



## Newsletter – 10 February 2004

This is the 48<sup>th</sup> 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).

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### **1. The Prize in Modern Letters**

The Prize in Modern Letters is moving into its final judging phase. US director of the IIML, Eric Olsen, has convened a panel of three judges to decide the winner, who will receive the \$60,000 award during Writers and Readers Week. The judges for the 2004 Prize in Modern Letters are Sandra Cisneros, Douglas Unger, and Geoffrey Wolff.

The Saturday 13 March award ceremony is free and open to the public. Please come along! It begins at 5.15 p.m. at the Westpac St James Theatre, Courtenay Place. The shortlisted authors – William Brandt, Kate Camp, Glenn Colquhoun and Geoff Cush – will earlier be reading their work at the Heineken Festival Club, 12.10 - 1.00 p.m., on Thursday 11 March. Catherine Chidgey, inaugural winner of the Prize in Modern Letters, will chair the reading.

The full programme is now available from independent bookshops (in Wellington, from Unity Books), and can be read on-line at

[http://www.nzfestival.telecom.co.nz/home/page.aspx?page\\_id=15](http://www.nzfestival.telecom.co.nz/home/page.aspx?page_id=15)

## 2. Janet Frame's French Poem

Amid the talk of manuscripts which Janet Frame may or may not have left, a recent correspondent to the *International Herald Tribune* has made public this poem, in French, written in 1974 when Frame was Mansfield Fellow in Menton. It seems the poem was written for the young son of Mary Adele Baus. Writes Baus: "One of my duties as an American working in the Menton Mairie was liaison between the New Zealand fellows and City Hall."

Etienne, Etienne.  
Il a dix ans.  
Il pique comme les abeilles  
qu'il attrape.  
Etienne, Etienne,  
C'est certain qu'il est sur  
le Massif Central.  
Etienne, la Turbie, la brise, et les abeilles  
mortes, suffoquees,  
qui font, il etait une fois,  
le miel de jasmin.

The desk at which Janet Frame wrote the three volumes of her autobiography and her last published novel *The Carpathians* is in the foyer of Glenn Schaeffer House on Victoria's Kelburn campus, and seems suddenly a little more precious. Photographs of Janet Frame and *Landfall* editor Charles Brasch (its original owner) hang on the wall above, separated by Frame's poem addressed to "The Landfall Desk". Visitors to Wellington are most welcome to call and see it. Our street address is 16 Wai-te-ata Road, and we are open weekdays 9.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.

A recent photograph of Janet Frame taken late last year when Creative New Zealand CEO Elizabeth Kerr flew to Dunedin to present her with the Prime Minister's Award has been posted on the CNZ website:

<http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/news/pics/frame.html>

## 3. Glenn Schaeffer Award

The winner of the 2004 Glenn Schaeffer Award, which takes one of Victoria's top creative writing students to the Iowa Writers' Workshop, has just been announced. She is novelist Tracey Hill, who will take up the US\$20,000 award in September. Tracey's first degree was in Politics and Philosophy, and she was the winner of the 1995 BNZ Katherine Mansfield Novice Writer's Award. During her enrolment in Victoria's MA in Creative Writing she worked on a novel, *Fool's Cap*, about life on a fictional, almost perfectly round island. Previous recipients of the Glenn Schaeffer Award are novelist Paula Morris and poet Anna Livesey.

## 4. A New Term

Workshops begin again in a few weeks' time, with all courses fully subscribed and with considerable waiting lists. As well as our semester-long workshops in Creative Nonfiction with Harry Ricketts, Children's Writing with Kate De Goldi, and Short

Fiction with William Brandt, there is a special one-day workshop on memoir with visiting poet and Fulbright Fellow Mark Doty. This year our MA workshops will be taught by Ken Duncum (Scriptwriting) and Damien Wilkins (Writing for the Page). IIML director Bill Manhire is on leave this year, and will soon travel to France to take up the Meridian Energy Katherine Mansfield Fellowship. In 2005, the MA programme will double its page-writing stream to accept 20 students.

## **5. Bart Simpson meets Thomas Pynchon**

We understand that Bart Simpson becomes a novelist in a forthcoming episode of *The Simpsons*, already shown in the States but yet to screen here. There are endorsement quotes from Thomas Pynchon and Tom Clancy. A sound file can be heard on weblog Amy's Robot. Pynchon says: "Here's your quote: Thomas Pynchon loved this book . . . almost as much as he loves cameras." A car drives past and he calls out, "Hey, over here! Have your picture taken with a reclusive author! Today only, we'll throw in a free autograph! But wait! There's more!" He pronounces his own name with stress on the final syllable: Pyn-CHON.

<http://www.amysrobot.com/files/pynchon/pynchon.mp3>

You can also see a cartoon drawing of Pynchon with a paperbag over his head:

[http://www.amysrobot.com/files/pynchon/pynchon\\_simpsons\\_02.jpg](http://www.amysrobot.com/files/pynchon/pynchon_simpsons_02.jpg)

## **6. Some Recent Web Reading**

Starting Out in Poetry

<http://www.poems.com/essawein.htm>

Keri Hulme Cuts Loose

<http://www.publicaddress.net/default,993.sm#post993>

A Couple of University Courses

<http://www.hku.hk/english/courses2000/2093.htm>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/features/story/0,11710,1140881,00.html>

Viggo Fan Review

<http://64.226.37.40/celefinniel/mordor.html>

Literary Weblogs

<http://news.scotsman.com/features.cfm?id=68052004>

Stump the Bookseller

<http://www.logan.com/loganberry/stump.html>

Poetry Jukebox

<http://www.poetryjukebox.com/>

A Poet's Week (Zimbabwe):

<http://www.poetryinternational.org/cwolk/view/21732>

The Postmodernism Generator

<http://www.elsewhere.org/cgi-bin/postmodern/>

## **7. Shaken But Not Stirred**

A recent piece in the *Wall Street Journal* by SF writer Ray Bradbury recalls an idea he once had – deriving from a suggestion by the Renaissance art historian (and Bradbury fan) Bernard Berenson – that books might be lost but subsequently rewritten from memory by “wilderness book people”. What would happen, asks Bradbury, if great books were recovered by the usual imperfections of memory? “Would Usher fall but rise again? Would Gatsby, shot, do 20 laps around his pool? Would *Wuthering Heights*’ Cathy, at Heathcliff’s shout, run in out of the snow?” Bradbury’s view is that the great poems would survive, “fresh and new”, along with children’s books. However, the ‘great’ books (i.e. novels) such as *War and Peace* or *Moby-Dick* would be hardest to remember – “they are too complex in different ways. But James Bond, easily remembered, could be set free again, shaken but not stirred by time.”

## **8. The Expanding Bookshelf**

Many thanks to Heather Manning at the National Library in Palmerston North and to Jan Bunting in Wellington, who have directed our way some literary magazines which the NatLib was soon to de-acquisition. This means that the IIML library now has a full set of *Islands* and an almost full set of *Landfall*, from the first 1947 issue forward.

## **9. Congratulations**

to playwright Lorae Parry, who completed our MA in Scriptwriting last year. She was recognised in the recent New Year’s Honours list with the award of the MNZM for services to the performing arts. Investiture by the Governor General takes place in April 2004.

## **10. Poetry Competition**

Dunedin literary magazine *Glottis* has announced its “first ever” poetry competition, for which short prose pieces are also eligible. First prize is \$250.00; second and third \$100. “Send up to three poems or one short story (300 words max) and a stamped self-addressed envelope to: THE F.E.G. POETRY COMPETITION, P.O. BOX 6249, DUNEDIN. (Each page must be clearly marked with your name and address.) Closing date 1st April, 2004. Winners will be published in *Glottis*.”

*Glottis* has a website, which seems never to have quite got beyond its early construction plans. There are some items of interest there, however, including Nick Ascroft’s unturbulent adventures among the poets of Wellington:

<http://www.glottis.co.nz/interviews/wellingtonpoets.html>

## **11. Michael Harlow at the Randell Cottage**

Poet Michael Harlow will be the new Randell Cottage writer in residence for the first half of 2004. He begins his residency at the historic Thorndon cottage during

February. Previous New Zealand writers to hold the residency are Peter Wells and Tim Corballis. French writers Nadine Ribault and – most recently – Charles Juliet have also held the residency. Monsieur Juliet is rumoured to be translating a small anthology of New Zealand poems into French.

Michael Harlow will be reading for the New Zealand Poetry Society on Thursday February 19, 8.00 pm, at Turnbull House – preceded by an open reading. The NZ Poetry Society now sends its comprehensive monthly newsletter out in electronic form. More information from their website:  
<http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz>