

Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

February 2021

www.olderdykes.org

Bookish Conversations Haley Katzen chats with Emma Ashmere 28 February 5 PM This is a Ten Forty Zoom event

In this third session of our bookish conversations, Hayley Katzen will chat with award winning writer Emma Ashmere whose collection of short stories, 'Dreams They Forgot', was recently published by Wakefield Press.

Emma started writing fiction in her mid-thirties, after she signed up for a new creative MA at the University of Adelaide in the late 1990s. She wanted to write about the kind of people left out of history books, or ignored, erased, or stereotyped - including marginalized women and lesbians.

She has published over 30 short stories, and has been a finalist a number of awards. Some of these stories are in 'Dreams They Forgot'. They roam through time and place.

An Irish Immigrant falls in love with an 1880s musical hall dancer; a timid teacher tries to teach English in a rowdy 1980s Sussex language school; two sisters await the 1974 'tidal wave' meant to wipe out Adelaide after homosexuality was decriminalized; a contemporary woman and her new love interest navigate a change in health; and a lost story is unearthed in a 1990s diamond mine in Borneo.

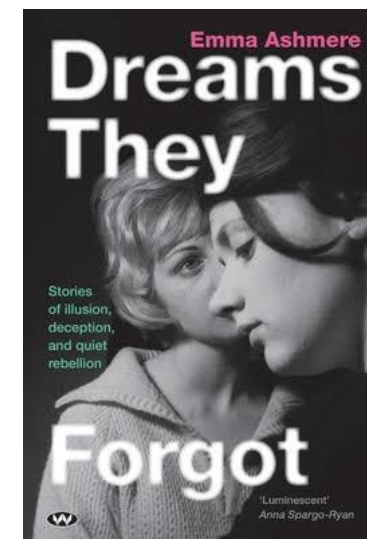
Emma's 2015 novel 'The Floating Garden' was written as part of a PhD on the use of history in fiction, and shortlisted for the Small Press Network MUBA/Book of the Year Award 2016. 'The Floating Garden' was inspired by a friend's grandmother, who was evicted from her Milsons Point boarding house to make way for the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. She survived the Great Depression by selling flowers from her suitcase outside of Wynyard Station.

Emma lives in northern NSW, and is working on short stories and another novel about a 19th century woman - a portrait painter." For more information and links to Emma's work please see her website:

<https://emmaashmere.com/>

In our zoom session Hayley will chat with Emma about her work and particularly 'Dreams They Forgot'. To give you a taste of the short stories and to stimulate our group discussion, here is a link to 'Fallout', the last story in the book, which has a lesbian focus and has the mix of politics of the Maralinga tests, travel, theatre – and humour.

<https://newtownreviewofbooks.com.au/emma-ashmere-dreams-they-forgot-extract/>



Raise Our Voices A 10/40 Event Sunday 7 March

We were recently awarded a \$500 grant by ACON to organise a choir event for both beginners and experienced choristers. For those who have never sung before it is a wonderful experience to find your voice.

When: Sunday the 7th March, 10:30 to 12:30 There will be a break for morning tea and a shared lunch after the meeting. If the weather is doubtful there will be a Zoom meeting from 11:30 to 12:30 on the same day. The notification for this will come out early in the day.

Tuesday evening the 9th of March there will be a follow up, one hour Zoom meeting from 7 to 8 pm.

You are encouraged to attend both meetings.

For more information or to email expressions of interest, contact

summerscheryl@gmail.com

before 21 February

Dykes for Dinner Thursday 11 March 6.30 PM

Venue: TBA
Check your Contact emails.

RSVP: Sue
suegee1@optusnet.com.au
Ph: 0413266483



Dinner and Discussion for Older Lesbians is back in 2021

We have started meeting face to face again

**All meetings to be held in our new venue:
Jimmy Little Community Centre
19 Cecily Street, Lilyfield**

From 6pm - 8.30pm

We will be adhering to our COVID Safe plan to make the venue and events as safe as possible. We have a great line up for the year.

The first DDfOL was on Saturday 13 February ***Climate Change and Our Insane Year, and what we can do about it: part 2*** was presented by *Anne Fitzsimmons*. A report will be available soon.

Saturday 10 April *Talks with a lesbian poet and talking about poetry: Jacqueline Buswell*. She will have copies of her second book of poetry, *'Sprinting on quicksand'* for sale. Bring your favourite poem.

Saturday 5 June *The Travel we've done and what we still want to do!* The Australian Lesbian Travel Anthology ***Walking to the Edge*** will be introduced by some of the writers.

We will get the chance to talk about our travels, past and future.

Saturday 7 August: to be decided but put the date in your diary

Saturday 9 October: to be decided but put the date in your diary

Details for each event will be sent in separate advertisements on Contact.

We look forward to seeing you.

The planning group are happy to hear your ideas for dinner/ discussion topics. Send them to Sylvia skinder@bigpond.net.au

Don't mess with the older generation

The old lady handed her bank card to a bank teller and said, "I would like to withdraw \$500".

The teller told her, "For withdrawals less than \$2,000, please use the ATM."

The old lady wanted to know why ...

The teller returned her bank card and irritably told her, "These are the rules. Please leave if there is no other matter. There is a line behind you."

The old lady remained silent for a few seconds, then handed the card back to the teller and said, "Please help me withdraw all the money I have."

The teller was astonished when he checked the account balance. He nodded his head, leaned down and respectfully told her, "My apologies Ma'am, you have \$35 million in your account and our bank doesn't have so much cash currently.

Could you make an appointment and come again tomorrow?"

The old lady then asked how much she could withdraw immediately. The teller told her any amount up to \$250,000.

"Well, please let me have \$250,000 now", she requested.

The teller did so quickly, then handed the cash respectfully to the elderly client.

The old lady put \$500 in her bag and asked the teller to deposit the balance of \$249,500 back into her account.

There's a moral to this story ... Don't be difficult with old people, they spent a lifetime learning life skills.....skills they don't teach at universities.



Thanks to Philippa for passing on this story.

Review: The Last Migration by Charlotte McConaghy



This is a strange book and belongs in the speculative fiction category along with books by Margaret Atwood and others, exploring our future world (almost upon us) if we don't do something soon about the changes in our climate. The book is strange too, because the main character, Franny Stone, is strange.

Franny has a lot of issues. She is obsessed with following the migration of what may be the last of the Arctic Terns, who migrate back and forth between the Arctic and the Antarctic twice a year. The book explores her love of birds and the situation of extinction they are facing in a world which is slowly destroying all wildlife due to climate change and over hunting.

The novel also explores Franny Stone's search for her mother who somehow she lost as a child. It does take some time for the reader to learn what happened to the mother, mainly

because Franny herself is in denial. We are also introduced early to the knowledge that Franny has committed a crime and has spent time in prison. In the police station she is told "... they are dead."

It takes a lot of reading to unravel what happened. Violence seems to be ripple just beneath Franny's skin despite her love of nature. Added to this strange personality is her deep love for her husband Niall, who oddly enough, she has abandoned but spends a lot of time writing him unsent letters. I was reminded of the main character in *We Need To Talk About Kevin*. That woman wrote numerous letters to her absent husband and those letters were unsent too.

The story flicks back in time to events in Franny's life in Ireland and Australia, then to her journey on the Saghani fishing ship (Inuit for Raven) travelling from Greenland to the Antarctic. The crew of seven are eccentric and the relationships between them, the captain Ennis, and Franny are complex. There is nothing regular about the vessel or the journey they are making.

I was somewhat frustrated with Franny's lack of care for herself and her, to my mind, unreasonable desire to follow the migration of the terns, just to see if they made it to Antarctic. The crew shared these frustrated feelings too. Gradually, towards the end of

the novel, the denouement comes in bits, and, as her past story is revealed, Franny comes to terms with her past and makes a life changing decision.

I found the writer's use of language to show emotions and feelings to be good. I could almost feel the cold Franny experienced and her emotional pain. She was so alone in her struggle with whatever ailed her and unable to communicate this to anyone.

Her strangeness and obsessions made her hard to like. McConaghy found a way to keep you wanting to get to know Franny and every now and then your heart reached out to her.

Charlotte McConaghy has a love of nature and travel, the book is inspired by both these passions, as well as her discovery that in the last 50 years alone, humans have killed over 60% of all wild animal life on earth. Charlotte lives in Sydney but reveals little of herself on her website.

Sylvia

An Alternative Review of the film Ammonite.

Ammonite is the second film directed by Francis Lee. Like his first film 'Gods Own Country' which has a relationship between two men, a sheep farmer and migrant, Ammonite features an imagined relationship between two women of unequal social status.

As lesbians it is understandable that we are delighted to see a well-made film with excellent actors, Kate Winslet as Mary Anning, the famed fossil collector, and Saoirse Ronan as Charlotte Murchison (who was also a well-known palaeontologist and fossil collector), engage in a lesbian relationship. The visuals of the wind torn coast of Lyme Regis in the south of England, and the accuracy of the conditions of life of the poverty stricken Anning family, are well done. In particular, the costumes are so well presented with the flannel undergarments and unflattering clothing of working class women, as contrasted with that of the upper middle class.

Francis Lee had a great opportunity to show the life of this remarkable woman of whom sufficient is known to make an excellent story. As may be expected of someone born in 1799

nothing is known about Mary's sex life, apart from the fact that she never married. To imagine she may have been a lesbian is not unreasonable as many spinsters of the past have later been found to be so. But Lee has let his imagination rove too far from the historical truth, in his desire to have Charlotte Murchison portrayed as a fragile young woman, whose husband leaves her in Mary Anning's care. Really! It is true these two women did correspond and had a friendship based on common scientific interests. Charlotte was 11 years older than Mary, and only became ill later in life due to malaria. Why not have the relationship challenged by class and age with Mary as the seduced?

There was also an implication in the film of some past romantic friendship between Mary Anning and Elizabeth Philpot, played by Fiona Shaw. Elizabeth, 19 years Mary's senior, had befriended Mary when she was a child around 8 years old and was collecting fossils with her brother Joseph, to help the family, following the death of her father. In reality Elizabeth had a long and deep friendship with Mary and supported her scientific endeavours.

I feel this would have been a potential love story, two spinsters who although they had an age difference had much to bring them close.

If Charlotte must be the love object then why not use her real age? Why did she have to be such a simpering young thing? Or is this the male titillation and pornographic image of lesbians? I found the love scenes unconvincing and unlikely. Was Mary experienced as a lesbian? Was this naive young woman in the film so easy to seduce without much foreplay? Sorry, not likely. Women last longer was a 1970's slogan and I think that also refers to our love of a slow, delightful seduction.

It is true that Mary Anning journeyed to London. But for scientific purposes and in the company of Elizabeth Philpot. Mary was not accepted into the scientific community, not only because she was a working class woman, but also because she was a dissenter from the established state religion which was Anglican. I thought the idea that Charlotte might imagine they live together in the same home as her husband laughable.

Sadly the real Mary Anning died, aged 49, in 1847 of breast cancer. Charlotte Murchison continued her scientific work despite increasing illness due to her earlier malaria. She died in 1869 aged 80. Elizabeth Philpot outlived Mary Anning too, she died in 1857 aged 77.

Poverty and hard work were chief factors in the short life of working-class people, Mary Anning was no exception.

Many reviewers have suggested that there is little known of Mary's life. This is not actually true. Considering her humble background and her short life, she was in fact quite celebrated. Many significant scientists, interested in fossils and palaeontology, visited and corresponded with Mary. There are extensive records of these communications. Following her death Charles Dickens wrote an article about her life.

Tracy Chevalier's, book **Remarkable Creatures** is a novel about Mary's life and relationship with Elizabeth Philpot, which is more factual and a good read.

Sylvia



Once upon a time there was an idiot crow. She was sensible enough most of the time, but utterly foolish when she fell in love or fancied anybody. Now it happened that she met a starling. The starling was charming, the crow was charmed, but she decided that for once she was going to be sensible. She was calm, dispassionate and moderately friendly. At last one day they met again. Crow had pined and repined dreadfully, but in accordance with her decision to do nothing foolish, she had done nothing. Once again Starling and Crow were very sensible and reasonably friendly. Soon they began to meet often. They continued calm, quiet and friendly. It became a habit. They got used to it. So that it was only occasionally that Crow tore her feathers and cursed her wisdom and her folly.

Suniti Namjoshi (lesbian feminist poet)

Viviane's Gluten-Free Scones

(Based on a recipe in Swain, Anne R, Soutter, Velencia L & Loblay, Robert H 2009, *Friendly Food. The essential guide to avoiding allergies, additives and problem chemicals, From the allergy experts at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Allergy Unit*, Murdoch Press.)

Ingredients

2 cups rice flour
¾ cup tapioca flour
¾ cup potato flour
1 tsp guar gum
3 tsp gluten free-baking powder
Ground sea salt
80g dairy-free margarine (I use Nutellex)
1 tablespoon caster sugar
325 ml (1-1/4 cup) rice drink or lactose-free milk

Preparation time: 10 mins

Cooking time: 15 mins

Makes 12 scones

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 220°C. Line a baking tray with a sheet of baking paper.
2. Sift the flour, baking powder and a pinch of salt into a large bowl. Use your fingertips to rub the margarine into the flour until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. (My ex-mother-in-law taught me this should be done lightly and quickly—don't overdo it).
3. Stir in the sugar.
4. Add the rice drink/milk using a round-bladed knife (I have an old one that was my grandmother's from a cutlery set her employer gave her when she retired from work to get married!). Mix until the dough just comes together. Again, don't overdo it or they'll be tough.
5. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface (I use rice flour) and knead until combined. Don't overdo it. Press with the flat of your hand into a circle about 2 cm thick. Cut into 12 wedges. Place on the baking paper about 1 cm apart.
6. Bake for 12-15 minutes, or until cooked.
7. Turn out onto a cake rack. Serve warm
8. They can be stored, when cool, in an airtight container and frozen. Just pop a frozen one into the microwave for about 30 seconds and voila! Nice and easy.

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About Ten Forty and Older Dykes

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 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 <http://www.olderdykes.org> encourages national and international connections between older lesbians. Ten Forty is not an organisation you have to join, though members do get some discounts. If you want to receive regular information about our activities and our bi-monthly newsletter, visit our website and put yourself on our email list.

Newsletter

The newsletter comes out on our email list. If you do not receive it, email us at contact@olderdykes.org

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

Who currently does what?

Events planning: Sylvia, Diann, Wendy

Contact email list: Diann, Niki

Archives: Sylvia, Jan and Pearlie

Money Management: Loretta

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Diann, Pearlie, Niki

Newsletter: editing and layout Pearlie and Diann