



## **Newsletter – 7 November 2001**

This is the 11th 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](mailto:modernletters@vuw.ac.nz).

1. Best New Zealand Poems .....	1
2. Prize in Modern Letters: Jurors Announced .....	1
3. Exhaustion Corner .....	2
4. Kim Hill .....	2
5. Swinging .....	3
6. Margaret Mahy Essays.....	3
7. Poetry Links .....	4

---

### **1. Best New Zealand Poems**

Among grants announced in the latest Creative New Zealand funding round is one of \$3,000 to the IIML for its annual online anthology Best New Zealand Poems. The grant will be used entirely to pay fees to the contributing poets and editor. Best New Zealand Poems is shamelessly modelled on the annual Best American Poetry, and like that anthology will appoint a new editor each year. The poems will be reprinted from magazines and collections, and each poem will be linked to biographical information about the poet and where possible to relevant publisher and magazine websites. The editor for Best New Zealand Poems 2002 is Iain Sharp, books editor of the Sunday Star-Times.

Among other grants announced by Creative New Zealand was \$6,000 to Rachael King, a member of this year's MA workshop at Victoria.

### **2. Prize in Modern Letters: Jurors Announced**

The panel of jurors who will decide the single winner of the \$60,000 Prize in Modern Letters has been announced. The three jurors are leading writers associated with the main US co-centres of the International Institute of Modern Letters.

**Eric Olsen**, who convenes the jury panel, is executive director of the International Institute of Modern Letters, responsible for its US operations. He is a graduate of the

Iowa Writers' Workshop (MFA in '77), where he was also a Teaching/Writing Fellow. After leaving the Workshop, he received a Michener Fellowship for fiction. Eric was a free-lance journalist for about 20 years, during which he wrote several hundred magazine articles and four non-fiction books (a fifth will be published later this year). In 1995, he became executive editor for custom publishing in a division of AOL Time Warner, a position he held until joining the Institute. He is based at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**James Alan McPherson** is currently on the faculty of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. His most notable work of short fiction is *Elbow Room* (1977), which made him the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction (1978). In addition, he has been the recipient of several prestigious grants and fellowships, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1972–73) and a MacArthur Foundation Award (1981, the so-called "genius" award). Among James Alan McPherson's other works are *A World Unsuspected* (1987), *The Prevailing South* (1988), *Confronting Racial Differences* (1990), the memoir *Crabcakes* (1997), and, this year, the collection of essays *A Region Not Home: Reflections from Exile*.

**Geoffrey Wolff** heads the creative writing programme at the University of California, Irvine. He is a novelist, essayist and biographer, and has been books editor of *The Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, and a contributing editor to *Esquire*. Wolff's stories, essays, profiles and criticism have appeared in *American Scholar*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *Granta*, *Lear's*, *Life*, *Michigan Quarterly*, *New Leader*, *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *Columbia Review*, *Time*, *TriQuarterly*, *Life*, *Saturday Review* and many other publications. His most recent novel is *The Age of Consent* (1995), and he is currently completing a life of John O'Hara – *The Art of Burning Bridges* – to be published by Alfred A. Knopf.

The four writers shortlisted for the Prize in Modern Letters are poet James Brown, dramatist Briar Grace-Smith, and novelists Charlotte Randall and Catherine Chidgey. The winner will be announced at Writers and Readers Week in March 2002.

### **3. Exhaustion Corner**

Writers from the 2001 MA workshop at Victoria submitted their end-of-course folios earlier this week. In all, the year produced six novels, two collections of poetry, one collection of short stories, and a full-length stage play. The writers themselves are lying comfortably in the recovery position.

### **4. Kim Hill**

Greg O'Brien will be discussing the poetry of James McNaughton in his Kim Hill slot on Friday 9 November, just after the 10.00 a.m. news. James McNaughton is a graduate of Victoria's 2000 MA workshop, and his first book – *The Stepmother Tree* – has just been published by Darius Press. James's work has been read by All Blacks, including Colin Meads.

## 5. **Swinging**

Barbara Anderson's new novel has just been published by Victoria University Press. *The Swing Around* is set nearly 20 years ago, when – as the publishers put it – “margarine was sold on prescription in pharmacies and protective tariffs ruled . . . The Minister of Cultural Links and Trade, an ex dairy farmer called Hamish Carew, sets off on a Swing Around of New Zealand's Asian friends and neighbours. With him are his wife Molly and two young officials, Freddy Manders and Violet Redpath.”

*The Swing Around* is Barbara Anderson's seventh novel, and VUP think it is “her funniest to date” and that it is also “imbued with her compassionate wisdom for the ways people connect with one another.” Barbara Anderson took Victoria's Original Composition workshop in 1983, the same year as David Geary, Dinah Hawken, and Anthony McCarten.

## 6. **Margaret Mahy Essays**

Two young New Zealand academics working in North America are compiling a collection of essays about Margaret Mahy. This is their call for papers:

We are soliciting papers for a collection of critical essays on the fiction of the New Zealand writer, Margaret Mahy.

We welcome studies of both her young adult fiction and her picture books for children, although the collection will be more heavily weighted towards the former. We seek work which places Mahy in the contexts of children's literature, fantasy, and New Zealand writing.

Thematic, formal, and comparative essays are all welcome. We are particularly interested in essays considering Mahy alongside Maurice Gee and Diana Wynne Jones, but are also interested in comparisons to other writers of children's fantasy (e.g. J.K. Rowling, William Mayne, Alan Garner, Peter Dickinson, Philip Pullman, Penelope Lively, Nina Bawden) and to other New Zealand writers.

Approaches may include but are not limited to:

- Mahy and sexuality
- Mahy and feminism
- Mahy and place/Mahy and landscape
- Mahy as a New Zealand writer (in a local or international context)
- Mahy and Postcolonial theory
- Mahy and illustration
- Mahy and narrative strategy
- Mahy and Gothic
- Mahy and the coming of age narrative
- Mahy and the literary tradition
- Mahy and race

Mahy and education  
Mahy in the schools  
Mahy and aging  
Mahy and magic realism  
Mahy and television

Abstracts or proposals of between 250 and 500 words are due by January 31, 2002 to:

Dr Elizabeth Hale  
Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management  
Wentworth Institute of Technology  
550 Huntington Avenue  
Boston, MA 02115-5998  
[halee@wit.edu](mailto:halee@wit.edu)

Dr Sarah Winters  
St Michael's College  
University of Toronto  
81 St Mary Street  
Toronto, ON  
Canada M5S 1J4  
[swinters@chass.utoronto.ca](mailto:swinters@chass.utoronto.ca)

## **7. Poetry Links**

An excellent poetry links site is at

<http://www.hphoward.demon.co.uk/poetry/hotsites.htm>

Peter Howard also writes a regular column about poetry websites for the UK's *Poetry Review*.