In May the Feminist Library took part in the cultural extravaganza that was Ladyfest London. The library took part in several workshops at the festival, including a Feminist Antique Roadshow (the start of an exciting project to collect and treasure feminist oral histories) and charting feminist landmarks. We would like to thank Ladyfest London for a great weekend, for all the support they have given the Feminist Library and for the substantial financial donation they made to the library.

This summer also saw the formation of a collections group. This group has taken on the huge project of digitizing the Feminist Library catalogue. The collection is currently organized by card catalogue, and the digitization of the catalogue will make it much easier to search for items in the library, and ultimately enable us to put the whole catalogue on-line. More librarians and archivist's would be very welcome to join the group. For more information contact [admin@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:admin@feministlibrary.co.uk).

Our Saturday openings are going very well, with many old and new friends making use of the Feminist Library!

On the 17<sup>th</sup> May South London Fawcett Group visited for a tour of the library and the archive. It was great to see so many women in the library and we hope they enjoyed their visit. The South London Fawcett Society are long-term friends of the library and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all their patience and support. It really is appreciated.

The South London Fawcett Group (SLFG) campaigns actively for gender equality at a local level and are part of the Fawcett Society, the UK's leading lobbying group on this issue.

The group meets regularly once a month in central London, with guest speakers often invited. Meetings are from 7 to 9pm on the second Monday of each month in the Mary Stott room on the first floor at the Fawcett Offices. 1-3 Berry Street, London EC1V 0AA, (nearest underground stations are Barbican or Farringdon).

If you would like to join the group, or would like more information, please ring 07958 753284, email [southlondonfawcett@hotmail.com](mailto:southlondonfawcett@hotmail.com) or visit [www.slfnfawcett.org.uk](http://www.slfnfawcett.org.uk). You do not need to be a Fawcett Society member to join the group.

## Some new additions to the Feminist Library

### **Uncommon Arrangements: Seven Portraits of Married Life in London Literary Circles 1910-1939, Katie Roiphe, The Dial Press, 2007.**

While I don't much care for Katie Roiphe's earlier work, *Uncommon Arrangements* is an interesting study of what she calls "Marriage 'A La Mode'"; the unconventional marriage structures adopted by various Bloomsbury couples in this tumultuous post-Victorian period. Interestingly enough, Roiphe distances herself from books such as Dr Marie Carmichael Stopes' 1918 classic *Married Love* (also available in the Feminist Library), dismissing it as a "highbrow self-help book" though that's close to what she achieves here. Her introduction declares that "some of the hand-wringing about marriage in the twenties remains eerily relevant to today's marriage" but such generalisations unnecessarily detract from the meticulous and thorough accounts of her 7 case studies. Roiphe's introductory lament to modern marriage and the parallels with modern relationships seem strained and unwarranted. *Uncommon Arrangements* is a fascinating look at the complex relationships of Rebecca West and HG Wells, Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry, Elizabeth von Arnim and John Francis Russell, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Ottoline and Philip Morrell, Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, Vera Brittain and George Catlin. What these subjects have in common is the financial freedom to flout traditional marital restrictions and the tendency to keep scrupulous

written records of everything. It makes a fascinating read.

### **HIV and AIDS (Working in Gender & Development), Alice Welbourn (Editor), Oxfam Publishing, 2008**

A collection of articles previously published in the Oxfam Journal *Gender and Development*. *HIV and AIDS* is a largely non-critical look at the HIV and AIDS prevention work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in different parts of the world, including South Africa, South Asia, the Pacific and London. Forming part of Oxfam's 'Working in Gender & Development' series, these articles focus on the many complex ways gender inequality impacts on both the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the various development programmes trying to tackle this pandemic as NGOs move gradually beyond health-based models. This book is a good resource for students, not least due to the thorough and useful resource section at the back listing tools, training and organisations involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Reviewed by Kate Lomax.

*Chickweed- a zine about herbalism*, made by London Anarchafeminist Kolektiv. This has been produced by the women who came together in early 2008 to squat and open Wominspace in Hackney, East London— a women and transfolk only social centre. For copies of the zine contact the group at [lafk@riseup.net](mailto:lafk@riseup.net).

### **My Volunteering Experiences at the Feminist Library** by Natasha Cock

I clearly remember my first visit to the library as a budding volunteer. My friend from the London Feminist Network had forwarded me an email from the library, knowing that I was seeking out volunteer opportunities, with the caption: "This looks brill – go for it!"

And brill it was, and ever since has been - from my first visit in February this year to my role as a member of the library's management committee and volunteering at the library, from where I'm currently writing this article. Una Byrne was the first person that greeted me, with a warm and welcoming grin in the periodicals room that first day. A leisurely "tour de visite" later, I felt that I had pretty much all the knowledge I needed to take the decision to become a volunteer. From just stepping into that special, unique collection of books, periodicals, poetry, pamphlets and much more (the library holds the country's most prominent collection of feminist literature from the 1960s to 1990s you know), I could feel every inch of the buzz, history, knowledge and energy that keeps me returning ten months on. Yes, it's true, the rooms the library inhabits are decrepit and unsuitable for the material we look after and cherish, but each Saturday I spend there staffing the collection, meeting and greeting old and new customers, helping them with their enquiries' or just poring over the goldmine of literature, I feel alive and full of purpose and conviction that I'm working to further a set of issues and movements that I believe in.

Whether you just have some free time to fill or whether you wish to develop existing or new skills, the library can do a lot for you. I have been able to greatly expand my knowledge of and interest in feminism, enhance my networking, policy, planning and administrative skills, and have gained some lovely, genuine friends, particularly from the library's management committee, along the way. I have gained access to a whole world of feminist activism and information-sharing and hubs and events and can honestly say that I look forward to the management committee meetings, (even when I have to trek to them in the winter rains), harbouring never a dull moment and giving rise to some vibrant and lively debates! And the added bonus is that the library pretty much works around you, whether that means accommodating your time and energy constraints, or allowing you to mould your volunteer role to fit with your ideas and interests.

Anyway I hope that this has given you some food for thought, particularly if you or someone you know has recently been toying with the idea of volunteering for an organisation like ours. The library is, as always, not short of interesting and often mind-boggling challenges over the coming months and we'd be glad if you would join us in taking them on!

## Listings

The Feminist Activist Forum (FAF) started in April 2007 as a national network of radical feminists with a commitment to intergenerational working. They have a great website [www.feministactivistforum.org.uk](http://www.feministactivistforum.org.uk) and a number of working groups: the feminist history group, which sometimes meets at the fem lib; the *outwrite* group, which is organising an exhibition on the history and legacy of this anti-racist feminist publication; the DisABILITIES resources group, which is organising a series of events and resources making the connections between disability, queer communities, and feminism; anti-racist feminism. To contact FAF about any of this send an email to [mail@feministactivistforum.org.uk](mailto:mail@feministactivistforum.org.uk).

### Glasgow Women's Library

2nd Floor, 81 Parnie Street, Glasgow G1 5RH

Tel/Fax: 0141 552 8345,

Email [info@womenslibrary.org.uk](mailto:info@womenslibrary.org.uk)

[www.womenslibrary.org.uk](http://www.womenslibrary.org.uk)

#### RHYME FOR A REASON

Friday 17 October 2008 11.30am at The Mitchell Library (The Simpson Room) A range of different women share their experiences of poetry and well being and explore the ways that women's writing has had a positive effect on our mental health. Join GWL staff, volunteers, and writers, in sharing poetry that has inspired you or relates to you or your life.

### Glasgow's Women and the Abolition Movement Merchant City Historic Walking Tour

Sunday 26 October 2008, 10am to 12pm.

Join a walking tour around Glasgow city, and learn the hidden history about the presence and contribution of local women and families in the abolition movement:

Glasgow Women Library is also been running a series of taster sessions in many subjects such as creative writing, alternative therapies, diy/woodwork, digital photography and many more.

For more information or to book a place at any of these events please call the library.

### Saturday 22nd November – London Reclaim the Night

National women's march against rape and male violence in all its forms. Celebrating five years of taking back the night.

Assemble 6pm Whitehall Place. Women-only march, followed by rally with speakers and stalls, open to all women, children and men and fully accessible. At Friends Meeting House, Main Hall, Euston Road.  
[www.reclaimthenight.org](http://www.reclaimthenight.org)

We will soon be having a Volunteer Training Day at the Feminist Library.

Come along to the Feminist Library (nearest tubes Lambeth North and Waterloo) and find out what's going on at the library, and how you could help us. You don't need any particular skills, just an interest in libraries, recent feminist history and spreading the word about what we do.

For more information, please contact us at [admin@feministlibrary.co.uk](mailto:admin@feministlibrary.co.uk) or visit our website at [www.feministlibrary.co.uk](http://www.feministlibrary.co.uk).

### The Women's Library

Old Castle Street, London E1 7NT

Tel 020 7320 2222

[www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary)

Saturday 1 November 2008 - Wednesday 1 April 2009

**Between the Covers: Women's Magazines and their Readers.** This exhibition charts the evolution of women's magazines from the 17th century to the present day, showcasing some of the most influential and innovative titles and telling the stories behind their success. Entrance free.

### Saturday 24 January, 12- 4pm Zine Fest Workshop

A hands-on day celebrating women's involvement in self-publishing. Bringing together innovative publishers, artists, illustrators and crafters, this event shares easy techniques for making zines and visuals and advice on publishing projects. Free but booking required.

### Thursday 27 November 5:45 – 9pm LAUNCH OF MILLION WOMEN RISE 2009 & the HACKNEY WOMEN RISE EXHIBITION

Hackney Museum, 1 Reading Lane, London, E8 1GQ  
If you can not make the launch day no worries you can always visit Hackney museum as an individual or with a group as the exhibition is running from 25th November 2008 to 28th February 2009.

### GENDER, RACE, CLASS: An Anti-capitalist Feminist Event.

Want to do something different on Valentine's Day? Then come along to this event.

You can also get involved in building for it...

We are feminists who have come together from a number of groups to organise an event on Saturday 14 February 2009 which aims to show the interconnections between all struggles against oppressions and against capitalism, and that creates an open space to develop our ideas. But we don't want to just talk about our politics - we want to fight to change the material conditions of women's lives, to fight our exploitation and to fight for the rights of all women - and that includes the rights of sex workers and 'illegal' migrants.

Workshops currently planned for the day include:

- The History of Feminism
- Reproductive Freedoms
- Community Organising
- Prison Abolition
- A Woman's Place is in her Union?
- Challenging Domestic Violence
- Dis/ability Workshop
- How Men Can Be Feminists
- Rape and Asylum
- Feminism and Sex Work
- How to Take Action as Feminists

To provide us with a forum to network, make alliances and inspire each other to build a strong and active feminist movement from the bottom up.

To get involved or for more information contact [anticapitalistfeminists@gmail.com](mailto:anticapitalistfeminists@gmail.com).

The Feminist Library would like to offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Ethel Buddle. Ethel passed away earlier in the year, and was a long time supporter of the library. Ethel left a legacy to the Feminist Library, for which we are very grateful.

We would also like to offer our condolences to the family of Anna Greening, who died in September 2007. Anna was an archivist who volunteered at the Feminist Library after working at the Women's library. It was thanks to the efforts of Anna and Feride Cork that the Feminist Library was saved from closure in 2004.

As you are all aware, the Feminist Library is completely run by volunteers. So if you have a few hours to spare, why not consider volunteering at the Feminist Library. We have recently said goodbye to two of the members of the management committee and so are in urgent need of volunteers willing to join the committee. We would like to thank Veronica and Polly and for all their hard work for the library and wish them all the best for the future.

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