



Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

July 2019

www.olderdykes.org

Dinner & Discussion

What makes You so uniquely You?

Saturday 3 August 2019 6.00 – 8.30pm
Presented by Wendy

Some say we are born with essential archetypes that interact to shape our everyday way of being in the world. For example, are you a Rebel, or an Optimist or a Diplomat? Or all three interacting to make your unique self?

To find out we will fill in Hart Life Coaching's short Archetype Quiz. We will each identify our three most dominant Archetypes, and the character traits that flow from this special mix!

Wendy hopes we can have a light-hearted discussion about our individual strengths and challenges, and whether this Quiz throws up some 'ah ha's' or room for interesting discussion on our true natures!

Come along for yet another interesting and fun night.

For further information contact Sylvia
contact@olderdykes.org

Venue: Michael Maher Room, 78 Dalhousie Street, Haberfield (please note change of venue across the road from our usual location)

Buses are available: 406, 436, 438, 439 and street parking is available close by.

Gold coin donation

BYO food to share and own drinks, coffee and tea supplied

Dykes for Dinner

6.30pm Thursday 8th August

Exotic Indian Curries

97 Smith Street,
Summer Hill.

RSVP to Rob by Sunday 4 Aug to

contact@olderdykes.org



6.30pm Thursday 12th September

Georgia's Kitchen

527 Illawarra Rd,

Marrickville

RSVP by Sun 8 Sep to

contact@olderdykes.org



Dates for your diary

Saturday 12 October 6.00-8.30pm,

Michael Maher Room

78 Dalhousie St,

Haberfield.

(Opp Dickson St)

Topic to be decided

Saturday November 23rd 5.30pm

Ten Forty Matrix AGM Annual dinner.

Saturday 7th December

Save the date and watch this space.



Dance for Joy!

We are having another weekend camp for Lesbians over 40

Put these dates in your diary

**5pm Friday 13 March 2020 to
4pm Sunday 15 March 2020**

Berry Sport and Recreation Centre,
660 Coolangatta Road, Berry 2535 NSW

More details to come as we work out the budget. Costs will be a little more than last year as we do not have any additional funding. However the camp will be subsidised. Accommodation is in comfortable, lower bunk beds in heated rooms. Activities include; kayaking, archery, bushwalking, dancing, board games, cards, participant generated workshops, and many more, all at no extra cost.

Places are limited, tell your friends now so they will not miss out. If you would like to make an early registration now please email your name, address and phone number, headed Berry Camp 2020, to Sylvia Kinder contact@olderdykes.org this will ensure your place. For enquires email Sylvia contact@olderdykes.org.

We had so much fun this year don't miss out!

What lesbians do in books

From Radclyffe hall to Sarah Waters

To give this large subject some shape, I decided to divide into stages – very rough cut but it may give an idea of the progression of our very own literature.

Stage One: Silence and disaster – Back in the 50s and earlier

The landmark book is **The Well of Loneliness** by *Radclyffe Hall*. First published in 1928 it set the tone of anguish, unfulfilled longing and the problems of being different (even if you had lots of money). Not much help here for the young Aussie woman struggling with the problems of feeling different and falling in love with her best friend, or the sports mistress or the head prefect. Mind you, this book is now more than a century old!

Then in 1949 there was **The Second Sex** by *Simone de Beauvoir* – not a novel but at least it had information, although not cheerful with words like invert ...

In the 30s we had *Lillian Hellman* who wrote **The Loudest Whisper** in 1934 which was made into a film in 1961 starring Audrey Hepburn and Shirley MacLaine.

Hellman followed this with her 1939 play **The Little Foxes**. Once again the love object went off with a bloke and our lesbian was left destroyed.

Not a lot of sex in any of these – pretty well subliminal but one could dream!

Stage Two: Peeping out of the closet – 50s, 60s and 70s

Now we come to a couple of landmark books: **The Price of Salt** (1952), now renamed *Carol* written by *Patricia Highsmith* best known for her detective novels and the Ripley series. The film with Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara made a big impact but Highsmith was a very unhappy, difficult and closeted lesbian – unwilling to come out because of the likely impact on her career.

But for we readers there was at least the model of two women in love who managed to make a life together although with many sacrifices. Sex-wise there was some action but it was rather vague and under the blankets.

About this time we had **Patience and Sarah** by *Isabel Miller* (1969); **Rubyfruit Jungle** by *Rita Mae Brown* (1973), **Desert of the Heart** by *Jane Rule* (1964); **Hidden Pictures** by *Meg Wolitzer* (1986), (she has just released an important feminist novel ... **The Female Persuasion** 2018) as well as having written **The Wife**, a recent very successful film. But guess what, they do not seem to have reprinted **Hidden Pictures**.

Jeanette Winterson's **Oranges are not the only fruit** was released in 1985, a very funny and sad autobiography.

And from Australia we had our very own book: **All that False Instruction** by *Elizabeth Riley* - really *Kerryn Higgs*, one of the

founders of Women's Land. Written in 1975 Kerry's book had emblazoned on its cover 'A Novel of Lesbian Love.' Quite a breakthrough.

Stage Three: A Bit on the Side – 70s and 80s

This is the beginning of the dyke detective period: notably *Katharine V Forrest* and her PI Kate Delafield (1984); *Claire McNab* and the Carol Ashton series (1988 +); *Sarah Dreher* and the Stoner McTavish series (1985).

What was different about this period was that the main character had a job detecting, either as a private eye or as a regular cop. If the latter they were always under the scrutiny of male colleagues and hiding their personal relationships.

This continued with *Val Mc Dermid* and *Lindsay Gordon* (2003 +).

Suddenly the sexual temperature went up and there was lots of action or at least a lot of heavy breathing. Luckily by this time we had text books like **The Joy of Lesbian Sex** by *Sisley and Harris* (1977) and **Lesbian Sex** by *JoAnn Loulan* (1984) which gave one us some ideas to explain what the heavy breathing was all about. And there were now lesbian focussed publishers like Virago and Naiad Here in Sydney we had LOTL (Lesbians on the Loose) which began in 1989.

Stage Four: How far can we go? – 90s and 2000s

There was also historical stuff: *Sarah Waters' Tipping the Velvet* (1998), **The Ladies**

of Llangollen *Elizabeth Mavor* (1984), **The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister** – 2010 film but also released as a book. There was a feeling that went "hey, this is not new – we have always been around!"

Nowadays we have lots of very explicit writing, some with historic settings and a new wave of films and finally DVDs. And lesbian and gay characters do pop up in mainstream media. And didn't we/don't we all look out for a cheeky lezzo kiss as part of the action?

Plenty of sad stuff as well – proving there are still plenty of hazards on the road to our kind of happiness.

Stage Five: Anything goes and as far as you like – 2010 and onward

The years of LBQTI (ooops, I nearly forgot the G) are with us, including the complications of queer etc.

There is one recent lesbian novel of note: **Godspeed** by *Casey Legler*. Ignore the title, it is not about religion. Casey is married to an Australian woman and was out here for the Writers Festival this year. She is in her early 40s, was an Olympic athlete, also a model who modelled in male clothes and had a solid history of drug abuse. She gives a picture of a very confused young life. But for we readers and observers the action is mainly on line now: TV, DVS, movies and any other medium you care to name.

But we still play "Spot the lezzo!"

New titles for your reading or watching list

– with an overlap between lesbian and feminist material.

Alison Bechdel: Dykes to watch out for. (comic strips) Plus "Fun House" – a memoir.

Carol Booth: Woman to Woman. (medical info)

Monique Wittig: The Lesbian Body

Frank Marcus: The Killing of Sister George 1964 – play and movie

Emily George: lesbian porn videos – not for the fainthearted.

Marge Piercy: Woman on the Edge of Time

Jane Severance: When Megan went away. Kids' story

Nivaiq Korneliusson: Crimson (Greenland, recent)

Leslie Feinberg: Stone Butch Blues:

Amy Bloom: White Houses (Rooseveltdt and Hickok)

Anne Holt: detective stories – often with lesbian characters and no fuss. Scandi noir.

Camilla Lackberg: as above.

Fannie Flagg: Fried Green Tomatoes (book and film)

Susie Orbach: Fat is a feminist issue.

The Secret Lesbian History of Sydney: Very hard to find.

Gentleman Jack: 2019 TV series – based on Anne Lister diaries.

Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorists. Alternative type comic series began 1991.

More books to come: there will be a longer list on our website: www.olderdykes.org

Jan

Storytelling

Although storytelling has been a part of our L40 Easter camps, it was only last year that we had the idea of a winter's Sunday afternoon of Storytelling for Ten Forty here in Sydney.

This year's event took place on 7th July. We had a good turnout.

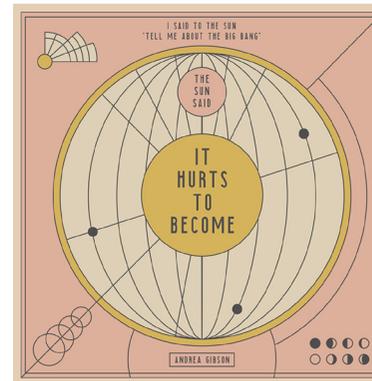
By the time women began arriving, the Dinner and Discussion Planning group: (Wendy Watkins, Wendy Freeman, Diann Payne and Sylvia Kinder), with help from Ping Ho, had set up chairs, the PA system, heaters, trestle tables and food. (Diann also took the photos.)

Pearlie, as coordinator of the readings, had spoken with each of our readers beforehand and then had the tricky task of compiling a programme, knowing that whilst some women had read previously and with a good degree of confidence, some readers this year were tackling the challenge for the first time.

Let me tell you a little about these wonderful reader/writers:

Diann, a writer for some years now, started off the event and read three poems, including **The Breakdown Years**, an optimistic narrative poem about age and declining health (read the poem on the next page).

Freddie, a first time presenter, read a poem by *Andrea Gibson*, **I Sing The Body Electric Especially When My Power Is out**. (You can check this poem on Google. The structure is so clever.)



Beatriz, a well known and loved poet and writer, read some of her romantic poetry. Beatriz is also known for her humour and she certainly didn't disappoint us. I especially liked the poem **Women Behaving Badly**.

Jenny, another first timer, read verses from a group she had started, a Memory Group. During our later feedback session Jenny outlined how we could run such a group. Her poem **Older Bodies Require High Maintenance**, certainly hit a high note. We have asked Jenny to write something about the ideas that prompted the setting up of her group for the newsletter.

Mary, came prepared to read but beset by nerves, managed to read just one poem that reflected on the experience of being older and unemployed. A good start Mary. We hope to hear more from you.

Jacqueline an avid dancer and another first timer, she told us before starting to read, about a Spanish saying ... No one can take away what you have danced. Her poem **Tango** reinforced that message.

Kaye presented a fun narrative about her struggle with hearing loss. Prompted by a friend, she began an intensive Auslan sign language class and soon our audience was involved in an interactive learning session. Kaye's presentation concluded with her donning a tea cosy that had, with skilful knitting on the front part of the cosy, been converted to a hat with a vulva. You can imagine the laughter and delight that caused.



Wendy, someone we already know as an entertaining comedian, has been researching her family history and read for us an essay she has entered into a competition, about her ancestor entitled **The Indomitable Jane Skillicorn**. In the mid 1800s Jane travelled out from England alone to Lyttleton, New Zealand. Her story is incredible.

Viviane's sci fi story **Jube** raised two important questions. Do we want to live a very long time? And what might the consequences be of the technology that makes this possible?

Jan read us Chapter One of **Vengeance Is Mine** the story of the death of a drunken violent man, killed by one of the family.

Sylvia read **Mad Migration**, the true story of how she came to Australia with no money, no job, no contacts or arranged place to stay, and clearly no idea what she was doing. Was she mad?

Pearlie read a coming-out-story **Soft Shoe Shuffle**, more about coming out to herself rather than family and friends, and the rollicking ride around town to just meet other lesbians.

Thanks to the many women who helped us clean up afterwards. Fourteen of us finished up having dinner at Papas Restaurant across the road from our venue and the laughter and good atmosphere continued. What a great way to spend a Winter Sunday.

Sylvia

The Breakdown Years

When it all begins to fall
Apart from her – she stayed,
Apart from the blood clots
To her legs
That travelled to her lungs
But at 91 she survived
Even that
She went home and continued to care for
her friend
Who had suffered a break
in her mind.

Once life was lived In the fast lane
With revved cars that gave way to
Challenging walks – the bush;
was an adventure to be savoured,
Travels through rugged lands,
Good food, good wine, good smokes;
But the lungs and the heart protested
At the age of 72

Her adult life was full
She began with enthusiasm brimming
Rushing in
Taking on tasks
Bigger than her thoughts could hold

Managing the myriads
Climbing the mountains
Siding on the slopes
Swimming in turbulent waters
She lived, she thought, the forever dream;
She mapped it out
Screamed and shouted
She made her plans

But then
the slowdown started
Around her she sees
Friends, acquaintances
Broken down
By the side of life's road
They are standing
Sitting
Waiting
Hoping
Despairing

She thinks
I am not that broken yet
But her own heart is failing
And her memory is faded
by the passing of so many years;
We all live with that now, she says

We move slower
Sleep more
We now need help
To walk out the door
All that fast life is
A fading memory of joy

But life has not abandoned us

We still open doors

We still explore,

Uncover,

Create

Organise

Implore

Limping a little here,

Resting a little there

Into a different pace

That we scoffed at before

Scorned

Pitied

dreaded

Railed against;

The breakdown years

But here we stand today.

Diann

Women in the Bush

Founded in 1984 with the aim of providing women with fun walks and great social contact, Women in the Bush has become a lesbian group that includes, cycling, kayaking, and other social events like bush dances, and theatre events. Our regular program can be found on the website, www.womeninthebush.org.au or you can be emailed it regularly if you send an email request to Kathy, contact@olderdykes.org. If you would like more information contact Sylvia contact@olderdykes.org we would love to tell you more about our activities.

Our walks vary but many of them suit those wanting a real bush experience that is within the capacity of moderately fit older women. We have no age limit although most of our regular walkers are between 50-80 years of age. Distances are from 8-15km and level of difficulty varies from easy to hard with mainly medium walks. Beginners would need to talk to one of the organisers to assess the suitability of the walk for them. Some of the harbour walks are great for beginners and we encourage everyone who enjoys the outdoors to join us.

A typical walk starts around 9-9.30am and includes time for morning tea and lunch finishing around 3pm depending on distance. We try to use public transport when possible and often organise to car share when not. We mostly finish our walks with a coffee in a



local café. With hundreds of fantastic walks around Sydney in the Ku-ring-gai, Royal, Blue Mountains, Brisbane Waters, Garigal and Lane Cove National Parks to name only a few, we are fortunate indeed.

Our next walk is suitable for beginners:

Saturday 27 July Sydney Harbour Walk- Greenwich Point Wharf to Milson's Point via Berry Island. Stop to eat your lunch & get coffee at the Coal Loader - 11km - easy to medium

Sylvia

This month we are including a story in two parts; a piece by Sand Hall drawing on the Curator Notes section of her new book, and hopefully, in our next issue, a review of that same book by Margot.



Shelters and Building

Stories of Women's Lands, Australia Volume 2

Land is Life. Sisterhood is Powerful. Together, these two truths create the spirit around which a community of women has evolved.

This second collection of stories from women who are part of the Women's Lands in NSW includes contributions from women involved with the Valley, Herland and the Mountain/Amazon Acres.

As a photographer with an interest in herstory and archiving, I've often thought of creating a book of my photos, taken since first going to the Lands.

I first went to the Mountain and Valley in 1978. Since the late 1980s I've been travelling to the Mountain three or four times a year, for a week or two at a time. It is my spiritual home base.

The book is intended for the women who have been part of the Lands, and those who are interested in these women's spaces. It's also a book for libraries, as it gives insight into Australian feminist and environmental social history.

Women in this collection write in their own words from their own perspective. The 24 contributors, range in age from 14-80 years.

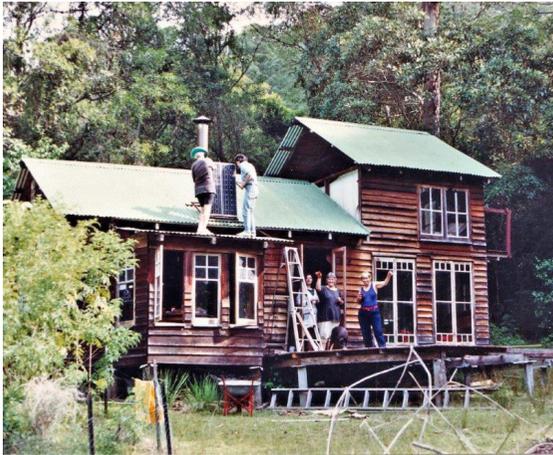
The book's theme of Shelters and Building is broadly interpreted. We created places to sleep and call our own; found land for shelter in the sanity of nature and under stunning night skies.

The Lands grew from strong links women had with the Women's Liberation Movement. Many who first came to the Land were involved in women's theatre, art, politics and music of the revolutionary 1970s. Often life on the Lands feels like live theatre, and the theatre of life. We have experienced (and still experience) what feels to be epic dramas, tragedies and comedy. Our interactions with each other are the fascinating stuff of life, the stuff of myths and legends.

Many of my most enjoyable times – and photos – have involved women working together to achieve practical outcomes. Building with others is challenging and satisfying. As well, tracks and roads need constant clearing and repair. Collecting firewood is ongoing. I have vivid memories of women preparing and sharing food, gardening, making music around fire and under night skies, or in front of a small fire in the old loggers' hut. Since finishing the beautiful hexagonal (plus extension) communal building on the Mountain – taking us about 20 years – it has become my favourite place, on the planet, to be: isolation, wilderness, limited money, extreme weather, basic resources and the need to learn building skills, has meant the creation of any kind of shelter is a true accomplishment. Those same challenging conditions meant we created places to come and go from, rather than places to live in for long periods of time. It is of value that they are our places to come and go from.



Today, some of those shelters have been taken over by the environment, some lost to bushfire or arson. Some are now getting much needed maintenance. Others are still going strong.



The deaths of women, young and old, give pause for reflection. Central to the Women's Liberation Movement is an understanding that the personal is political. This means acknowledging power and abuse.

Despite our utopian ideals, it is important to acknowledge that there have been occasions when women and children have experienced abuse from other women while living on the Lands. We were slow to identify this amongst ourselves, tending to minimise or excuse. One of the problems of making things up as we went along is that we didn't always get it right.

For many of us, the new normal is elderly. Generally, our abilities are less than they used to be, and some women can barely make

the trip to the Lands now. Still, our love of that land and experiences of these women's spaces are vast. Many of us have a willingness to share with new women whose love of the Lands is a great match for our own.

For the most part, the stories in this collection tell of an era now past, that is made more visible in the telling.

The stunning natural environment, and the freedom to be ourselves, has many of us still visiting.

I acknowledge the hundreds of women who have come to the Lands, and the thousands who have helped and supported our existence over five decades.



I acknowledge the care and custodianship of the land carried out by the local Biripi people, over thousands of years.

Sand

Please contact Sand by email if you wish to order a copy of her book ...

contact@olderdykes.org

About Ten Forty

The first national conference of Ten Forty in the mid-eighties attracted politically active feminists of all hues and sexualities. However, over time it became obvious that a huge majority of women attending follow-up meetings and activities in Sydney were lesbian feminists.

Today Ten Forty Matrix and Older Dykes refer to the same group of women. We enjoy discussion on the issues we face in work, life and at home, and hold regular fun events to keep us in touch with the lighter side of life.

Our website www.olderdykes.org encourages national and international connections between older lesbians.

You can pay an annual fee to join Ten Forty Matrix, or you can participate as a casual member. If you want to receive regular information about our activities and the free bi-monthly newsletter join our mailing list www.olderdykes.org/mailList/?p=subscribe

Newsletter

To receive a free emailed newsletter, please email contact@olderdykes.org

The web edition and back copies of the newsletter are available for download from our website olderdykes.org/newsletters/

Who currently does what?

Events planning: Members of the Ten Forty Matrix committee

Telephone contact: Jan 9810 1862

Utilities box: Sylvia and Gillian

Money Management: Kel

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Diann, Pearlie, Barbara

Newsletter: editing and layout Ruth and Pearlie