



Newsletter – 12 October 2001

This is the 9th 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. Blue Sky Boy

We are delighted to announce that Ken Duncum, writer of award-winning play *Blue Sky Boys*, has been appointed to the position of “Michael Hirschfeld Director of Scriptwriting” at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria.

Ken was a member of Victoria’s precociously talented 1983 Original Composition Workshop (fellow writers included novelist Elizabeth Knox and poet Jenny Bornholdt). Subsequently his career as a full-time writer for screen and stage includes the plays *Flipside* (Chapman Tripp Award for Production of the Year 2000), *Waterloo Sunset* and *Blue Sky Boys* (Best New Zealand Play 1990), as well as scripts for major television shows like *Duggan* and *Coverstory*. His industry experience is wide-ranging: he was script editor for *Greenstone*, script adviser for *Tiger Country*, storyliner and writer for *Mirror Mirror*, and is currently head writer for *Willy Nilly*.

In September Ken also received the Michael Hirschfeld Memorial Writing Award. The award marks 25 years of Circa Theatre; he will use the \$12,000 prize to complete his play *Cherish*, which will be staged at Circa in 2002.

The new scriptwriting position has sponsorship from the film and television industry and will give Ken Duncum an opportunity to continue working as an industry professional, thus maintaining an ongoing connection with the commercial world of scriptwriting.

Ten students will be accepted into the Scriptwriting Course each year. Applications close on November 1 (see below).

2. MA 2002

A reminder that applications close on 1 November for the 2002 MA in Creative Writing. There will now be two streams in the MA. The first (convened by Bill Manhire) is for writers working towards book publication – i.e. writers of poetry, fiction, memoir etc. The second (convened by Ken Duncum) is for scriptwriters – i.e. those who are writing for film or television or stage or radio. The scriptwriting option also involves 120 hours of industry placement. Fuller information is available on the IIML website, where application forms can also be downloaded (more info [here](#).)

Application materials for our undergraduate workshops in short fiction, poetry, children's writing, creative nonfiction, and creative writing in the marketplace can also be downloaded from the IIML website. Applications for first half year courses in 2002 (short fiction and creative nonfiction) close on 1 December.

3. A Glimpse of the Future

This Sunday afternoon, 14 October, prize-winning novelist Damien Wilkins introduces readings by and conversation with four exciting new Wellington writers who have just published their first books of fiction: Tim Corballis, Kate Duignan, Victoria McHalick and Rebekah Palmer.

Time: 2.00 p.m.

Venue: City Gallery, Wellington. Tickets \$5 at the door.

4. Winners!

Congratulations to Janis Freegard and Tracy Farr who have taken the top two places in the biennial BNZ Katherine Mansfield Short Story Awards. Both authors are graduates of Victoria's creative writing programme. Janis Freegard, who won first place with her short story 'Mill', took Greg O'Brien's Poetry Workshop last summer. Tracy Farr, second placegetter with her story 'The Blind Astronomer', took the Short Fiction Workshop with Bill Manhire in 1998.

The Pacific Regional Winner of the 2001 Commonwealth Short Story competition is Sarah Quigley for her story 'There's no particular reason why I'm dreaming of you'. Sarah was a member of the 1996 Original Composition workshop. Overall winner was Lelawattee Manoo-Rahming of the Bahamas

5. The Stepmother Tree

James McNaughton's first book of poetry, *The Stepmother Tree* will be launched at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 24 October at Wellington's Unity Books. All welcome. James, who is returning from Japan for the event, completed Victoria's MA in Creative Writing in 2000.

'Forget about absinthe, alcohol, bungy-jumping and eastern mysticism - if you really want to see things, this object in your hand isn't a book, it's a box of seeds. Now, sit down or lie back and watch them grow.'

Gregory O'Brien

6. Gladiator

Wellington writer Michael Laws, graduate of the 2000 MA in Creative Writing workshop, is launching *Gladiator - the Norm Hewitt Story* on Tuesday 23 October. James McNaughton (see above) will also read from *The Stepmother Tree* at this free event.

Venue: Whitcoulls Lambton Quay

Time: 6.00 p.m.

7. The Prize in Modern Letters

The shortlist for the Prize in Modern Letters is released on Monday, 15 October. Subscribers to this newsletter will receive information about shortlisted writers that same day. The \$60,000 award, the richest in Australasia, will be presented next March during Writers and Readers Week by IIML founding patron Glenn Schaeffer and Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka.