Gender

The specific readings listed in the FWWCP Gender Reading Guide are all written by women, with publication dates spanning from 1978 to 1991. In these pieces, some women were overtly rejecting the societal systems they lived in, while other were merely writing about their lives. Regardless, all of these women wrote about political and societal issues in one way or another through detailing their personal experiences with domestic life, motherhood, migration, race, politics, the working-class life, World War II, and more.

Stories about gender within the FWWCP collection not only discuss a variety of topics, but also span multiple generations, ethnicities, languages, and genres. The publications selected for this collection alone include essays, memoirs, poems, and short stories in many different formats, such as anthologies, magazines, books, and pamphlets.

Within the FWWCP materials, there are pieces written by individuals focused on gender issues and social concerns in their own lives. These might include gendered work, sexuality, masculinity, femininity, raising children, and family. In other cases, there are anthologies, such as Move on Adam that represent an organisation-wide publication written by women, in order to highlight women's voices. Even more, though, throughout the Collection, there are discussions about the role of gender in connection to class identity (see Voices 25).
A Classy Pair of Knickers and Other Poignant Pieces of Politics and Love #34
London Voices, 1996
FWWCP/08 L 05

This substantial collection has 81 pieces of creative writing from the London Voices Poetry Workshop. Topics cover feminist issues (“a woman,” “If love is the same”), economic issues about socialism and poverty (“I stifled a yawn,” “Unemployment balance sheet”), and sex (“A classy pair of knickers”). The poems range in voices from sentimental to unforgiving.

**Keywords:** class | feminism | gender | poverty | women’s writing

A Woman’s Work
Annie Spike, 1978
FWWCP/08 L 03

Annie Spike chronicles her life through her relationship to work in this short memoir. She describes her time working in Ireland and Hackney, London, as a factory girl, while also detailing her relationship with labour unions, her office jobs, her work as a cleaning lady, and time spent being a mother and wife. The story was originally written for a book about thirteen people who live and perform multiple work in Hackney, *Working Lives Volume Two*.

**Keywords:** autobiography | class | gender | factory life | family | London | memoir | politics | relationships | women’s writing | working-class

Booknews No. 3, Women Writers magazine
FWWCP, 1988
FWWCP/08 L 12

Booknews No. 3, *Women Writers* is an educational magazine focused solely on women’s writing groups within the FWWCP. It was primarily for “teachers who want to know about writing and publishing outside the mainstream and like to encourage active involvement by their students in the writing process.” By encouraging a range of works across the FWWCP, they hoped to showcase the rich tradition of women’s writing through a variety of forms and genres.

**Keywords:** autobiography | class | education | gender | London | school | women’s writing | working-class
Every Birth it Comes Different
Hackney Reading Centre, 1980
FWWCP/08 L 03

This collection of writings is from the Hackney Reading Centre, a group that helps adult learners improve their reading, writing, and speaking skills. The stories, written with the help of tutors, vary in form, but all stem from the lives of multiple women and their experiences with childbirth. Compiling these stories allowed the women to explore the unifying theme of pregnancy and childbirth, and childbirth customs from London and beyond.

Keywords: autobiography | childbirth | gender | memoir | motherhood | London | relationships | women’s writing | working-class

Guilty Secrets: Anthology of Women’s Writing
Scarlet Women Writing and Publishing Group, 1989
FWWCP/05 EM 02

Guilty Secrets was inspired by a feminist women’s writing workshop that discovered most feminist writings fall into the category of “guilty” secrets. These selections include poetry and prose about the secrets women hold every day. The anthology is meant to empower women to tell the stories they previously felt they had to hide.

Keywords: family | feminism | feminist | gender | sexuality | women’s writing

Move Over Adam: an anthology of short stories
Women Writers of the FWWCP, 1990
FWWCP/ RM 01

This collection of short stories is noted for not only the quality of the stories, but the fact that the space was created specifically for women’s writers. Although creating a space for one group within the Federation was controversial, Move Over Adam presents an important moment within the FWWCP’s history to celebrate women writers.

Keywords: gender | London | Liverpool | relationships | women’s writing | working-class
Sheffield Sampler, A Selection of Local Women’s Writing
Mogg, Dymphna and Rachel Van Riel, editors, 1985
FWWCP/03 Y 04

In this anthology of women’s writing, collected to coincide with International Women’s Day in 1985, the editors aimed to celebrate the tradition of female writing, with the particular selection chosen from over 100 texts sent to them. The anthology seeks to represent a broad aspect of the female experience and “local women’s responses to life,” touching on a variety of subjects.

Keywords: autobiography | domestic life | family | feminism | gender | memoir | motherhood | poetry | women’s writing | working-class | Yorkshire

Paper Talk
Sally Flood, no date
FWWCP/08 L 02

In this book of poetry, Sally Flood describes life at her home in East London. She writes about sleepless nights with family life, as well as drawn out days working as an embroidery machinist. Her poetry simultaneously draws attention to the beauty and hardships as a working-class woman.

Keywords: class | community | family | gender | migration | poetry | poverty | working-class | women’s writing

Pure Running
Louise Shore, 1982
FWWCP/08 L 03

Pure Running is a memoir of a working-class woman, Louise Shore, and her migration to London from Jamaica in 1960. Her aspiration to write books was stalled by a lack of education and encouragement. Yet, when she began attending the Hackney Reading Centre, she worked with tutors to achieve her goal. Her story chronicles facets of her life including issues of migration, work, housing, and relationships, and navigating all of them as a Black woman.

Keywords: Black writers | class | gender | housing | London | memoir | migration | race | relationships | women’s writing | working-class

34
Time to be Bold
Lotte Moos, 1981
FWWCP/08 L 03

Lotte Moos’ collection of poems is a response to working-class life in Hackney, London. Lotte wrote poetry at a young age, but was interrupted by WWII when home and work responsibilities took precedence. When the urge to create was too strong, she began writing again, eventually joining the Hackney Writer’s Group, where this volume was compiled. These autobiographical poems chart her life through her political views, labor, heartbreak, and relationship with family.

Keywords: domestic life | family | gender | Hackney | London | poetry | politics | relationships | women’s writing | working-class | World War II

Tough Annie: From Suffragette to Stepney Councillor
Annie Barnes, Kate Harding, Caroline Gibbs, 1980
FWWCP/08 L 14

Tough Annie was written through a series of taped conversations. Barnes tells about her involvement with the Suffragettes, her family life, her work in the Labour Party, and her eventual ascension to Stepney Councillor, where she fought for the rights of working-class people and other individuals.

Keywords: family | gender | Labour Party | London | memoir | politics | Suffragette | women’s writing | working class | World War I

Voices 25: Magazine of the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers
FWWCP, no date
FWWCP/01 NW 08

Two pieces in this issue of Voices sparked conversations about gender within the FWWCP. In the piece, “Feminist Groups,” Jimmy McGovern argues that admitting feminist-focused group Women and Words to the FWWCP would compromise the movement’s focus on the working-class. Women and Words responded, expressing the value they bring to the FWWCP.

Keywords: feminism | gender | Manchester | women’s writing | working-class
Further Reading in the FWWCP Collection:

An Independent Woman  
FWWCP/08 L 03  
Digital Collection: http://fwwcp.gn.apc.org/node/6810

Feel My Words  
FWWCP/08 L 03  
Digital Collection: http://fwwcp.gn.apc.org/node/6843

Herzone  
FWWCP/01 NW 07

One Over The Bakers Dozen  
FWWCP/08 L 03

Reminiscences of a Bradford Mill Girl  
FWWCP/03 Y 12

Scribe Sistren  
FWWCP/08 L 03  
Digital Collection: http://fwwcp.gn.apc.org/node/6812

Upon Reflection. Women’s Writing Group  
FWWCP/03 Y 07

Writing on the Line: 20th Century Working-Class Women Writers  
FWWCP/08 L 10