



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

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This is the 145th in a series of occasional newsletters from the Victoria University centre of the International Institute of Modern Letters. For more information about any of the items, please email modernletters@vuw.ac.nz.

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1. Alistair Te Ariki Campbell (1925 -2009)

We were sad to learn of Alistair Campbell's recent passing. He was a graduate of Victoria, and later Writer in Residence here, and recipient in 1999 of an Honorary DLitt. He regularly, and generously, presented his work to large lecture rooms packed with New Zealand Literature students. The *Dominion Post's* obituary by Peter Kitchin is [here](#). The *Guardian's* (by Canterbury University academic Paul Millar) is [here](#). And there is a fine description of the tributes paid at his farewell on [Denis Welch's blog](#).

Alistair could pay fine tribute, too – especially to friends and family. His poem for his late wife Meg appeared in the 2007 issue of [Best New Zealand Poems](#) while just over a year ago he wrote a fine obituary for his fellow poet and contemporary Hone Tuwhare in the [Guardian](#). He also had to share the Scottish part of his name with a range of others, including [this rather dodgy wordsmith](#). So he might have taken a wry pleasure in [this Portuguese moment of confusion](#)

2. Dr Barbara Anderson

We're pleased to confirm that, as rumoured in our previous newsletter, acclaimed Wellington fiction writer Barbara Anderson received her honorary degree of Doctor of Literature from the University of Otago last weekend. Vice-Chancellor Professor David Skegg said the honorary doctorate recognises Barbara Anderson's intellectual and artistic achievements, and the high regard in which she is held nationally and internationally.

“Barbara Anderson joins the company of other distinguished writers to whom this University has awarded honorary degrees in the past – people such as Janet Frame, Ruth Dallas and Cilla McQueen,” he said. “She has had a remarkable second career as a writer, and is renowned for her mastery of both the novel and the short story, showing great understanding of human nature and critical clarity.”

We congratulate Dr Anderson on her newly acquired title, which provides a nice counterweight to that of her husband, Sir Neil.

3. Hugh Price: learning to read

We were also delighted to see Hugh Price receive an Honorary Doctorate earlier this month from Victoria for his contributions to publishing, history and literature. In a speech responding to his award, he mentioned his own (and, to his listeners, astonishing) first encounters with books:

“My Masterton home was a bookish place in two ways – I was born with club feet, which were reconstructed by a long series of surgical operations, followed by hours of daily massaging by my mother, who read to me while she worked away. She was a skilled dramatic reader, and she learned to read the print on the page upside-down, while I followed the words and looked at the pictures. What a memorable first contact with books!

At the same time my father assembled a library of reference books. He was a disputatious man who trusted those volumes to prove him right if he were caught in an argument, though I am bound to say that I never saw him consult any of them. But some of the books he bought, such as H G Wells's *Science of Life*, showed me, while still very young, that serious subjects were fascinating. Over the years I have come to see that those crippled feet were fortunate because they brought me to reading. In a nutshell, I was seduced by books.

I have not wasted a single moment of my life on sport!”

The full speech can be read [here](#).

4. Aesthetics

Those who don't mind sport with a dash of artiness might appreciate a game created by Ian Finch, who studied at the IIML on a Fulbright Fellowship in 2001 and is the designer of both the first and the current *Turbine* masthead and site layout. Finch is the inventor of a game called [VikingBall](#), one of a growing number of 'art-sports' being played in the United States. Finch says, "It's like [knattleikr](#) for the 21st century." For the uninitiated, knattleikr was a hockey-like game played by the Vikings of Iceland, and descriptions are to be found in the Icelandic sagas. He explains:

“My brother in-law was a film student a few years ago and he needed to make a fake promo video, so we made up the sport so he could create the film. But then people said they actually wanted to play the sport, and so now we play just about every week. Amazingly we got a mention in a [New York Times article](#)[on art-sports]. A local reporter came last week to interview us, and I told him that at the time we started playing, I was in grad school. When he asked what I was studying, I said 'poetry,' and he said 'of course!'”

5. New Zealand Post National Schools Poetry Awards and Writing Festival

This weekend a large contingent of young writers will descend on Victoria University for the New Zealand Post National Schools Writing Festival, where they will be taught by, and attend events featuring, some of New Zealand's leading writers. On Friday night the winner of the National Schools Poetry Awards will be announced at a glittering ceremony on the Wellington waterfront, featuring a performance by Jason Kerrison of the band OpShop, who has set one of the shortlisted poems to music. The 2009 finalists' poems are available as a PDF [here](#), along with background information on the Awards. Listen out for an interview with the winner on National Radio's Arts on Sunday programme this weekend.

6. Books and change

As part of its winter lecture series, the National Library is presenting a discussion that promises to explore the challenges and opportunities facing publishing today. Publishers Bridget Williams (BWB), Jane Connor (Craig Potton Publishing) and Sam Elworthy (Auckland University Press), all of whom have worked both in New Zealand and overseas, will debate the issues on Thursday 17 September at 5.30 pm in the National Library Auditorium, Aitken St.

7. The expanding bookshelf

Last week Saradha Koirala launched her first book of poetry, *Wit of the Staircase* (Steele Roberts), at Unity Books. Saradha was a member of Dora Malech's 2007 MA workshop, and examples of the work she produced that year can be found in [Turbine 07](#).

8. Legal fiction

Over the past four years Dr Grant Morris (Senior Lecturer in Law, Victoria University) has been constructing a database of legal references in New Zealand fictional literature and visual media. This database has been transformed into an on-line website which contains an annotated bibliographic reference for each of the approximately 500 sources (novels, plays, poems, short stories, films and television programmes). The database will be publicly launched at the historic Old Government Buildings on Thursday 3 September. To mark the occasion the launch is being combined with a one day symposium which will feature presentations by writers and academics, including award winning authors Charlotte Grimshaw (11am-12 noon) and the IIML's own Damien Wilkins (1-2pm). This event will be of interest to academics, students, lawyers, writers and members of the general public with a passion for fiction and/or law. There will be a drinks reception to conclude the day. For more information on the symposium, contact [Dr Grant Morris](#), tel 463 6368.

9. On stage

Vanessa Rhodes' play *Where Are You, My Only One?* is described as 'a bittersweet comedy' and 'an unconventional love story' that brings together a secretary from Moscow and a Waikato dairy farmer. Rhodes, who is a graduate of the IIML's scriptwriting workshop, says she was inspired by stories in the media to find the truth behind the negative stereotypes of so-called mail order brides. Originally written as a short play for Silo Theatre's 2003 To Russia With Love season, this full-length production is being premiered by Circa Theatre under the direction of Susan Wilson. The *New Zealand Herald* reviewer described the short version as 'Utterly charming ... an elegantly drawn scenario of the heart ... a poignant and layered exploration of the role courage plays in contemporary love.' The full-length show opens on 5 September and runs until early October; for bookings tel 801 7992 or visit the [Circa](#) website.

10. Kenyan playwright speaks at Victoria

Wakanyote Njuguna, an internationally renowned Kenyan playwright, will present a talk at Victoria University in September. Njuguna is an artist, critic, playwright, theatre director/producer and poet. He has been a cultural and political activist since the 1980s. His plays have been published by Claripress and broadcast by Kenyan national radio, Zimbabwe Radio and the BBC. He has also directed many plays, in

English, Kikuyu and Swahili, and has chaired the Kenya Association of Theatre Artists and served on the board of the Eastern Africa Theatre Institute. He will speak on "The Drama of Kenyan Politics and the Politics of Drama" on Thursday 10 September, 12:30–1:45 pm in Maclaurin Lecture Theatre 101

11. Fantastic Voyages: Writing Speculative Fiction

Authors Tim Jones (*Transported; Anarya's Secret*) and Helen Lowe (*Thornspell*) will share their love of writing science fiction and fantasy, the challenges and rewards of being a New Zealand speculative fiction writer, and how they've gone about getting published, both in New Zealand and internationally. The event, chaired by Lynn Freeman, runs from 7.30-9pm on Thursday 17 September in the Upper Chamber, Wellington Arts Centre/Toi Poneke, 61 Abel Smith Street. Admission is free. For more information, contact 027 359 0293, [email](#), or visit his [blog](#).

12. Your work here?

SWAMP is an online publication created by and created purely for postgraduate Creative Writers (from Honours students through to PhD candidates). Run from the University of Newcastle, Australia, the journal's stated aim is 'to promote Creative Writing programs within the world of academia, and the general public alike.' Submissions for their fifth issue close on 4 September, and there is a compulsory theme of 'city/country' for the issue: 'write about the city, or the country, or both, or any aspect within either. But there has to be something identifiably city or country within your submission.' They welcome poetry, fiction, nonfiction or memoir: visit their [website](#) to view the previous four issues, editorial and publication information, and submission guidelines.

13. Musical pioneers

[Pioneers](#) is a music and theatre show that tells the story of the people who chose to leave Victorian England and Ireland to settle in New Zealand 150 years ago. Former Wellington musicians David Leahy and Angeline Conaghan have toured the show extensively in the UK with the third trio member Ben Brewer. This month they've brought their show home. It tells the story of three of their ancestors using original acoustic music based on texts by leading New Zealand poets including James K. Baxter, Bill Manhire and Len Lye. The show also incorporates story-telling and character portrayal, along with images of New Zealand and rarely seen digitally reproduced archival images of Magic Lantern slides.

Pioneers plays on Friday 28 August at the Expressions Arts Centre in Upper Hutt (8pm) then moves to the Wellington Museum for the nights of Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 August (7.30 pm), detours to the Aratoi Museum of Art and History in Masterton on 2 September (7.30pm), then returns to the Wellington Museum on 3-4 September. For advance bookings in Wellington contact the Wellington Museum (04) 472 8904

14. From the whiteboard

“Most people say that the purpose of poetry is communication; that sounds as if one could be contented simply by telling somebody whatever it is one has noticed, felt or perceived. I feel it is a kind of permanent communication better called preservation, since one’s deepest impulse in writing (or, I must admit, painting or composing) is to my mind not “I must tell everybody about that” (ie responsibility to other people) but “I must stop that from being forgotten if I can” (ie responsibility towards subject). When writing a poem I am trying to construct a verbal device or machine which will, upon reading, render up the emotion I originally experienced to as many people as possible for as long as possible. You’ll remember I called it a slot machine into which the reader inserts the penny of his attention.”

—Philip Larkin

15. Auckland writing residencies on offer

The Michael King Writers’ Centre is calling for applications for two eight-week residencies at the Centre in Devonport in early 2010. The residencies provide an opportunity for two established authors to work full-time on a major project, and come with a stipend of \$8,000 each. The first runs from January to mid-March, the second from March to May. Applications close on Wednesday 30 September, and the selection panel expects to announce its decision before the end of October. Further information is available on the centre’s [website](#) or contact [The Administrator](#), tel/fax (09) 445 8451.

16. Script to screen

[Script to Screen](#) presents the acclaimed Australian film-maker [Rolf de Heer](#) in conversation this week in Auckland (last night, sorry!) and next Monday (31 August) in Wellington. De Heer is responsible for acclaimed films such as *Bad Boy Bubby*, *The Tracker*, *Dance Me To My Song*, and *Ten Canoes*, and has won the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes, the Jury Prize for Un Certain Regard at Cannes and the International Film Critics Prize at Venice. He will talk about how he has consistently made feature films for the international art house market, while developing a voice that is distinctly his own. The Wellington event on 31 August is hosted by Park Road Post, 141 Park Road, Miramar and kicks off with 6.30 pm drinks before a 7 pm start.

17. Worldwide nonsense

Submissions are being sought for *An Anthology of World Nonsense*. The editors are looking for translations of verse or prose nonsense literature from cultures outside the Anglo-American tradition. They say they are collecting folk nonsense of the “High

Diddle Diddle” type, literary nonsense of the “Walrus and the Carpenter” type, and pop culture nonsense, such as some Bollywood film lyrics. They then provide a helpful guide to nonsense, which we reproduce here for the curious, followed by their submission requirements:

What Nonsense Is: Nonsense texts usually exist somewhere between perfect sense, on one hand, and absolute gibberish on the other. They achieve this by maintaining a balance between elements that seem to make sense and elements that do not.

Nonsense texts often revel in topsy-turvyness and inversions of natural laws or hierarchical laws of order and place. They are chimerical constructions typified by excessive randomness, often celebrating the impossible and playing with temporal and spatial confusion. They ennoble anomaly while simultaneously rejecting the expected, the orderly and the everyday. These characteristics of nonsense create the effect of questioning commonly endorsed systems, such as language and logic. Nonsense seems to allude to an alien and impenetrable alternative system of authority that rejects established order. Nonsense can be poetry or prose, and it can appear in the guise of any genre or form, including but not limited to short story, novel, travel writing, ballad, sonnet, limerick, song, folk rhymes and tales, lullaby, recipe, and alphabet.

What Nonsense Is Not: Nonsense is not riddles. Nonsense is not jokes. Nonsense is not light verse. Most fantasy is not nonsense. Not all nursery rhymes are nonsense. Not all limericks are nonsense (limericks with the “punch line” ending are usually not).

Examples of Nonsense:

The following examples from English tradition point to the styles and genres for which we are looking. We seek similarly styled poems and prose nonsense from continental Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Oceania and Central and South America.

Folk Nonsense: Certain nursery rhymes like "Hey Diddle Diddle" which paint unlikely and seemingly meaningless scenarios, or examples from children's oral folklore like "One Bright Day in the Middle of the Night," which posits a list of impossible juxtapositions.

Examples from prose folklore like The Brother's Grimm "Clever Elsie", in which Elsie cannot remember whether she is she, or whether someone else is she. Passages from mummers' plays and other carnivalesque traditions in which the world is turned upside down and absurdity reigns supreme.

Literary Nonsense: Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" or "The Hunting of the Snark," Edward Lear's "Owl and the Pussycat" or "The Four Little Children Who Went Round the World," some of Carl Sandburg's Rootabaga Stories, Edward Gorey's The Iron Tonic or The Epileptic Bicycle, John Ciardi's "Sylvester," Laura Richards' "Eletelephony," Shel Silverstein's "If the World Was Crazy."

Some Authors We Are Considering:

(Germany) Christian Morgenstern, "The Picket Fence"

(India) Sukumar Ray, "Glibberish-Gibberish"

(South Africa), Nicholas Daly, Wanderer in Og
(Portugal) Fernando Pessoa, "Poema Pial"
(Poland) Stanislaw Baranczak; Jerzy Harasymowicz, "A Green Lowland of Pianos"
(France) Guillaume Apollinaire, "Hat-tomb"
(Norway) Einar Økland, "Siri, What Shall You Do?", Zinken Hopp, The Magic Chalk
(The Netherlands) Kees Buddingh, "De blauwbilgorgel"
(Czech Republic) Pavel ?rut
(Russia) Evgeny Kluev, Between Two Chairs

Submission Requirements: Please send original language text (if possible) and a literal, word-for-word, translation. If you also have a more polished English translation, you may submit it. Any explanatory/translation notes would be appreciated. Deadline: 15 January, 2010. Contact: [Michael Heyman](#), The Berklee College of Music, or [Kevin Shortsleeve](#), Christopher Newport University.

A blog, [Jabberwokabout](#), chronicles the research and travel associated with this volume.

18. Recent web reading

[Poems about poems](#)

[The longest poem in the world](#)

[Tennyson's birthday](#)

[Whitman's brain](#)

[Whitmanesque poetry generator](#)

[A book festival thank-you](#)

[Hinemoana Baker on the poetic life](#)

[Brian Turner](#)

[Michael Palmer interview](#)

[Perils of the poetry reading](#)

[Rik Mayall poetry reading](#)

[Australian poetry](#)

[Anti-smoking poetry](#)

[Poetry theft](#)

[Poetry in Motion](#)

[D J Spooky goes to Antarctica](#)

[A great Edward Lear site](#)

[Radio NZ documentaries on literary translation](#)

[Pacific Starmap](#)

[Eleven questions with Mr Dave Armstrong](#)

[A chat with Chris Tse](#)

[Learning to be a poet](#)

[MFA chronicles](#)

[Madonna and Anne Sexton](#)

[And more on Madge from the New Yorker:](#)

[Margaret Atwood has a blog](#)

[The catalogue of digitized medieval manuscripts...](#)

[Marginalising the Humanities](#)

[Finding equilibrium](#)

[Hong Kong Literary Museum](#)

[Noisy sands](#)

[Sands of the Ukraine](#)

[Smallest horse in Australia](#)

[Virtual bubblewrap](#)

[World's largest bubble](#)

[Physicists create the world's smallest incandescent lamp...](#)

[Shooting stars](#)

[Turbo Heather](#)

[The world's smallest radio](#)

[Make your own recipe book](#)

19. Great lists of our time

Team names from the [Swamp Soccer World Championship Results Page](#)

FC Full Gunge
Fuddy Muckers
Threemiletown Big Bangs
Hawick's Fuddy Muckers
AC Mudlan
Bridgnorth Corinthians
The Manky Milf Hunters
Clartypool United
PSV Hangover
Dunoon Celtic Supporters Club
Whitby Walruses
The Mud, The Bad and the Ugly
AK International Swamp Donkeys
The Pre-Mudonnas
The Chocolate Men
Dirt Kuyt FC
Gin'll Fix It
Bruce's Bog Trotters
Sporting Abeergut
Bawbag City Mayors
Boga Juniors
Dunblane Thistle
Paddington Bear's Marmalade Crew
Renfrew Mudby Club
Team Hackney
Real Manky
Real Mudrid
Happy Mud Days
Fergie's Bohemians
Football Punk
Mudchesthair United
St Midden
Creggans Swamp Rats
Mudderwell
Yipee Ki Yay
Red Star Bellend
Mud Sweat & Beers United
Swamp Dogs
The Mud Sharks
Deep, Down and Durty
Federation Against Cabbage Tasting
FC Top Gunge
Scottish Intrepids Dirty Dozen

Swamp Bog Millionaire

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Supporting the IIML

The International Institute of Modern Letters was established at Victoria University in 2001 to promote and foster contemporary imaginative writing. Our founder, philanthropist Glenn Schaeffer, continues to contribute to IIML activities in a range of ways.

While not everyone is able to match Glenn's level of support, we value all those who have helped us to foster the development of emerging writers – for example through scholarships, prizes, and grants. We would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about continuing your support for the IIML, for example through a gift in your will.

All gifts are managed by the Victoria University Foundation, a registered charitable trust established to raise funds in areas of strategic importance to the University, such as the IIML.

For further information on how you can provide philanthropic support to the IIML, please contact our Director, Bill Manhire, Ph: 04 463 6808, Email: bill.manhire@vuw.ac.nz, or Diana Meads, Fundraising Manager, Victoria University of Wellington Foundation Ph: 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534), Email: diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz