



A Literary Ventures Fund Book

Feather Man

Publication Date: September 2008

\$15.95 | Paperback

310 pages

Trim Size: 8.5 x 5.5

978-0-7145-3148-9

Marion Boyars Publishers

Book Synopsis: Set in Brisbane, Australia during the 1950s Feather Man centers around Sooky, a precocious and resilient child cast off from her family. The novel travels from Sooky's neglected childhood and follows to her entrance into womanhood in grubby London of the 1970s, and her entry into the art world. Combined comedy with emotional intensity this stunning book has been awarded the **Barbara Jefferis Literary Award** for best novel written by an Australian author that depicts the empowerment and status of women and girls in society.

A September IndieNext Pick

Included in this Press Kit

- Press Release
- Advanced Praise for Book
- Author Biography
- Reading Group Guide
- Awards & Recognition
- Book Flyer



MARION
BOYARS

http://www.literaryventuresfund.org/books/feather_man



literary
ventures
fund

Advanced Praise for *Feather Man*

"Let me say that Rhyll McMaster is an extraordinary writer. Her prose is dazzling, poetic and thought-provoking, and this is literary fiction at its best... I have likened Rhyll McMaster to Margaret Atwood. Atwood is brilliant, but in my view McMaster is even better. *Feather Man* has quite rightly won literary prizes in Australia and my money is on *Feather Man* making the Booker Prize longlist here."

—Vulpes Libris

"Rhyll McMaster has struck gold with her debut novel of betrayal and loss... This is a stunning, dark story with tight, controlled prose. Unforgettable. Five Stars"

—*Goodreading Magazine*

"I think [*Feather Man*] is quite wonderful. Beautifully written. Engrossing and utterly involving and it does something new"

—Maureen Freely, Author of *Unforgettable* and *The Other Rebecca*

"There is a cumulative and haunting power to Rhyll McMaster's novel of a woman desolated by the grown-up betrayals riddling her child's world, and the reclamation of identity they eventually compel. A striking work, the poetic concision of the language carries a darkly nuanced understanding of love and loyalty, and the near-fatal costs they exact on the unprotected heart. In the sensuous descriptions, in the native knowledge of custom and culture, and particularly in the quirky suburban vernacularisms, Australia of the mid-twentieth century comes fiercely alive. Sooky may have an avant-garde sense of herself in the human universe, but we know exactly where she is from. McMaster's insights, by turns moving and mordant, are always wise, and if the unraveling of Sooky's life is profoundly unsettling, it is all the more satisfying when she learns how to ravel it back together. This is literature that sticks to the bones."

--Lynn Stegner, Author of *Because a Fire Was in My Head*

"This beautifully written and disturbing Australian coming of age novel grabbed me from the first page. Sooky struggles to overcome her difficult childhood, with a father who abandoned the family, an emotionally distant mother and abuse by the one person to whom she felt close. The effects of this childhood are powerfully portrayed as Sooky moves from relationship to relationship and from Brisbane to London. It is her growing sense of herself as an artist which balances the pain."

--Nancy Felton, Broadside Bookshop

"McMaster achieves many brilliant effects...a tour de force of vivid and surprising imagery and allusion....Her eye for detail, for recognizing the exceptional in the most mundane of things, illuminates these pages. The seedy ordinariness of life in London is superbly conveyed."

—Andrew Riemer in *The Sydney Morning Herald*

Advanced Praise for *Feather Man*, Cont.

"Rhyll McMaster tosses us in at the deep end...enlivened by a genuine mystery, a slender but powerful narrative thread....It's a masterstroke...she makes this novel so much more than a simple story: in the clever patterns of imagery, the brilliant descriptions, the narrative structure and the understanding—more and more absent from contemporary fiction—that a good novel has something to say about the world."

—Kerryn Goldsworthy in *The Australian*

"...a novel which explores the impact of childhood sexual abuse on adult life... a brutal tale, but an exquisite read, full of the most satisfying psychological truths."

—Ramona Koval, *The Book Show*, ABC Radio National

"...I think it would be a good choice for book clubs as there can be different reactions both to the adventures and the structure of the story."

—Eve Abbey, *Abbey's Bookshop Newsletter*

"McMaster is interested in the fragility of identity and the dynamics of personal power. This superb first novel is beautifully written but not for the faint-hearted....in a class of its own."

—Christina Hill, *Australian Book Review*

"...a novel about privacy, about an experience so secret and so traumatically internalized that its effects go on reverberating long after the child victim has grown up. In tracing Sooky's progress from a traumatized suburban childhood to the beginnings of a successful international career as an artist, McMaster charts the emotional complexities of dependence, loyalty, cruelty and betrayal..."

—Kerryn Goldsworthy, *The Australian Literary Review*

Author Biography



Rhyll McMaster, born 1947, started writing poetry as a child. Her first volume of poetry, *The Brineshrimp*, was published in 1972 and won the Harri Jones Memorial Prize for Poetry. She has since published several volumes of poetry, which have been awarded the C.J. Dennis Prize for Poetry and the Grace Leven Prize for Poetry. Her collection *Washing the Money* won the Victorian Premier's Prize and the Grace Leven Prize. Her poems have been broadcast on national radio and television in Australia. McMaster has also been employed by the Canberra Times as a poetry editor and a book reviewer by the Sydney Morning Herald and the Australian. Feather Man is her first novel.

Rhyll McMaster's Website: <http://rhyllmcmaster.com>

Reading Group Guide for
Feather Man
by Rhyll McMaster

Feather Man spans a period of over twenty years, and two countries, Australia and the United Kingdom. How does Rhyll McMaster succeed in giving her story such scope, while at the same time ensuring we remain connected to her characters? What does this 'long view' perspective add to our understanding of her characters?

Does Sooky develop emotionally during the book? Do we think she will ever overcome her vulnerability?

Marriage is one of the most powerful themes of the novel – what struck you most about Rhyll McMaster's depiction of Sooky's first marriage?

By the end of the novel, Sooky is on her own in London, a different person from than the one we encountered in the opening pages of the book. What are the positive – and the negative – effects of this transformation?

Redmond displays a very narcissistic personality. Did you understand why Sooky found him so attractive?

The underlying sexual abuse from the start of the book is key, but what did you think about Rhyll McMaster's portrayal of the victim as attracted to her abusers? Did this make some sense to you? How does it connect to present day worries about internet grooming?

Additional Information

Marion Boyars Publishers Online

<http://www.marionboyars.co.uk>

Rhyll McMaster's Website

<http://rhyllmcmaster.com>

Literary Ventures Fund

<http://www.literaryventuresfund.org>

Feather Man Press Release

http://literaryventuresfund.org/downloads/Feather_Man_April_08_release.pdf

Reading Group Guide Online

http://literaryventuresfund.org/books/rggs/McMaster_reading_guide.pdf

Media Inquiries/Events and Speaking Engagements

Contact: Mary Bisbee Beek

mbisbee.beek@gmail.com

The Literary Ventures Fund, a first-of-its-kind, not-for-profit private foundation, serves as a primary "partner-in-risk" with authors and publishers in advancing works of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Using a philanthropic investment model, we provide supplementary support to literary authors and publishers by offering them our foundation's resources, including expertise and publishing ties to bookstores and media outlets, publicity assistance, innovative marketing and sales programs, and in some cases direct cash investments as well. LVF's efforts help ensure that exceptional works of fiction, literary non-fiction, and poetry with a potential for broad readership reach the widest possible audience and remain in print for years to come. In addition, LVF fulfills its public-policy mission by presenting programs that generate discussion about the broader literary landscape, the role of publishing in serving literary writers, and how more readers can become engaged with literature.

Marion Boyars Publishers is renowned for publishing adventurous and occasionally controversial fiction and non-fiction, especially in translation since 1975.

Awards & Recognition



The Australian Society of Authors is delighted to announce that the winner of the inaugural Barbara Jefferis Award is Rhyll McMaster, with her book *Feather Man*.

The Barbara Jefferis Award is offered annually for the best novel written by an Australian author that depicts women and girls in a positive way or otherwise empowers the status of women and girls in society.

Barbara Jefferis was a feminist, a founding member of the Australian Society of Authors, its first female President and, in the words of Thomas Keneally, “a rare being amongst authors, being both a fine writer but also organisationally gifted. She was a professional and internationally published writer long before most of us dreamed of such things.”

The Award is paid from the Barbara Jefferis Literary Fund, which was established by a bequest from Barbara Jefferis’ husband, ABC film critic John Hinde, who died in 2006. The Australian Society of Authors is Trustee of the Fund.

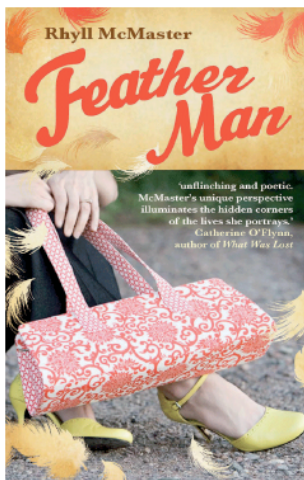
In its first year, 2008, the Award is valued at \$ 32,000



Winner, University of Technology, Sydney, Glenda Adams Award for New Writing



Short-listed for the Australian Literary Society's Gold Medal Award. The ALS Gold Medal is awarded annually for an outstanding literary work in the preceding calendar year. The Medal was inaugurated by the Australian Literature Society, which was founded in Melbourne in 1899 and incorporated into the Association for the Study of Australian Literature in 1982.



Publication Date:
September 2008

ISBN:
978-0-7145-3148-9

Price: \$15.95

Features:
310 pages, 8.5 x 5.5

How to Order:
Consortium/Perseus
Book Sales &
Distribution
800-283-3572

Feather Man by Rhyll McMaster

Set in Brisbane, Australia, during the stultifying 1950s, and moving to the grubby London of the 1970s, *Feather Man* is about Sooky, who, ignored by her parents, is encouraged to make herself scarce and visit Lionel, the farmer next door—there, an incident will take place that will impact the rest of her life.

Against the backdrop of rural Australia and the London art world, McMaster meticulously paints the landscapes of Sooky's internal and external worlds through a narrator that brings to mind Scout of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Following Sooky from her neglected childhood to womanhood and her entry into the art world, the book combines comedy with emotional intensity. When Sooky's attraction to Redmond leads her to London, her past follows her into the future in a deadly confrontation.

Rhyll McMaster, born 1947, started writing poetry while a child. *Washing the Money* won the Victorian Premier's Prize and the Grace Leven Prize. Her poems have been broadcast on national radio and television, in Australia. *Feather Man* is her first novel.

A September IndieNext Pick

Praise for *Feather Man*

“Feather Man is at once both unflinching and poetic. McMaster's unique perspective illuminates the hidden corners of the lives she portrays.”

--Catherine O'Flynn, author of *What Was Lost*

“McMaster's insights, by turns moving and mordant, are always wise, and if the unraveling of Sooky's life is profoundly unsettling, it is all the more satisfying when she learns how to ravel it back together. This is literature that sticks to the bones.”

--Lynn Stegner, Author of *Because a Fire Was in My Head*